PARCC ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATION GUIDANCE VERSION 1.0
MARCH 2013

I. Purpose of this Guidance

Since work began on PARCC in September 2010, great strides have been made by the PARCC states in developing next generation assessments based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Among other accomplishments, the design of both the assessments and the technology infrastructure needed to deliver them has been finalized, test development is well underway, and item prototypes have been released. PARCC has also made progress in drafting and releasing test administration policies for public comment – including draft policies for students with disabilities who need accommodations.

As the work continues, PARCC is committed to keeping **stakeholders** and policy makers informed. To that end, this guidance is the first in a series of publications that PARCC intends to release over the coming months; all publications will be designed specifically to assist state and local policy makers prepare to administer PARCC assessments in 2014-2015.

The March 2013 guidance includes information about:

1) the design of PARCC's English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics assessments;
2) the number of testing sessions and approximate testing time;
3) the number of days over which schools may administer the assessments (testing window);
4) "rule of thumb" guidance for the number of computer devices needed to administer the assessments; and
5) a new tool designed to assist local policy makers and educators build the technology capacity they need to administer PARCC's computer-based assessments in 2014-15.

The information provided here will continue to be refined after PARCC reviews results of several research studies currently underway and a large-scale field test scheduled for Spring 2014. That said, major changes are not anticipated. Local educators can be confident that this information can be used to (1) develop general scheduling plans for the assessments in 2014-2015; and (2) determine whether they may need to acquire additional devices and/or bandwidth to administer computer-based forms of the assessments in an efficient and timely fashion.

II. Overview of the PARCC Assessment Design

The PARCC summative assessments in English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy and Mathematics will include a rich set of performance-based tasks that address a long standing concern among educators about large scale student assessments – they have been unable to capture some of the most important skills that we strive to develop in students. The PARCC assessments are being carefully crafted to accomplish this important goal. They will enable teachers, schools, students and their parents to gain important insights into how well critical knowledge, skills and abilities essential for young people to thrive in college and careers are being mastered.
PARCC assessments in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics will be administered in grades 3-11 beginning in the 2014-2015 school year. Tests at each grade level will be based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for that grade level. In high school, the mathematics tests will be based on CCSS designated for two course sequences – a traditional sequence including Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II; and an

integrated sequence including Mathematics 1, 2, and 3. For more information regarding high school mathematics course standards, readers should refer to the Mathematics Model Content Frameworks at http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-model-content-frameworks.

In order to promote improvements in curriculum and instruction and support various forms of accountability, the PARCC assessments are designed to measure the full range of the CCSS and full continuum of student abilities, including the performance of high and low performing students. To effectively carry out the PARCC design, assessments in both content areas will be administered in two components:

- **A performance-based assessment (PBA)** component**,** administered after approximately 75% of the school year, and
- **An end of year assessment (EOY)** component**,** administered after approximately 90% of the school year.

PARCC ELA/Literacy Assessments

The ELA/Literacy PBAs at each grade level will include three tasks: a research simulation, a literary analysis, and a narrative task. For each task, students will be asked to read one or more texts, answer several short comprehension and vocabulary questions, and write an essay that requires them to draw evidence from the text(s). The ELA/Literacy EOYs at each grade level will include 4-5 texts, both literary and informational (including social science/historical, scientific, and technical texts at grades 6-11). A number of short-answer comprehension and vocabulary questions will also be associated with each text.

Results of the ELA/Literacy assessments will be reported in three major categories: (1) ELA/Literacy; (2) reading and comprehending a range of sufficiently complex texts independently (reading) and (3) writing effectively when using and/or analyzing sources (writing). ELA/Literacy results will be based on a composite of students' reading and writing scores.

Students will receive both a scale score and performance level scores for ELA/Literacy, and scale scores for the reading and writing categories. Performance level scores will be reported according to five levels. More information about the PARCC's performance levels can be found by visiting http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-assessment-policies.

PARCC Mathematics Assessments

The mathematics PBAs at each grade level will include both short- and extended-response questions focused on conceptual knowledge and skills, and the mathematical practices of reasoning and modeling. The mathematics EOY assessments will be comprised primarily of short-answer questions focused on conceptual knowledge, skills, and understandings.

Overall results of the mathematics assessments will be reported in terms of scale and performance level scores.

A full listing of the reporting categories for both ELA/Literacy and mathematics assessments will be released along with updated testing blueprints later this spring. The blueprints will provide greater detail about the nature of each content area assessment in terms of the specific CCSS that are addressed in each component (PBA, EOY), as well as the number, types, and value of the items that will appear on each component.

Readers can find more information about PARCC item and task prototypes and the purposes, design, and content of the assessments by visiting: http://www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes.

III. Number and Length of Testing Sessions

The PARCC PBA and EOY assessments will be administered in a total of nine sessions. At each grade level the PBA component will require **five sessions** – three sessions for ELA/Literacy and two sessions for mathematics. The EOY component at each grade level will require **four sessions** – two sessions for ELA/Literacy and two sessions for mathematics.

