

20 Things Every Tennessee Teacher Should Know about the PARCC Assessment

PARCC stands for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career. A partnership of 18 states and the District of Columbia, PARCC is developing math and English language arts / literacy assessments in grades 3-11. Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, the PARCC math and English language arts assessments (ELA) will replace the Achievement and End of Course math and ELA assessments as part of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).

PARCC is still in the design process. Test blueprints have been developed and released and the first round of items has been developed and reviewed by educators in Tennessee. Tennessee, along with other PARCC states, will participate in a field test of these items during spring, 2014. As with the field test for all TCAP assessments, the PARCC field test will help the consortia make final decisions about the design and scoring of the assessments. With Tennessee's strong support, PARCC is committed to creating high quality tests that will be improved over time based on results and feedback from all of the member states.

Based on the design of tests as of October 2013, here are 20 things every Tennessee teacher should know about PARCC:

- 1) **Tennesseans helped build PARCC.** Tennessee is a governing state in PARCC and Tennessee educators from K-12 schools and from institutions of higher education have participated in the design of PARCC and reviewed items for content and for bias and sensitivity. Together with other states, we are building the PARCC assessments.
- 2) **The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) will include the PARCC Assessments in grades 3-11 in Math and English Language Arts / Literacy.** Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, the PARCC assessments will replace the Achievement and End of Course tests for math and English language arts (ELA) as part of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP). We will continue to have Achievement and End of Course exams in science and social studies as part of TCAP.
- 3) **Participating in PARCC will allow Tennesseans to see how our state performs and grows over time in math and English language arts / literacy compared to other PARCC states.** Right now, with each state developing its own tests, there is no way to know how our students' growth and performance compares with our neighbor's performance or pace of growth. Working with other states to develop and administer PARCC will allow us to see how our students' achievement level and pace of growth compares to other PARCC states every year and will allow us to learn from others.
- 4) **The PARCC assessments will be given in two separate windows during the year: a Performance-Based Assessment Component in February or March and an End of Year Assessment Component in April.** There will be a block schedule administration available for both the Performance-Based Assessment and the End of Year Assessment (which will be called the End of Course Component in high school) in the fall and winter. Unlike the Achievement and End of Course math and reading assessments, not all of the testing will happen at the end of the course or year.
- 5) **Students' final scores will reflect their performance on both the Performance Based Assessment and the End of Year Assessment.** The Performance Based Assessment will include all of the questions that students have to perform a task not just pick an answer – for example, write an essay or create a model. The Performance Based Assessment has three parts ELA/Literacy and two parts math. The End of Year Assessment has two parts math, two parts ELA/Literacy. The final student score will be based on performance across all the components (students will not get a different score for each component).

