

## ISBE Responses Questions from Downers Grove Assessment Town Hall

1. *We have heard the current form of PARCC will be changed. What is the vision for this new version? Any specific details to share regarding these changes?*

Our collective vision for the future is a suite of aligned Illinois Assessments of Readiness that serve educators, students, and families with a more useful understanding of where students are in their learning journey today and how ready they are for what's in front of them tomorrow.

We will make improvements in ways that maintain comparability across years and continue to meet federal assessment guidelines. We will continue to use, at minimum, an anchor set of PARCC items. Even as our assessments evolve over time, the standards and expectations that they measure remain constant.

Our specific objectives included in our competitive procurement of Illinois Assessments of Readiness include:

- Returning results more quickly, providing educators with meaningful time to adjust instruction;
- Building assessments from the ground up in more languages to increase accessibility and allow all students to demonstrate their true level of mastery;
- Measuring growth in high school, so educators can better see what's working;
- Utilizing test items developed by Illinois educators to more closely align with instruction in Illinois classrooms;
- Reporting results on a common scale across all assessments, so educators can be in deeper dialogue with each other and with families and students;
- Reaching full online assessment to support equity of access to rigorous instruction and return results faster; and
- Transitioning to a computer-adaptive format, meaning the test items get more or less advanced depending on the student's performance as they progress through, so we know not just whether a student meets the standards for their grade level but the upper and lower bounds of their mastery.

The timeline and specific details for all changes depend on the bids and proposals put forth by vendors. There will be no changes to the formats of any assessments for the spring 2018 administration. For more information, please see the letter from State Superintendent Smith on this topic at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/20180209-Letter-Future-of-PARCC.pdf>.

2. *Superintendents, educators, and parents alike have advocated vigorously for state accountability measures for our students and schools that schools address three key areas of need that are missing in the current PARCC:*
  - (1) *Relevant to students: Results need to be both timely and connected to their learning in a meaningful way.*
  - (2) *Useful for teachers and educators: Results need to be timely and evaluate student performance in ways that inform classroom instruction and curriculum.*
  - (3) *Provide opportunities to reduce testing time to preserve both in support of teaching and learning.*

*With understanding, how will you and ISBE ensure that the new iteration of the state test addresses that (above points)?*

Please see the response to question 1, as well as the letter from State Superintendent Smith on his vision for the future of assessments at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/20180209-Letter-Future-of-PARCC.pdf>.

- 3. How will you ensure that the new assessment is more valid and reliable for students, parents, teachers, and schools?*

Please see the response to question 1, as well as the letter from State Superintendent Smith on his vision for the future of assessments at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/20180209-Letter-Future-of-PARCC.pdf>.

- 4. If PARCC is so great and federally recognized and well aligned as a way to measure a student, why have so many states moved away from using it?*

PARCC is presently the only large-scale assessment to “fully meet” all federal accountability requirements, setting the standard for item quality, removing bias in testing, and meeting universal design. A consortium of states formerly administered the exact same PARCC assessment. Many of the states formerly in the consortium continue to use the PARCC items and specifications in their new and revised tests. In addition to the states that officially remain in the consortium, both the Department of Defense Education Activity and the Bureau of Indian Affairs administer the PARCC exam to students in their educational programs.

- 5. If PARCC was such a success, then why are you making so many changes to this exam?*

PARCC is presently the only large-scale assessment to “fully meet” all federal accountability requirements, setting the standard for item quality, removing bias in testing, and meeting universal design. A consortium of states formerly administered the exact same PARCC assessment. This state-to-state collaboration now has a new format that allows states to continue to use these high-quality PARCC test items while customizing the other elements of an assessment to meet local needs. States are giving these customized local assessments new names, but the high-quality PARCC items are the same.

- 6. Are teachers and administrators fully informing children and parents about the proper use and positioning of wireless devices (such as Chromebooks) to avoid exposure to radiation that exceed the FCC guidelines that are actually considered woefully inadequate by many scientists and doctors?*

References to the internet safety education curriculum in state statute (105 ILCS 5/27-13.3) cover areas such as “safe online communications, privacy protection, cyber-bullying, viewing inappropriate material, file sharing, and the importance of open communication with responsible adults.” Statute requires school districts to “incorporate into the school curriculum a component on Internet safety to be taught at least once each school year to students in grades 3 through 12. The school board shall determine the scope and duration of this unit of instruction.” That statute does not specifically cover possible exposure to radiation from technology devices or any other potential

transmitter. We would encourage families that have such concerns to contact district leadership for an open discussion.