Appendix A provides a breakdown of the sessions by grade level, including an estimate of the amount of time the typical student will need to complete each session, which is presented or shown in the table as the "estimated time on task." These estimates may be refined based on the results of research and field tests conducted over the next 18 months.

While it is anticipated that most students will complete the test sessions within these estimated times, all participating students will have a set amount of additional time for each session to provide them with ample time to demonstrate their knowledge. The additional time will reduce the need to provide increased time as an accommodation, although time beyond the set additional time will be allowed for students with disabilities who have an unlimited/untimed time accommodation documented in their Individualized Education Plan. Guidance issued later this year will provide more information on scheduling testing sessions and on accommodation policies for students with disabilities and English learners.

IV. Number of Test Administration Days (Testing Window)

Preparing for PARCC's computer-based tests will necessitate changes from how schools have planned for paper-based assessments in the past. The vision for computer-based assessments is that they will allow for more flexible scheduling than current paper-based tests and become more integrated into instruction. The testing window described below is designed to provide flexibility for schools that are in the process of building the capacity to administer tests via computer.

Schools will have a maximum of 20 school days to administer the Performance Based Assessment (PBA) component and a maximum of 20 school days to administer the End of Year Assessment component (EOY). It is important to note, however, that while the testing windows will span 20 days for each component, schools will be able to complete administration of the tests in fewer days, if they have sufficient capacity to administer assessments to large numbers of students simultaneously.

The 20 day windows are provided primarily to provide ample opportunity to administer the assessments via computer in schools with a limited number of devices and limited bandwidth. While the testing window in some schools may span as many as 20 days, individual students will participate in testing sessions for both the PBA and EOY components over five to nine days.

One of the primary reasons state leaders joined PARCC is so they could compare results across states, districts, schools, and various student populations. Accordingly, it is important that all students in PARCC states have had an opportunity to learn the material covered by the assessments prior to being tested. To that end, there will be several testing windows, each with a different start and end date to accommodate districts with different school opening and closing dates. At a later date, each state in PARCC will provide additional guidance to their districts regarding the specific testing windows in which they may participate.

V. Guidance on Number of Devices for Computer-Based Test Administration

PARCC encourages schools and districts to consider their computer device needs for assessment as only one factor in an overall strategy for educational technology that supports high-quality student instruction, teacher professional development, and school community communications, as well as next generation assessment. With this in mind, one of the most important determining factors in a school's ability to administer PARCC's computer-based assessments in an efficient and timely fashion is the number of computer devices, including desktops, laptops, and tablets that meet or exceed the PARCC minimum technology specifications and are actively available for testing purposes. Readers can view the specifications at: http://www.parcconline.org/technology.

The number of devices a school needs for assessment is largely dependent on:

1) the number of students enrolled at each tested grade level;
2) the number of students that can be tested simultaneously given the way in which available devices are deployed (e.g., in labs, in classroom, on carts, etc.); and
3) the available bandwidth capacity.

To assist schools in planning for an adequate number of devices for the PARCC assessments in 2014-2015, some "rule of thumb" guidance is provided in Table 1 below.

Guidance in the table is divided between schools that will be testing three grade levels (e.g., K-5, 6-8, 9-12 schools), and those that will be testing six grades (e.g., K-8 schools). The guidance is then divided further between the **minimum number of devices** that a school will need to administer the assessments within 20 and the **recommended number of devices,** which is the number needed to administer the assessments in fewer than 20 days.

These are general guidelines and states and districts may wish to recommend *lower* student to device ratios that will ensure that schools can continue with computer-based instruction at the same time as they are conducting computer-based assessments.

Table 1. "Rule of Thumb" Guidance on Number of Devices Needed to Administer Computer-Based Tests

School type	Minimum number of devices	Recommended number of devices
For a school with three tested grades (K-5, 6-8, 9-12)	One device for every two students in the largest tested grade	One device per student for the largest tested grade
For a school with six tested grades (K-8)	One device per student for the largest tested grade	One device per student for the two largest tested grades

Note on Paper and Pencil Test Administration

The expectation is that all students will take the PARCC assessments on a computer. Among many other advantages, computer-based testing will be engaging for students, result in lower costs and ultimately allow for faster scoring and reporting of results. The PARCC assessments will be available in paper and pencil format for students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Plans require it, and for schools that have gained approval for paper and pencil-based testing from their State Educational Agency (SEA).

VI. Assessment Administration Capacity Planning Tool

The *PARCC Assessment Administration Capacity Planning Tool* is designed to assist local educators in determining roughly how many days they will need to administer the assessments given their current device/bandwidth capacity, and how they might accommodate a reduced number of days by increasing the number of devices and/or amount of bandwidth.

The *Assessment Administration Capacity Planning Tool* is a spreadsheet that will allow schools to evaluate the extent to which their current computer inventory and bandwidth is sufficient to administer PARCC's computer-based assessments, as well as model what they could do with increased capacity. The *Assessment Administration Capacity Planning Tool* and accompanying users' guide are posted at http://parcconline.org/assessment-administration-guidance.