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- 6) **Sixty percent of the PARCC ELA / literacy assessment will involve writing.** Unlike previous assessments that chiefly assess ELA through multiple choice questions, writing will be a key element of PARCC. You can learn about the three writing task types in more detail and see sample items [here](#).
- 7) **More than 60 percent of the math questions will focus on the math standards that have been identified as the “major work of the grade” (as outlined in the PARCC Model Content Frameworks – see [here](#)).** Unlike the Achievement and End of Course math assessments, with small number of items on every State Performance Indicator (SPI), there will be more questions on certain standards on the PARCC math assessment. Students who do well with the major work of the grade in math will do well on PARCC.
- 8) **The PARCC math and ELA / literacy assessments will include many different types of questions.** There will be questions that ask students to do something – these are typically called constructed response questions. All constructed response questions will part of the the Performance Based Assessment window to allow for hand scoring by the end of the year. There will also be multiple choice questions and interactive technology questions – questions that require students to drag and drop items or type an answer where no choices are given or select from many options. All of these questions will be able to be scored automatically. The End of Year component will only include questions that are automatically scored.
- 9) **Constructed response and writing questions will be hand-scored by trained reviewers.** Reviewers will go through in-depth training on how to use the rubric, similar to the training on our current writing assessment, to ensure fairness and consistency. Multiple reviewers will score each assessment, and a third reviewer will examine student scores if there is a discrepancy in the scoring. This scoring process is a similar approach to the scoring of the writing assessments students have taken for many years.
- 10) **There will be accommodations and accessibility features that allow all students to have the support they need to do well on PARCC.** Unless a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) team determines that the student will participate in the portfolio assessment, he or she will participate in the new PARCC assessment. PARCC is being designed to be accessible for all students other than those taking the Portfolio assessment (the MAAS assessment will no longer be administered beginning in the 2014-15 school year.) Students with disabilities will be able to use accommodations specific to the PARCC assessment chosen by their IEP teams. More information about these accommodations can be found [here](#).
- 11) **The PARCC portion of TCAP will be administered online,** and there will be a paper-pencil back up option at first. Not all students will take the PARCC tests at the same time, as typically has been the case with the Achievement and End of Course paper-pencil assessments. Groups of students will cycle through different test parts during a window of several weeks and return to class and continue learning throughout the window. Students will only work on assessments for a few days within the testing window.
- 12) **There will not be questions on the ELA/Literacy assessments that test grammar in isolation; grammar will be assessed through students’ writing.** On PARCC, grammar is assessed solely through writing. There will not be stand-alone multiple choice questions assessing grammar.
- 13) **All passages on the ELA/Literacy parts will come from an authentic text.** The [PARCC passage selection guidelines](#) state: “The texts students encounter on tests should be worthy of careful attention, be content rich and challenging, and exhibit professional published quality.” Unlike previous assessment passages, written for the purpose of the test, PARCC will feature only previously published texts.
- 14) **Multiple-choice and selected-response questions on the ELA/Literacy Assessments will focus on reading and vocabulary.** All multiple-choice questions will be based on a text and require students to provide evidence to

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support their answer. Additionally, vocabulary questions will focus on meaning as presented in the text. Students will not be expected to have prior knowledge of the subject or content of the text.

- 15) **Tennessee will offer the PARCC high school level math assessments for both the traditional course sequence (Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II) and for the integrated course sequence (Math I, Math II and Math III).** Unlike the previous End of Course offerings which only followed the traditional sequence with Algebra I and Algebra II tested, PARCC will offer the full suite of assessments for both traditional and integrated courses. Click [here](#) for more information on the mathematics pathways.
- 16) **Students will get partial credit for some questions in math.** On some of the constructed response math questions, students can receive partial credit if they demonstrate understanding of a concept. Students will need to generate a precise and accurate answer in order to earn full point value.
- 17) **In grades 1-6, there will be math questions that assess students' speed and accuracy with basic procedures without a calculator, (i.e., their math fluency).** The list of fluency standards can be found [here](#). Beyond grade 6 will have fluency standards, but there will not be a fluency component of the PARCC assessment.
- 18) **In grades 6 and beyond, PARCC will have calculator and non-calculator sections.** Assessments in grades 3-5 will not allow the use of a calculator. Assessments in grades 6-7 will allow for a four-function plus square root calculator, assessments in grade 8 will allow for a scientific calculator, and assessments in high school will allow for a calculator similar in functionality to a TI-84 graphing calculator. PARCC's calculator policy can be accessed [here](#).
- 19) **Students will have a math reference sheet for grades 5 and higher.** Students in grades 3 and 4 will not be provided a reference sheet. Reference sheets for [grades 5-8](#) and for [high school](#) will be available to students during the assessment.
- 20) **Students who do well on PARCC will know they are ready for college and career.** PARCC will ask students to do the kind of work they will need to do to be ready for college and career. Tennessee public institutions of higher education have agreed to use students' performance on the PARCC assessment as an indicator of readiness for credit bearing work. PARCC will give students and parents clear information about whether they are on track towards meaningful options in life.

If you have additional questions about the PARCC assessment, please go to the PARCC section of the TNCore website at www.TNCore.org or email your questions to TNCore.Questions@tn.gov.

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