

TO: P-12 Education Committee
FROM: John B. King, Jr.
SUBJECT: PARCC Assessment Update
DATE: July 11, 2011
AUTHORIZATION(S):

John B. King, Jr.
SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

Review of assessment design changes for PARCC Assessment.

Reason(s) for Consideration

Review of Policy.

Proposed Handling

This item will come before the P-12 Education Committee for discussion at the July 2011 meeting.

Background Information

In January 2010, the Regents endorsed the participation of New York State in the 25-state Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). PARCC is a consortium of states that worked together on a joint proposal to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) to seek Race to the Top funding for the development of a K-12 assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics.

In June 2010, PARCC submitted a \$170 million proposal to USDE, and in September 2010, PARCC was awarded these funds, as well as a Supplemental Grant for \$15.8 million (see section on Governing Board for more information on the

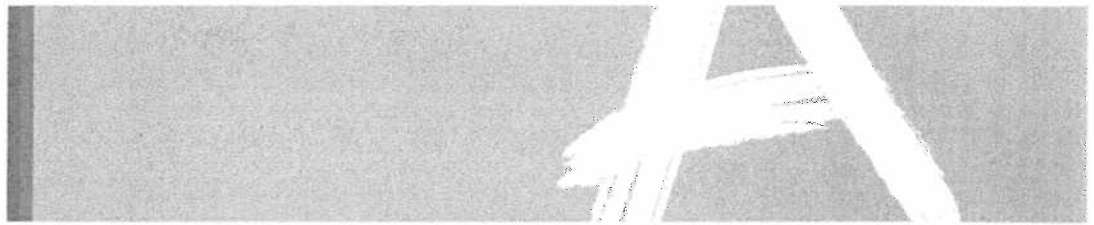
Supplemental award). Achieve, Inc. is the managing partner for PARCC; the state of Florida is the fiscal agent; and New York serves as one of 13 governing states.

The PARCC assessment system is scheduled to be operational in 2014-15.

Update on PARCC Assessment Design

In April, the PARCC Governing Board, comprised of the Chief State School Officers of the 15 PARCC governing states, asked for recommendations for adjustments to the assessment design that would address concerns regarding costs and unintentional negative impacts on instruction resulting from the four separate testing administrations of the original design (three through-course and one end-of-year testing administrations). At the June 24 Governing Board meeting, the Board approved allowing the first two components of the PARCC assessment to be optional. The approved design still requires two separate test administrations for the final summative score: performance-based assessment tasks to be administered towards the end of the school year; and a separate component of innovative, machine-scored tasks to be administered at the end of the school year. The Governing Board is confident that this design meets the original purposes of the consortia while being responsive to concerns about cost and implementation.

See Appendix A, Mitchell Chester letter, for a more detailed description of the design changes.



June 29, 2011

PARCC Governing States

Arizona
Arkansas
District of Columbia
Florida
Georgia
Illinois
Indiana
Louisiana
Maryland
Massachusetts
New Jersey
New York
Oklahoma
Rhode Island
Tennessee

Dear PARCC State Chiefs:

I am writing to update you on the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) project. The PARCC Governing Board met on Friday, June 24th for its second quarterly meeting of the year. As you can see from the attached meeting agenda, the Board took up several important issues, including proposed by-laws to govern the organization of the consortium and its decision making structure, possible approaches for structuring PARCC's procurement of contractors for the PARCC assessments and technology delivery system, and refinements to strengthen the PARCC assessment design.

Among these topics, I'd particularly like to share with you the results of the Board's discussion about the PARCC assessment design. At its April 2011 meeting the PARCC Governing Board asked for recommendations for revisions to the PARCC design that would address a number of recurring concerns:

- The cost of assessments in very tight fiscal environments for the foreseeable future;
- The potential that the required three summative through-course assessments could unintentionally dictate the scope and sequence of the curriculum and limit curricular flexibility for local school districts; and
- The potential that the required three summative through-course assessments would disrupt the instructional program on, and in preparation for, testing days.