7. *Given that test scores overwhelmingly correlate with socioeconomic status, aren't we just punishing the teachers of the neediest students when we "hold them accountable" for test scores? Why must tests be punitive?*

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) allows states to have multiple measures of academic success and school quality. Illinois has identified 10 indicators, including student growth. Several of these indicators are not based on the accountability assessments. Most importantly, the consequence of low performance will now result in the provision of additional supports and resources.

8. *I refuse PARCC because I do not want my children's scores to be used to harm teachers and public schools. If you don't want them to refuse, how else would you suggest that I prevent this harm?*

It is important that we understand how a school is serving all of its students, so that we can provide the necessary supports and resources. ESSA allows states to have multiple measures of academic success and school quality. Illinois has identified 10 indicators, including student growth. The consequence of low performance will now result in the provision of additional supports and resources.

9. *Are scores used to rate or evaluate the "quality of education" for schools in addition to evaluating each student?*

The primary use of assessment data is to understand the quality of education being provided by schools. ISBE does not use accountability data to evaluate the performance of an individual student, nor do we recommend using the accountability assessments to make decisions about promotion or retention. Assessment data can be one data point in understanding and evaluating an individual student's performance and need, but should never be the only -- or even the most important -- information being considered.

10. *What is the value of the data gathered at the state and national levels?*

State-level assessment data is useful for understanding what drives student achievement and helping us identify areas that need support. Data is used to identify schools and districts that are eligible for certain grants and to target professional development. National data is used much the same way.

11. *Are a child's specific needs addressed after the scores are known?*

The primary use of accountability assessment data is to understand the quality of education provided by schools. ISBE does not use accountability data to evaluate the performance of an individual student, nor do we recommend using the accountability assessments to make decisions about promotion or retention. Assessment data can be one data point in understanding and

evaluating an individual student's performance and need, but should never be the only -- or even the most important -- information being considered.

*12. Where is the money coming from to upgrade our schools?*

Illinois' new Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula directs more money to our most under-resourced districts. School districts statewide are receiving a total of approximately \$395 million in new funding in fiscal year 2018 through the EBF formula. Districts can use that additional funding to meet their local needs.

We are continuing to advocate for appropriations from the General Assembly specifically for school districts that do not have sufficient internet bandwidth.

Additionally, communities may levy a local .05 percent Fire Prevention and Safety Tax or issue fire prevention bonds to repair or maintain school facilities through the Health and Life Safety program.

*13. How are assessments used to evaluate teachers and schools? How are test results used in promotions, demotions, and school closings?*

ISBE does not have authority over local personnel decisions or school closings. This question should be directed to the local school district for more specific information about how such decisions are made. ISBE does not encourage using the accountability assessments to make decisions about promotion or retention.

With regard to how assessments are used to evaluate teachers (per 23 Ill Admin. Code 50.110), the performance evaluation for teachers must identify at least two assessments for evaluating each category of teacher. The identification of these assessments is the responsibility of the Performance Evaluation Reform Act Joint Committee, a local body that includes teachers, administrators, and union representatives. The committee must select at least one Type I or Type II assessment and a Type III assessment determined between the teacher and his or her qualified evaluator.

A Type I assessment is a reliable assessment that measures a certain group or subset of students in the same manner with the same potential assessment items, is scored by a non-district entity, and is administered either statewide or beyond Illinois. Examples include the state's accountability assessment, assessments available from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), Scantron Performance Series, Star Reading Enterprise, College Board's SAT, Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate examinations, or ACT's Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS®)

Type II assessments are developed or adopted and approved for use by the school district and intended to be used on a districtwide basis by all teachers in a given grade, course, or subject area. Examples include collaboratively developed common assessments, curriculum tests, and assessments designed by textbook publishers.

Type III assessments are rigorous and aligned to the course's curriculum. The qualified evaluator and teacher determine that the chosen assessment measures student learning in that course. Examples include teacher-created assessments, assessments designed by textbook publishers, student work

samples or portfolios, assessments of student performance, and assessments designed by staff who are subject or grade-level experts that are administered commonly across a given grade or subject.

14. *How do you ensure that assessments only take up 1 percent of time when local districts add lots of additional standardized assessments?*

Districts and schools may administer any additional assessments they believe are needed to equitably support students' learning. ISBE has engaged deeply with educators and educational leaders in defining our collective vision for the future of assessments in Illinois. We believe that returning results more quickly from the state accountability assessment can reduce the need for additional local assessments.

