

RACE TO THE TOP ASSESSMENT

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for
College and Careers

Year Three Report



U.S. Department of Education
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Introduction

ABOUT THE RACE TO THE TOP ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

The Race to the Top Assessment program was authorized as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). In September 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) awarded competitive, four-year grants to two consortia of states, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced).¹

The two consortia are developing comprehensive assessment systems that are valid, support and inform instruction, provide accurate information about what students know and can do, and measure student achievement against standards, including those that are typically hard to measure, designed to ensure that all students gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and the workplace. The assessment systems must include one or more summative assessment components in mathematics and in English language arts that are administered at least once during the academic year in grades 3 through 8 and at least once in high school; both consortia are also creating a series of diagnostic, formative, or interim tests that will be available for their member states to provide ongoing feedback during the school year to inform teaching and learning. The assessment system must be accessible to all students, including English learners and students with disabilities. PARCC and Smarter Balanced will each develop a common measure across their member states of whether individual students are college- and career-ready or on track to being college- and career-ready. The assessment systems will provide an accurate measure of student achievement, including for very high- and low-achieving students, and an accurate measure of student growth over a full academic year or course.

These assessment systems, which will be operational in the 2014-2015 school year (SY 2014-2015), are intended to play a critical support role in educational systems; provide administrators, educators, parents, and students with the data and information needed to continuously improve teaching and learning; and help meet the President's goal of restoring, by 2020, the nation's position as the world leader in college graduates.

RACE TO THE TOP ASSESSMENT PROGRAM REVIEW

As part of the Department's commitment to supporting states as they implement ambitious reform, the Department established the Implementation and Support Unit (ISU) in the Office of the Deputy Secretary to administer, among others, the Race to the Top Assessment program. The goal of the ISU is to provide collaborative support to grantees as they implement unprecedented and comprehensive reforms to improve student outcomes.

Consistent with this goal, the Department has developed a Race to the Top Assessment program review process that not only addresses the Department's responsibilities for fiscal and programmatic oversight, but is designed to identify areas in which the consortia need assistance and support to meet their goals. The ISU works with the Race to the Top Assessment consortia to identify and provide support based on their specific plans and needs. ISU staff encourages collaboration and partnership across the consortia and with outside experts to achieve and sustain educational reforms that improve student outcomes.

The consortia are accountable for implementing their approved Race to the Top Assessment plans, and the program review is a continuous improvement process.² Regular updates and data from the consortium

¹ More information about the Race to the Top Assessment program is available at www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment.

² More information about the ISU's Race to the Top Assessment program review process can be found at: www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/review-guide.pdf.

inform the Department's support for the consortia. The consortia may submit for Department approval amendment requests to a plan and budget provided that such changes do not significantly affect the scope or objectives of the approved plans. The ISU posts the approved applications and plans from the consortia, including any approved amendments, on the program website.³

If the Department determines that a consortium is not meeting its goals, activities, timelines, budget, or annual targets or is not fulfilling other applicable requirements, the Department will take appropriate enforcement action(s), consistent with 34 CFR § 80.43 in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR).

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Department used the information gathered during the program review process (e.g., through monthly calls, an on-site visit conducted in November 2013, the consortium's annual performance report (APR) which was submitted in August 2013 and updated in February 2014, and the April 2013 Technical Review) to draft this report on the consortium's Year 3 implementation of the Race to the Top Assessment program. This report serves as an assessment of the consortium's overall implementation of its approved plan, highlighting successes and accomplishments, identifying challenges, and noting important lessons learned by the consortium during the third year and key activities anticipated in Year 4. The report is focused on the four primary components of the consortium's activities: assessment design and development; professional capacity, outreach, and communications; technology; and governance.

This report focuses on the third year of the grant, from January 2013 through December 2013, unless otherwise noted. Progress subsequent to that time will be reflected in the Year 4 report.

³ Approved plans and any approved amendments are available at: www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/awards.html.

About the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers

PARCC is developing an assessment system intended to measure whether students are college- and career-ready or on track to being ready for college or work. Hundreds of teachers from across PARCC states have contributed to assessment design and reviewing assessment items, and nearly 600 educators have served in the Educator Leader Cadres, where they get early training on assessment design and consortium resources to share with colleagues.

PARCC assessments are designed to be high-quality instructional experiences and “tools for enhancing teaching and learning.”⁴ To reach this goal, the consortium is building interactive online assessments that require students to, for example, enter precise answers in mathematics and use text as evidence in English language arts/literacy. In contrast to most current state assessments, these tests rely less on multiple-choice items. The consortium anticipates that the assessments will present activities similar to those students would ordinarily do in a high-quality instructional setting. PARCC released sample items and practice tests that demonstrate the kinds of work students will do during the assessments, now available at <http://www.parcconline.org/practice-tests>.⁵

The assessment system is designed to be taken on a computer or tablet. In the course of preparing students for college and work in the 21st century, states, districts, and schools have been modernizing and updating their technology infrastructure. However, where necessary, a paper-and-pencil option will also be available during the initial years of operational administration.