PARCC Participating States

Alabama
Colorado
Delaware
Kentucky
Mississippi
North Dakota
Ohio
Pennsylvania
South Carolina

The recommendations presented to the Board at its June 24th meeting were developed by the lead staff in the Governing States based on feedback and input about the assessment design received from many PARCC states over the past several months. In particular, the recommendations were intended to strengthen PARCC's original design in a way that meets the consortium's original goals while responding to concerns about the implementation of PARCC's original proposed design. The proposed revised design preserves the components of the original design while reducing the number that "count" for summative purposes.

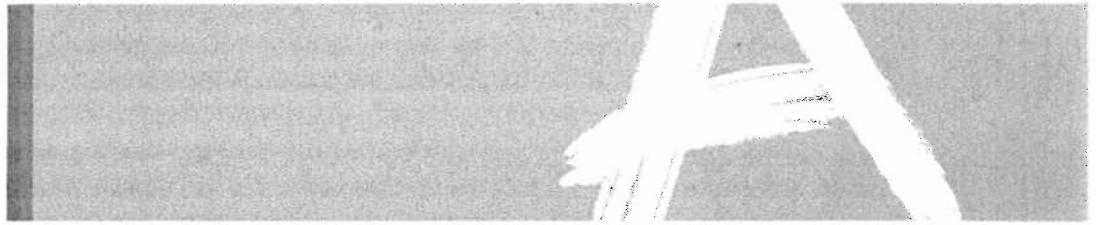
The Governing Board approved the recommended refinements to the design on June 24th with the understanding that, consistent with the terms of PARCC's cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education (ED), the revisions must be approved by ED officials. Discussions toward that end have already begun. The PARCC Governing Board and lead staff in the Governing States will also continue to refine the design, and PARCC will proceed to develop and issue procurements for the development of the assessment system. As a result of both



sets of conversations, the design may continue to evolve. None of the proposed revisions will result in a delay in the development of the PARCC assessments.

The refinements, while true to the original design goals – including signaling the kinds of instructional priorities and changes necessary to ensure all students graduate from high school college- and career-ready – were viewed by the Governing Board as an improvement over PARCC’s initial proposed design. The refinements approved by the Governing Board include:

- **Component 1 (Optional):** *Early Assessments* designed to provide teachers with information that can serve as an early indicator of student status relative to the CCSS. It may be possible to design this component to also include information about whether students who did not achieve proficiency in their previous grade have made progress towards or have attained proficiency on those standards in their current year.
- **Component 2 (Optional):** *Mid-Year Assessments* designed to be performance-based assessments that will provide instructionally useful feedback to teachers and students and help prepare them for the innovative assessment tasks they will see on the performance-based Component 3. These will be consistent with the original PARCC design but will not count towards a student’s summative score initially. Over time, states may consider including results of the mid-year assessments in summative scores. PARCC will also provide teachers with an online score training tool so they can score their students’ assessments and use the results to evaluate and improve their understanding of performance expectations in CCSS.
- **Component 3 (Required, counts toward summative score):** *Rich Performance-Based Assessments* in grades 3-8 and high school administered as close to the end of year as possible. Priorities in ELA/literacy will include focusing on writing effectively when analyzing text; in mathematics, priorities will include focusing on application of concepts, skills and understandings. This assessment will be comprised primarily of performance tasks and will be scored in time to be incorporated into the end-of-year summative score for each student.
- **Component 4 (Required, counts toward summative score):**
 - *Grades 3-8 end-of-year assessments* comprised of innovative, computer-based machine-scorable items focusing on reading and comprehending complex texts in ELA/literacy, and the full range of standards in mathematics.
 - *High School:*
 - *End-of-course assessments in high school mathematics*, which will be comprised of innovative, computer-based machine-scorable items. States will have the option of selecting a traditional mathematics course sequence or an integrated mathematics sequence; each complete sequence will measure full range of high school mathematics standards. There has been some interest in creating a modularized version of the EOC mathematics exams, to address interest in greater customization of sequencing and pacing. Consideration of this will continue as the development of the procurements continues.



