Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers

10 Things Parents Should Know About PARCC

1. **Massachusetts is the nation's top performing state, but we cannot stand still and allow key educational and technological innovations to pass by us.**
   Massachusetts students are performing at high levels - second-to-none among the 50 states and on par with some of the highest performing nations in the world. Despite this, not all students are enjoying the same level of success. To remain competitive globally, we cannot stand still. We need to continue to invest in public education, upgrade our curriculum and instruction to reflect the demands of the 21st century, and put all students on a pathway to college and career readiness.

2. **Massachusetts is collaborating with other states to develop a new, high quality, 21st century student testing program called PARCC.**
   Massachusetts is one of 11 states and the District of Columbia working collaboratively to develop PARCC, which stands for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers. PARCC is a key component of the state’s commitment to prepare all students for success after high school. PARCC assesses students in English language arts and math in grades 3 through 11.

3. **The goal of PARCC is to measure student progress toward a common set of academic learning standards in English language arts and mathematics.**
   In 2010, Massachusetts adopted new learning standards, and since then, schools across the Commonwealth have been introducing them into classrooms. The standards are more rigorous than previous standards and are tied to the skills and knowledge that colleges and employers expect of our high school graduates. The best preparation for PARCC is good classroom instruction that is aligned with the standards.

4. **Massachusetts is doing a unique, two-year "test drive" of PARCC before deciding in fall 2015 whether to fully adopt this new testing program.**
   In spring 2015, 5 million students across 11 states and the District of Columbia, including 220,000 in grades 3-8 in Massachusetts (Spring 2015 District Assessment Decision Update), will take PARCC tests. In Massachusetts, districts were allowed to choose to give PARCC or MCAS to grades 3-8 as part of our test drive. The state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will decide in fall 2015 whether to adopt PARCC and transition away from MCAS English language arts and math tests, and this spring’s administration of PARCC and MCAS will help inform that decision.

5. **Higher education is a key partner in the development of the new PARCC tests.**
   Educators from K-12 and higher education are playing integral roles in the development of the new PARCC tests. PARCC will provide clearer signals about students’ readiness for the next grade level and, in high school, readiness for college and careers. Each of Massachusetts’ 29 public two-year and four-year colleges and universities have committed to use student performance on the PARCC tests as an indicator of students’ readiness for entry-level, credit-bearing college courses.

6. **PARCC is a computer-based test, though a paper-and-pencil option exists.**
   Computers are playing an increasingly larger role in everything we do, including education. A computer-based test will allow us to improve the ways that students can demonstrate on a test what they know and are able to do. For instance, students will be able to use the computer to complete performance-based tasks that better measure the range of skills we value and colleges and employers report are necessary for students to acquire.
7. Regardless of whether their district is using PARCC or MCAS English language arts and math tests in spring 2015, students will receive their scores. In addition, students will continue taking MCAS science and technology/engineering tests, and the 10th grade MCAS will continue to be a graduation requirement through at least the class of 2019.

Students taking PARCC tests this year will receive their spring 2015 scores during the 2015-16 school year. While MCAS scores will be available in late September, PARCC results will come later. In addition, all Massachusetts high school students, at least through the class of 2019, are required to take and pass the high school MCAS tests in three subjects to satisfy the state graduation requirement and earn a high school diploma.

8. We are striving to make PARCC tests accessible to all students.

We are committed to ensuring that all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, are able to participate in a meaningful and appropriate manner so we can report valid results for all students. More information on PARCC accommodations is available online at PARCC Accessibility and Accommodations webpage.


Parents can help their children prepare for PARCC by familiarizing themselves with the state’s academic learning standards. The standards are posted online at Common Core State Standards Initiative webpage. The National PTA has also developed a Parents’ Guide to Student Success, available in English and Spanish, in response to the new common set of learning standards. Additionally, PARCC practice tests and sample questions will be made available later this spring.

10. In future years, PARCC could replace MCAS as the state's student testing program.

Based on the two-year “test drive” of PARCC, the state commissioner of elementary and secondary education will evaluate the strengths of PARCC and the program's ability to measure the state's new academic learning standards in English language arts. The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will vote whether to fully adopt PARCC as the state’s new testing program in fall 2015.

If you have questions about PARCC, please visit Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers(PARCC) website, send an email to parcc@doe.mass.edu, or, as always, ask your principal.