

Frequently Asked Questions about PARCC **(Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers)**

Why are we moving to PARCC? Who developed PARCC?

- In 2010, New Mexico adopted a better, higher quality set of academic standards in reading and in math that build upon each other year after year. Teachers began training on the new standards, called Common Core, in 2011 as part of a multi-year plan to phase the new standards into classrooms across the state. The final phase of the plan is to implement PARCC as the assessment that measures whether our students are academically progressing as they should. This year, 12 other states and D.C. are transitioning to the PARCC assessment just like New Mexico is.
- PARCC is a higher quality test that directly aligns to the Common Core standards and assesses what students have been learning in school all year. It was developed through the work of 2,000 teachers, school leaders, and curriculum experts from all over the country, including New Mexico, whose goal was to develop a better test that requires students to think critically and apply what they've learned throughout the year to solve real world problems instead of simply regurgitating memorized facts on a bubble test.
- Ultimately, teachers and schools will be able to get the results more quickly and in a way that helps them make better use of the results and inform instructional decisions that are made for each student.
- The results and information provided by PARCC will allow parents to know with confidence how their child is progressing academically, how their child is performing compared to other students across the state and across the nation, and whether they are truly on track for success in college and career after high school.
- Being computer based means that PARCC is far more interactive than a traditional bubble sheet test. Students can move beyond the limitations of multiple choice answers, give more in-depth answers, and show how they went about developing their answers. The computer format allows for a more rigorous test that asks students to apply their knowledge to solve complex problems and better demonstrate their writing skills.
- For more information about the transition timeline referred to in the first bullet, visit: <http://newmexicommoncore.org/pages/view/22/transition-timeline/>.
- For more information about PARCC, you can visit the PARCC website at www.parcconline.org.

Is it true that if my child doesn't pass PARCC this year, he or she won't be able to graduate?

- No.
- For seniors who are already on track to graduate this year (2015), PARCC does not impact their graduation at all, nor will they be taking PARCC.
- PARCC will be a part of graduation requirements starting in 2016. Just like the SBA, PARCC will fulfill some but not all requirements to graduate.
- To accommodate the transition to PARCC, the class of 2016 will need a minimum score of 3 (scale of 1-5) on the test to meet graduation requirements. If a student does not score a 3 on PARCC this year, there will be a retest opportunity (same as the SBA). For future cohorts who will graduate after 2016, the required score will likely be a 4 or 5 signifying college or career readiness.
- If a student in the class of 2016 or later does not fulfill graduation requirements with PARCC, "Alternate Demonstrations of Competency" (ADC) may be used to fulfill graduation requirements. ADCs are determined by individual districts. While these ADCs can permit students to qualify for graduation and a diploma, state guidance is such that *students must first exhaust their opportunities to pass PARCC before the ADCs can be considered*, just as the guidance was when SBA was the annual assessment.

Is it true that PARCC is going to be worth half of my child's teacher's evaluation?

- No.
- PARCC results won't be factored into 2015 teacher evaluations at all.
- In 2016, PARCC will account for about 11% of a teacher's total evaluation score, and for most teachers, even less.
- The first time PARCC will be fully incorporated into a teacher's evaluation will be in 2018, at a maximum of 35%, and for many teachers, even less.
- The first year PARCC results are used in evaluation (2016), evaluations will be calculated in a way where PARCC scores will be compared to what scores would have looked like on the SBA and adjusted to account for any temporary dips in scores during the first year.
- Remember that a teacher's evaluation is calculated using multiple measures, including classroom observations and local measures (for example, teacher attendance if a district chooses that measure) as well as growth in student achievement.
- It is important to know that teachers are not evaluated on the proficiency of their students (i.e., what % of the class "passed" PARCC). The evaluation looks only at student GROWTH (i.e., how much did each student learn this year while he/she was in this teacher's classroom).

How much time will my student spend taking PARCC? What are the testing windows?

