



Hanover Public Schools
PARCC Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is PARCC?

A: The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC, is a state-led effort to develop a next-generation computer-based student testing program, aligned to a newly adopted common set of college and career ready learning standards, in English Language Arts and Mathematics. PARCC is a key component of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's commitment to ensure that all public school students are well prepared for success after high school.

Q: Why does Massachusetts need a new student-testing program?

A: With the new curriculum frameworks in place, a next-generation student-testing program that is aligned to our new college and career ready standards is necessary. The Massachusetts state assessment, MCAS, is 17 years old and was never intended to be a predictor of college and career readiness. PARCC is designed to build on the strengths of MCAS and add additional features such as innovative technology-based items and more open-ended, performance-based tasks that will better measure students' ability to think critically and to apply what they know. At the high school level, PARCC intends to assess a broader range of the skills that employers and colleges report as essential for success after high school.

Q: Who is developing the PARCC test items?

A: The PARCC consortium, of which Massachusetts is a member, has contracted with Pearson and Educational Testing Service (ETS), which is working extensively with our state's MCAS office as well as various subcontractors, to develop the assessments and test items. Their priority is to evaluate whether the items are closely aligned to the new college and career ready standards; are of high quality; and are rigorous, fair, and unbiased.

Q: What is the goal of PARCC?

A: 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 and are tied to the skills and knowledge that colleges and employers expect of our high school graduates.

Q: How is PARCC administered?

A: 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. For more information and for individual school testing schedules, please refer to our district website at <http://www.hanoverschools.org>.

Q: Can I see sample questions from the PARCC assessment?

A: Yes. Sample test items and tasks for ELA and mathematics, along with supplemental materials and additional resources, are available online at <http://www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes>. In addition, test blueprints that show how the assessments reflect and measure the Common Core at every grade level are available at <http://www.parcconline.org/assessment-blueprints-test-specs>.

Q: Will the school and students receive results from the assessment this year?

A: Yes. Students, parents, and the district will receive student reports from the administration of the PARCC this year.

Q: Will any students still participate in MCAS this year?

A: Yes. All students in grades 5, 8, and high school will participate in MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering tests as PARCC does not have a comparable assessment. Students in grade 10 will also continue to participate in ELA and Math MCAS through 2019 as their competency determination (current 8th graders).

Q: What are some of the major changes from MCAS to PARCC?

A: Being the first administration of this assessment district wide, it is difficult to identify all changes. As we move into the second year of the pilot, we have identified several key changes from MCAS to PARCC. Unlike MCAS, PARCC is a timed test and there could be a need for extended time as defined in a student's IEP. With PARCC, tools such as graphic organizers and math reference sheets are not allowed (other than the approved math reference sheet the state has put out for students in grade 5-8). Also, for the paper-and-pencil option of PARCC, students bubble answers directly in the test booklet, which is much easier for tracking purposes. As we move through this process, we will be tracking any and all changes that effect student's access and performance. This information will be shared with the state on a regular basis.

Q: Is PARCC accessible to all students?

A: We are committed to ensure 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. The state is working to design a testing program that is inclusive of all students by building many accessibility features that we consider to be accommodations on MCAS into the computer-based PARCC test. Some accessibility features built in to PARCC are: questions read in native language, highlighting, magnification, text-to-speech, eliminate choices, flag questions for review, etc.

Q: How can I help my child prepare for the PARCC test?

A: Parents can help their children prepare for PARCC by familiarizing themselves with the state's academic learning standards. The standards are posted online at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/commoncore/>. 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 are available at <http://parcc.pearson.com/practice-tests/>.

Q: Will PARCC replace MCAS as Massachusetts' student testing program?

A: Massachusetts schools are "test driving" PARCC before the state decides whether to fully adopt this new testing program. In spring 2014, more than 1.35 million students in grades 3-11 across 14 states, including Massachusetts, participated in taking a PARCC field test. A field test lets us try out the test questions, make sure the questions measure the subject area content contained in the learning standards, and build the best test we can. This year (year 2 of the "test-drive") approximately 54% of Massachusetts's districts will be administering the PARCC assessment providing insight and valuable feedback to the pilot process.

Q: When will Massachusetts issue their final decision to move to PARCC?

A: The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will decide in the fall of 2015 what the State's accountability assessment will be moving forward. What is clear is that the MCAS as we know it will cease to exist. The Board will either adopt the PARCC or move on to another next generation assessment.