15. *Can you help explain why the discrepancy of testing scores between PARCC and MAP scores/test results? (Both of my kids scored higher on MAP.)*

PARCC measures how well students know the rigorous Illinois Learning Standards through complex tasks that require strategic reasoning and extended investigation to solve problems. PARCC is presently the only large-scale assessment to "fully meet" all federal accountability requirements, setting the standard for item quality, removing bias in testing, and meeting universal design. NWEA's MAP test to date has not met the federal accountability requirements.

16. *Since it is well known that a child's brain has done most of its development by age 6, is the state planning to provide funding for preschool and all-day kindergarten?*

Illinois' new EBF formula directs more money to our most under-resourced districts. Districts can use that additional funding to meet their local needs.

The EBF formula defines an adequate funding target for each school district, based on enrollment numbers and the cost of 34 factors proven to deliver the greatest positive impact to students. The factors include kindergarten. Districts can use these factors to inform local decision-making regarding fiscal and academic priorities, but are not mandated to do so. Additionally, the state administers several state and federally funded programs expanding access to high-quality prekindergarten learning opportunities.

17. *How do you justify subjecting children to PARCC testing when many adults cannot pass the sample test?*

The Illinois Learning Standards are intentionally rigorous to reduce the need for students to take remedial courses once they graduate from high school. We want to ensure that if students fully meet state standards by the time they graduate from high school they are truly ready for college and career. The days when rote memorization and recall could prepare students for college and career are long gone. The jobs of tomorrow require critical thinkers and adaptive learners. Illinois is aiming to meet that demand by supporting all students to meet appropriately rigorous state standards.

18. *What pieces of data about our children are actually given to PARCC and Pearson from ISBE?*

ISBE provides the data necessary to roster a student for the assessment. This includes the Region-County-District-Type-School code of their school, their name, date of birth, and state student ID, and then other information about the tests they should be taking and accommodations and accessibility features they should be provided. These are listed on our website at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/parcc-pre-id.pdf>.

19. *Do all states in the United States participate in federal program or ESSA? Have states opted out of adhering to federal standards?*

All 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have submitted their required ESSA state plans. ESSA gives states flexibility to design their own accountability systems that support schools and meet local needs and priorities, while adhering to common principles of equity and excellence.

Complying with federal accountability requirements also protects the hundreds of millions of dollars Illinois receives from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). The federal Title I grant in FY 2018 alone totaled more than \$619 million. Federal sources supply approximately 10 percent of funding for public education in Illinois and particularly support our most under-resourced schools.

20. *Why are private schools not required to test and meet performance metrics like public schools when they receive taxpayer money through a scholarship program?*

Public Act 100-0465 created the Invest in Kids Scholarship Program. Students who participate in the program will be required to take the same state assessments required of public school students beginning with the 2019-20 school year.

21. *What does ISBE use to ensure that PARCC is valid and reliable? Does Pearson provide technical reports that demonstrate validity and reliability?*

There are three mechanisms that ISBE uses to ensure that its assessment are valid and reliable. The first is known as a Technical Advisory Committee, which is a panel of national assessment experts who study issues of validity and reliability in large-scale assessments. This group reviews the technical reports produced each year on the assessment and also weighs in on any decisions that impact the design, scoring, or reporting of the assessment. ISBE also has staff who co-chair both the content working groups and the Research, Analysis, and Psychometrics Committee, which reviews and guides the work. Finally, all assessments must go through a federal peer review process, which also evaluates whether or not an assessment is sufficiently valid and reliable.

22. *Is the PARCC test developmentally appropriate for children with disabilities?*

The PARCC assessment was developed to assess students on grade level content at either the 75 percent or the 90 percent threshold of instruction. Students with a disability should be instructed with grade level content that utilizes differentiation techniques or universal design for learning. Furthermore, students who have a disability should be given time to access the practice assessments to become more familiarized with the assessment. Teachers can also incorporate some of the question styles into their daily instruction to ensure that generalization of the types of questions being asked on a PARCC assessment is being utilized in their classroom assessments. More exposure to practice items and grade level standards will help to ensure that students with a disability can still access and complete grade level assessments. There are many resources available to teachers to help them align their curriculum more to the grade level standards:

