

10 Things Parents Should Know About PARCC

- 1. Massachusetts is the nation's top performing state, but we cannot stand still and allow key educational and technological innovations to pass by us.**

Massachusetts students are performing at high levels – second-to-none among the 50 states and on par with some of the highest performing nations in the world. Despite this, not all students are enjoying the same level of success. To remain competitive globally, we cannot stand still. We need to continue to invest in public education, upgrade our curriculum and instruction to reflect the demands of the 21st century, and put all students on a pathway to college and career readiness.

- 2. Massachusetts is currently developing a new, high quality, 21st century student testing program called PARCC.**

Massachusetts is one of 18 states working collaboratively to develop PARCC, which stands for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers. PARCC is a key component of the state's commitment to prepare all students for success after high school. The state will administer PARCC tests to students in grades 3 through 11 in two subjects, English language arts and mathematics.

- 3. 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 than previous standards and are tied to the skills and knowledge that colleges and employers expect of our high school graduates. The best preparation for PARCC is good classroom instruction that focuses on the standards that students receive every day.

- 4. Over the next two years, Massachusetts schools will "test drive" 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, will take 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. In Massachusetts, we will randomly select roughly 15 percent of students in grades 3-11 to take a PARCC test this spring and try out the test questions.

- 5. Higher education is a key partner in the development of the new PARCC tests.**

Educators from K-12 and higher education are playing integral roles in the development of the new PARCC tests. PARCC will provide clearer signals about students' readiness for the next grade level and, in high school, readiness for college and careers. Each of Massachusetts' 29 public two-year and four-year colleges and universities have committed to use student performance on the PARCC tests as an indicator of students' readiness for entry-level, credit-bearing college courses.

- 6. 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.
- 7. Students selected to take a PARCC test this spring are most likely to continue participating in MCAS testing as well.**
Students taking a PARCC field test this year will not receive a score or grade based on their performance. Most schools will continue to administer MCAS tests to students in grades selected for PARCC to preserve the reporting of valuable information on student performance to parents. In addition, all Massachusetts high school students, at least through the class of 2018, are required to take and pass the high school MCAS tests in three subjects to satisfy the state graduation requirement and earn a high school diploma.
- 8. We are striving to make PARCC tests accessible to all students.**
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. We are designing a testing program that is inclusive of all students and building many accessibility features that we consider to be accommodations on MCAS into the computer-based PARCC test.
- 9. Parents can help children prepare for the PARCC test.**
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 will be made available later this spring.
- 10. In future years, PARCC could replace MCAS as the state's student testing program.**
Based on the two-year "test drive" of PARCC, the state commissioner of elementary and secondary education will evaluate the strengths of PARCC and the program's ability to measure the state's new academic learning standards in English language arts. The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will vote whether to fully adopt PARCC as the state's new testing program in fall 2015.

If you have questions about PARCC, please visit <http://www.doe.mass.edu/parcc>, send an email to parcc@doe.mass.edu, or, as always, ask your principal.