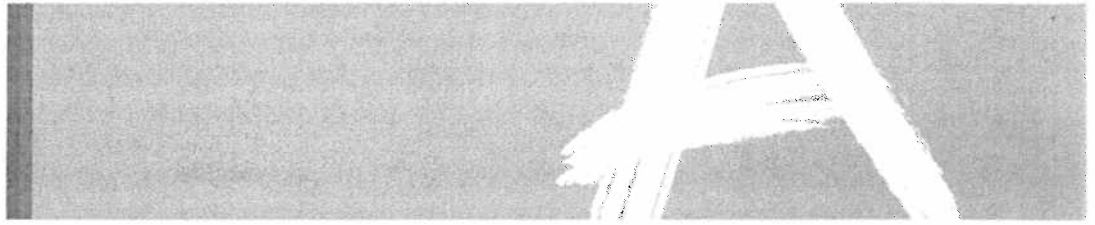
- *End-of-year assessment in high school literacy*, comprised of innovative, computer-based machine scorable items assessing literacy skills in ELA, science, social studies and technical subjects.
- **Component 5: Required Assessment of Listening/Speaking:** This was initially conceived of as a required, non-summative through-course assessment, delivered after the third through-course assessment in ELA/literacy. In the original design, students were to make a presentation based on their work for the third through-course assessment, which would be scored using a common rubric. To increase its feasibility and decrease the impact on classrooms, PARCC is considering an alternative approach that would permit the assessment to be administered at any time of the year.

The two summative assessments components combined will measure the full range of the CCSS at each grade level and the full range of student achievement, including the performance of high- and low-performing students. There will be nearly twice as many score points in the PARCC summative tests than are typically found in current state tests. This will provide the room to measure the low and high tails of performance well enough to measure growth. While we do not believe it will be necessary, if additional precision at the tails is needed, the end-of-year test will either be lengthened or customized for very high- and low-performing students using a “staged” or “block” adaptive approach.

The design is intended to ensure that results will be reported in categories consistent with the CCSS. For example, in ELA/literacy, separate scores will be reported for reading (comprehending complex texts) and writing (to sources), as well as an overall ELA/literacy score indicating on track to college and career readiness. In mathematics there will be a separate score for a “highlighted domain” that reflects the CCSS’s emphasis at each grade level (e.g., fractions in grade 4, ratios and proportional relationships at grade 6), as well as an overall math score indicating on track to college readiness.

The Governing Board approved these adjustments to PARCC’s design because the Board believes that they are an improvement on PARCC’s original design and are consistent with the PARCC states’ goals of:

- Ensuring cost- effectiveness, feasibility and sustainability over time for states, districts and schools
- Assessing the full range of the CCSS, including standards that are difficult to measure—and currently not measured on most state assessments
- Measuring the full range of achievement for students, including for high- and low-performing students
- Measuring student growth over the full academic year or course
- Incorporating innovative approaches throughout the system
- Determining whether individual students are college- and career-ready, or “on track”
- Providing data during the academic year to inform instruction, interventions and professional development activities
- Being accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners



- Reporting comparable results across PARCC states and allowing for comparisons to other national and international benchmarks

We will be reaching out to your staff shortly to discuss these refinements further and to engage them in the consortium's next steps as we move towards the procurement of contractors to develop the PARCC assessments and technology delivery system. I think you'll find that the refined assessment design presents PARCC states with a stronger and more coherent set of assessment components that are sustainable over time and that signal the kinds of instruction needed for all of our students to make progress towards college and career readiness by the end of high school. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or wish to discuss the adjustments to the PARCC design.

Sincerely,

Mitchell Chester
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Massachusetts
Chair, PARCC Governing Board