In order to make use of the Tool, school/district personnel will need to enter the following school-level information:

1) the number of students in each tested grade;
2) the number of computers available for testing that meet PARCC's minimum technology specifications;*
3) bandwidth availability;
4) estimates for instructional and office uses of bandwidth that will be taking place during assessment sessions; and
5) the number of assessment administration days to use as a target for the calculated models.

** Data derived from the Technology Readiness Tool (http://assess4ed.net/) can be used to determine the number of devices in a school's inventory that meet minimum technology specifications.*

PARCC is assuming that schools can administer at least two testing sessions per day each day of the testing window (e.g., a morning and afternoon session). As such, the Tool provides schools with two planning models: a Device Planning Model, and an Administration Days Planning Model.

Device Capacity Model: Shows the number of administration days the school will need to administer the assessments based on the school's current student to device ratio. This model also shows the number of days of administration that would be required if the school could build capacity to meet the following student to device ratios:

- If the school had two students per device at the largest grade level;
- If the school had one student per device at the largest grade level; and
- If the school had per device for each tested student in the school.

Assessment Administration Model:

- Shows the number of devices and bandwidth a school would need to administer the assessments in 5, 10, 15 or 20 administration days.

In addition to models that take into account a school's current number of students, devices and bandwidth, the *Assessment Administration Capacity Planning Tool* allows schools to conduct "what if" modeling by entering different numbers of students, devices and/or bandwidth. For example, a school could explore the impact on

the number of days it would take to administer the assessments if they added 25 additional computers to the number originally entered into the Tool.

Use of the *Assessment Administration Capacity Planning Tool* is voluntary and provides estimates only. The Tool should **not** be used as a single source of readiness information and its resulting calculations should always be examined in the unique contexts of individual schools.

The assumption that schools can only administer two sessions per day is a conservative assumption. In actuality schools may be able to administer three or more sessions per day. However, by constraining this factor at this time, the Planning Tool is less likely to overestimate a school's capacity to administer the PARCC assessment components in 20 or fewer days. The Tool will be updated later this year as more precise information is known about testing time, the demand the assessments will place on bandwidth, and the number of different test sessions PARCC can deliver on any given day.

VII. Looking Ahead

In the coming months, PARCC will issue additional guidance for educators to assist with planning for the administration of the PARCC assessments in the 2014-2015 school year. Readers are also encouraged to also look for updates at www.parcconline.org and to sign up for the PARCC newsletter to receive updates directly. Local educators with questions or comments about this guidance should contact their state education agency's office of student assessment or its equivalent. Other readers should address questions to http://parcconline/org/contact.

Appendix A: Estimated Time on Task by Grade and Session

Note: estimated time on task refers to an estimate of the amount of time the typical student will need to complete each session. While it is anticipated that most students will complete the test sessions within these estimated times, all participating students will have a set amount of additional time for each session to provide them with ample time to demonstrate their knowledge.

		Performance-Based Component						End-of-Year Component					Summative Total
		ELA/Literacy			Math		Total	ELA/Literacy		Math		Total	
Grade		**Literary Analysis**	**Research**	**Narrative**	**Session 1**	**Session 2**		**Session 1**	**Session 2**	**Session 1**	**Session 2**		
3	Estimated Time on Task (minutes)	50	60	40	50	50	**250**	60	60	55	55	**230**	8 hours

		Performance-Based Component						End-of-Year Component					Summative Total
		ELA/Literacy			Math		Total	ELA/Literacy		Math		Total	
Grades		**Literary Analysis**	**Research**	**Narrative**	**Session 1**	**Session 2**		**Session 1**	**Session 2**	**Session 1**	**Session 2**		
4-5	Estimated Time on Task (minutes)	80	80	50	50	50	**310**	70	70	55	55	**250**	9 hours, 20 minutes

		Performance-Based Component						End-of-Year Component					Summative Total
		ELA/Literacy			Math		Total	ELA/Literacy		Math		Total	
Grades		**Literary Analysis**	**Research**	**Narrative**	**Session 1**	**Session 2**		**Session 1**	**Session 2**	**Session 1**	**Session 2**		
6-8	Estimated Time on Task (minutes)	80	85	50	50	50	**315**	70	70	55	55	**250**	9 hours, 25 minutes

Grades		Performance-Based Component						End-of-Year Component					Summative Total
		ELA/Literacy			Math		Total	ELA/Literacy		Math		Total	
		Literary Analysis	Research	Narrative	Session 1	Session 2		Session 1	Session 2	Session 1	Session 2		
9 -10 Alg I/ Math I Geo/ Math II	Estimated Time on Task (minutes)	80	85	50	50	50	**315**	70	70	65	65	**270**	9 hours, 45 minutes

Grade		Performance-Based Component						End-of-Year Component					Summative Total
		ELA/Literacy			Math		Total	ELA/Literacy		Math		Total	
		Literary Analysis	Research	Narrative	Session 1	Session 2		Session 1	Session 2	Session 1	Session 2		
11 Alg II / Math III	Estimated Time on Task (minutes)	80	85	50	65	65	**345**	70	70	55	55	**250**	9 hours, 55 minutes