- PARCC is one test broken up into several smaller units in English Language Arts and in math.
- Total testing time for all required testing for an individual student will fall between 6.25 and 10.5 hours (depending on grade level) for the entire year. (Note: These hours also include the Science SBA in grades 4, 7, and 11.)
- There are two testing windows for PARCC this year: March 2-27 and April 13-May 8. ***This does not mean your child will be testing every day during this period.*** The testing windows are set as wide as possible so that districts and schools have full flexibility to set their own testing schedules in a way that best meets their individual needs. The vast majority of students will take PARCC for a couple of hours a day over the course of a few days. Please ask your school principal if you have questions about your child's specific testing schedule.
- Please note: Some districts may choose to use additional assessments that are not required by the state. If a student is taking other assessments that are not on the list of state required assessments, this is at the direction of the teacher, principal, or district leadership.
- With PARCC replacing the SBA in reading and in math, state-required testing time is reduced by 2.5 hours across all grades. PARCC testing time is less than 2% of all classroom time throughout the year.

Is PARCC accessible to students with special needs?

- Yes.
- Just like with the SBA before it, PARCC is fully accessible to students with special needs.
- The vast majority of Special Education students will take PARCC just as they took the SBA and will be provided with the necessary accommodations per their individualized education plan (IEP), just as they were with the SBA.
- Please note: About 1% of our Special Education students will take the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) assessment instead of PARCC. NCSC is an alternate assessment for children with severe cognitive disabilities.
- For more information, please click here for the full guide on PARCC for Students with Disabilities. <http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/NMPARCCDocs/SPED%20Directors%20PARCC%20Accommodations.pdf>

Is PARCC accessible for English language learners?

- Yes.
- For the first year of PARCC, English language learners will take the math portion of the PARCC assessment in Spanish and continue to take the SBA Spanish Language Arts assessment.
- For more information about how the new Common Core Standards affect our English language learners, please click here <http://newmexicocommoncore.org/pages/view/25/english-learners-els/1/>

Will my student be held back if they fail PARCC?

- The decision for a student to repeat a grade is, and always has been, a local decision made at the district and school level.
- PARCC is a valuable tool that provides teachers and schools with objective information about how students are progressing academically. That information can be used by teachers to make instructional decisions and determine how best to support students improve where improvement is needed. There is no state rule that currently ties student retention to annual assessments like PARCC.

Can I opt my child out of PARCC?

- Federal and state laws require that all eligible students take the annual state assessments. These laws do not allow for the right of refusal.
- Federally and state mandated assessments like PARCC (and the SBA before it) have been used in our schools for decades, as well as in all 50 states across the country.
- For more information regarding this topic, including the potential implications of refusing to have your child participate in PARCC, please access the Assessment Participation FAQ here: <http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/AssessmentEvalDocs/Assessment%20Participation%20FAQ.pdf>

What happens if a student knows an answer but not the computer function they need to fill in the test correctly?

- Students should have been provided instruction on the basic computer skills needed to successfully take the test on the computer.
- Last year, schools were provided the opportunity to pilot computer-based testing for students to practice using the computer format – about a quarter of our students were able to take advantage of this opportunity.
- This year, PED offered a waiver to districts/charters allowing up to 20% of students to take this year’s test using paper and pencil – approximately one-third of districts took advantage of this opportunity.
- Because computer testing is a new format for most students, however, and because the test itself is based on higher standards, we may experience a dip in results initially and have made adjustments to bridge the difference during this first year so that the results can be used fairly.

Can parents help prepare their students for PARCC?

- Of course!
- Make sure your child has a good night’s sleep the night before and a good breakfast in the morning.
- Encourage your child to do his/her best.
- Know who to contact - if you have questions about the test, talk to the testing coordinator at your school, your principal, or your Superintendent.
- To see the monthly “Countdown to PARCC” newsletters created for families, please visit: <http://newmexicocommoncore.org/pages/view/329/countdown-to-parcc-for-parents/1/>.
- The PARCC website also has some good tips for parents. Visit: <http://www.parconline.org/frequently-asked-questions> for more information and links to sample questions.