



# Illinois State Board of Education

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## FAQs

### PARCC ASSESSMENT

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**Q: What is the testing time for the PARCC assessment?**

**A:** The PARCC assessment will require slightly more testing time than the ISAT and PSAE. However, testing will be divided into two separate administrations in early spring (March) and the end of the school year (May) and incorporate more technology-enhanced questions and a writing component at each grade level. Overall times fluctuate depending on grade level, but the PARCC assessment allots an average of 8-10 hours – extended over several days and two testing windows. Most students finished earlier than the allotted time during field testing last spring. Students are expected to spend approximately 6 ½ to 7 ½ hours on the PARCC exams, depending on grade level, and the PARCC assessment alone will account for less than 1 percent of the school year.

**Q: What are the consequences of PARCC testing this year?**

**A:** This is a baseline year so there are no consequences for schools or students. The numbers will be used as a baseline in order to measure growth by students, schools and districts in the future. The first year of data will also be used to establish cut scores that determine the performance levels at which students can be deemed “college and career ready.” The PARCC assessments are standardized and the performance results of students in Illinois can be compared directly with their peers across the nation.

**Q: How will the PARCC assessment affect the administration of the ACT?**

**A:** ISBE listened to local districts that wanted the state to continue to fund and provide the ACT, so districts now have the choice to administer the ACT Plus Writing and/or the WorkKeys® in addition to a PARCC high school level combination of ELA and math assessments tied to specific courses. All 11th-grade students within a given district will take the ACT Plus Writing on March 3, if the district chose to offer the test. March 4 has been set aside for the ACT WorkKeys® in participating districts. These tests are fully paid for by ISBE. Illinois is among a handful of states that has provided the ACT to all students, free of charge, for the past decade.

**Q. Why can't Illinois delay implementation of the PARCC assessments?**

**A:** In 2010, the Board adopted the new Illinois Learning Standards in ELA and math and districts were free to begin reviewing and implementing the new standards with the 2013-14 school year set as the deadline for full implementation prior to the PARCC assessments.

In December 2014, the U.S. Department of Education recently confirmed our understanding of current laws regarding accountability and that there is no waiver to districts that may want to delay administering the PARCC. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, also known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) – requires states (including Illinois) receiving Title I funds to provide for administration of the state's academic assessment to all designated students. Additionally, the department confirmed that the same assessment must be used for all students, with some limited exceptions such as an

alternate assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The department spelled out expectations for both state and local education agencies in addition to outlining the possible penalties that could be imposed upon each in its letter posted at <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/USED-ESEA-asmt-clarification-1214.pdf>.

**Q. Why can't my child simply take the ACT instead of the PARCC assessment?**

**A:** We understand the utility of other standardized tests such as the ACT. The ACT is developed to adhere to its own college readiness standards, which differ from the K-12 Common Core Learning Standards in use by the other PARCC and Smarter Balanced members. But PARCC is a different test. We believe PARCC is more comprehensive than our prior Illinois assessments, inviting students to think deeply and construct their own solutions to challenging tasks and situations. An assessment that requires students to analyze information – and explain their answers – better reflects classroom lessons and experiences.

**Q: Can the PARCC assessment be used for college acceptance?**

**A:** Institutions of higher education are working toward acceptance of PARCC assessment results as a way to show readiness for college-level work without remediation. PARCC assessments have always been framed as a placement exam and not an entrance exam, allowing colleges and universities to place those students testing at the "college and career ready" level in credit-bearing courses (as opposed to remedial courses).

**Q: Can individual students opt out of the PARCC assessments? Can parents opt their children out of the PARCC assessments?**

**A:** No. Districts can develop a policy for those students who refuse to take assessments on testing days, but federal and state law does not provide for any opt-out provisions. If fewer than 95 percent of students in a district take the assessment, the district will automatically fail to meet their accountability obligations and be at risk of losing federal funding, hurting our schools and ultimately all of our students.

**Q: Will students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs) also take the PARCC assessment and if so, what types of accommodations will the test allow?**

**A:** Students with disabilities will take either the PARCC or the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM-AA) assessment. The DLM-AA, which replaces the Illinois Alternate Assessment, is the test for the students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. IEP teams determine which test will be most appropriate for individual students. The PARCC assessment includes a number of features to assist students with disabilities. A manual listing potential accommodations has been made available [here](#) on the PARCC website. The manual addresses the specific needs of students with disabilities, English learners and English learners with disabilities.

ELs will take the PARCC and DLM-AA assessments using appropriate accommodations. Illinois will also continue to use ACCESS For ELLs®, a standards-based, criterion-referenced English language proficiency test designed to measure ELs' social and academic proficiency in English.

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