*ISBE Academics webpage:*

<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Academics.aspx>

*ELA Shift Kits:*

<https://education.illinoisstate.edu/casei/ela/>

*Math Shift Kits:*

<https://education.illinoisstate.edu/casei/math/>

*Assist School Leaders with Standards and Assessments*

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/parcc-readiness-doc-school-leaders.pdf>

*3-12 EQulP tools for curriculum alignment*

<http://www.ilclassroomsinaction.org/curriculum-alignment.html>

23. *Have any states been penalized for not meeting the 95 percent requirement? What are the potential consequences?*

Complying with federal accountability requirements protects the hundreds of millions of dollars Illinois receives from ED. The federal Title I grant in FY 2018 alone totaled more than \$619 million. Federal sources supply approximately 10 percent of funding for public education in Illinois and particularly support our most under-resourced schools. Various states have faced sanctions, including corrective actions, additional reporting requirements, and conditions on the receipt of these funds for failure to test all students as required by law.

24. *What if informed parents opt their high-performing students out of PARCC exam? Why should this district be punished?*

The statewide participation rate increased from 96 percent in 2015 to 98 percent in 2016 and held steady at 98 percent in 2016. Full participation supports equity and transparency, protects critical funding for the most under-resourced students, and ensures a proficiency rate that truly reflects the capacities of the school.

ESSA directly incorporates the 95 percent participation threshold into the calculation of proficiency on the assessment. The denominator for calculating proficiency for the purposes of accountability is the higher of 95 percent OR the school's actual participation rate. A larger denominator with the same numerator will result in a lower proficiency rate.

To illustrate the proficiency calculation, consider two schools:

- School A has 100 students, of which 97 participated in the state assessment, and 40 were designated as proficient or higher. School A's proficiency rate would be 41.2 percent, the result of dividing 40 proficient students by 97 participants.
- School B has 100 students, of which only 50 participated in the state assessment, and 21 were designated as proficient and higher. School B will have two proficiency rates. The first would be 42.0 percent, the result of dividing 21 proficient students by 50 participants. The second, which would be used for accountability and measuring interim progress, would be 22.1 percent, the result of dividing 21 proficient students by the minimum participation threshold of 95.

25. *Does "computer-adaptive" mean that the same test is not given to the same child? Isn't that a federal requirement (for comparability)?*

"Computer-adaptive" means the test items get more or less advanced depending on the student's performance as they progress through, so we know not just whether a student meets the standards for their grade level but the upper and lower bounds of their mastery. State accountability assessments that are computer adaptive must have a substantial number of items in common for all students to ensure comparability. We will make improvements to the Illinois Assessments of Readiness in ways that maintain comparability across years and continue to meet federal assessment guidelines.

26. *Why are kids not allowed to opt out of PARCC as they can opt out of sex education and vaccines?*

Assessment is a regular part of the instructional program. Students may not opt out of federally required accountability assessments, just as they may not opt out of federally required vaccines. Parents can file a religious objection to vaccines and exemptions can be made if a medical contraindication for the vaccine would harm a particular child, but these are the only factors that can be used to waive the requirement. As we have seen, families that refuse these supports and protections do so at significant risk to their children and their school communities. Sex education is not federally required and therefore is governed by different state-by-state statutes.

27. *How many school districts in the State of Illinois have a less than 95 percent student participation rate in the PARCC assessment?*

In 2017, 53 districts with a total of 317 schools did not meet the 95 percent participation rate for the PARCC assessment. ISBE is working with these schools and districts to communicate with and engage families and improve understandings of the importance and value of education.

28. *What value does PARCC testing provide that isn't addressed by the Cognitive Abilities Test and other standardized tests such as the ITBS that District 203 already administers? Please provide quantitative or tangible examples in your responses rather than a purely conceptual or speculative answer.*

The Illinois Assessments of Readiness allow schools, districts, and the state to compare student performance against a common standard. The results allow the state to identify trends for schools, districts, and different groups of students and direct supports where there is the highest need. Having common standards and a common assessment facilitates peer-to-peer learning across classrooms, schools, and districts.

Additionally, PARCC is presently the only large-scale assessment to “fully meet” all federal accountability requirements, setting the standard for item quality, removing bias in testing, and meeting universal design. Complying with federal accountability requirements protects the hundreds of millions of dollars Illinois receives from ED. The federal Title I grant in FY 2018 alone totaled more than \$619 million. Federal sources supply approximately 10 percent of funding for public education in Illinois.