

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers

PARCC Communications Tools: Letter to Parents from Commissioner Chester

January 2014

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The best education in the country today is happening in Massachusetts. Our students are reading better and doing math better than a decade ago. Despite these accomplishments, we know that there are gaps in achievement, and not all students are enjoying the same level of success in kindergarten through grade 12 or when they advance to higher education and employment. We have to continue to invest in public education to ensure that the remarkable gains of the past decade are not lost.

That is why in classrooms across the state, we are upgrading curriculum and instruction to prepare all students for success after high school. In 2010, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new academic learning standards in English language arts and mathematics to put all students on the pathway to college and career readiness. To measure progress against those learning standards, we are now developing a new student testing program.

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC, is a multi-state project to develop a next-generation, computer-based testing program aligned to our academic learning standards. PARCC will offer rich, performance-based tasks that will provide you with a better measure of our children's ability to write, think critically, and apply what they know. PARCC will also provide clearer signals to educators and parents about students' readiness for the next grade level and, in high school, for college and careers.

Later this spring, your child may be asked to participate in a "field test" of PARCC. The purpose of a field test is to allow schools and students to experience a new test before it counts. A field test is how we ensure that the test questions are fair, on grade level, and measure the intended skills. This process helps us to make sure the test is as good as it can be.

If selected to participate in a PARCC test this year, your child will not receive a score or grade based on her or his performance. Over the next two years, Massachusetts is piloting PARCC to see how well it measures the state's learning standards and whether it should replace MCAS, our current testing program.

Thank you for your continued involvement in and support of your child's education. If you wish to learn more about PARCC, please visit <http://www.doe.mass.edu/parcc/>, send an email to parcc@doe.mass.edu, or, as always, ask your child's principal.

Sincerely,

Mitchell D. Chester
Massachusetts Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education