

PARCC Fact Sheet

What is it?

- PARCC is a consortium of states that have contracted with test-makers Pearson and ETS for computer-based tests intended to replace MCAS and the other states' tests.
- PARCC tests are supposed to reflect the new "Common Core" standards.
- PARCC will test students in grades 3 through 11 in English Language Arts and Math.
- There will be two sets of tests for each subject, one with long-form answers in March and one with short answers near the end of the school year. There will also be tests of listening and speaking skills.
- In comparison, MCAS has one set of tests per subject and doesn't test in grades 9 or 11.

Why?

- Massachusetts joined PARCC as part of a package deal to get federal "Race To The Top" money.
- The package also included adopting the "Common Core" and using student test scores to rate teachers.
- However, the final decision — switch to PARCC or stick with MCAS — is still up to state policymakers. MCAS has been revised to reflect the new standards.

When?

- The PARCC test items are being field-tested on 15 percent of Massachusetts students in 2/3 of the state's schools during two periods this spring, March-April and May-June.
- Next school year (2013-14), each school district will decide whether to give PARCC or MCAS, except that high school sophomores will continue taking MCAS.
- In the fall of 2015, the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will decide whether to adopt PARCC or keep MCAS. Even if they adopt PARCC, high school students will still take the 10th grade MCAS at least that school year.

How?

- PARCC will be given entirely on computers. Districts will have to improve their computer systems to make that possible. There may be outside money to help. For a while, there will also be a paper-and-pencil version for districts that can't gear up fast enough.
- Another difference between PARCC and MCAS: On MCAS, students can take as much time as they need. PARCC tests will have time limits, although some students with special education plans will be allowed to take longer.

More info?

- PARCC practice tests: www.parcconline.org/computer-based-samples
- PARCC website: parcconline.org
- Or email Citizens for Public Schools: lisa.guisbond@gmail.com

Citizens for Public Schools