PARCC developed tools to support educators in understanding the new assessments and the standards on which they are built. Early in the grant period, the consortium crafted model content frameworks (about which they accepted public comment prior to adoption), which articulate the way PARCC is using the standards to build assessments. In addition to involving educators in the assessment development work and the Educator Leader Cadres, PARCC will develop professional development modules available online regarding the assessment system and diagnostic and formative tools that support teachers and students in focusing on specific student skills and knowledge.

Because the test is designed to indicate readiness for post-secondary education or entry into the workforce, PARCC has consistently partnered with institutions of higher education (IHEs) across all member states. Those groups helped inform the definition of “college- and career-readiness” and have worked alongside their kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) colleagues in reviewing items and serving in the Educator Leader Cadres. PARCC will continue to work with IHEs to support them in using assessment results for the intended purpose of exempting from remedial coursework students who earn “college- and career-readiness” determinations.

PARCC assessment results are intended to be valid, reliable, and fair. The consortium is working to develop measures of student annual progress and to provide the research basis to ensure data can be used as one component in measuring school and district effectiveness; educator effectiveness; student readiness for entry-level, credit-bearing college courses; and comparisons with other state and international benchmarks.

As of December 31, 2013, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consisted of seventeen states (see Figure 1). The fifteen governing states involved themselves

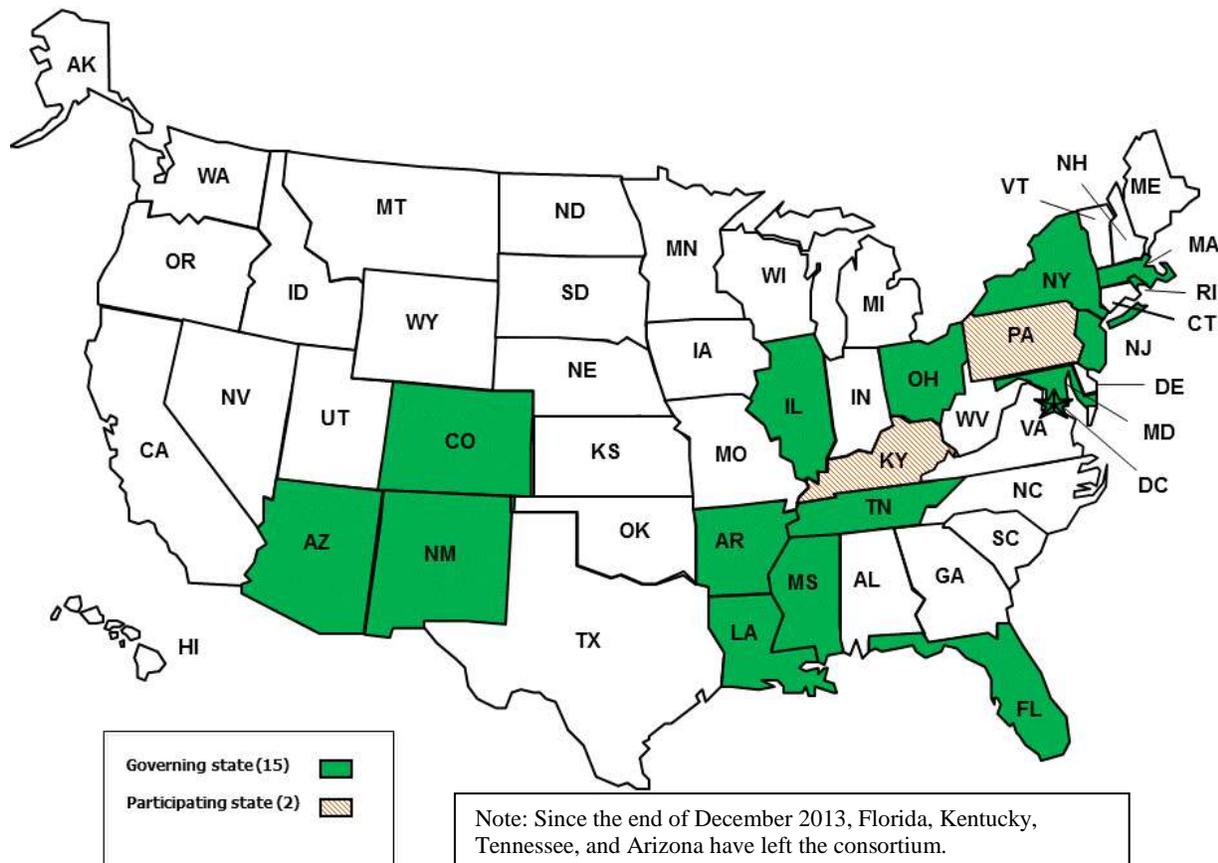
⁴ PARCC website <http://www.parcconline.org/about-parcc>. Accessed April 17, 2014.

⁵ Though these practice tests were posted in January and augmented in March 2014, and therefore technically released at the start of Year 4, the link is included in this report as a resource.

in policy decision-making for the consortium. Two others were participating states, meaning they join PARCC efforts without voting on policy and may also be involved in the work of Smarter Balanced. Awarded a grant in the amount of \$185,862,832 by the Department in September 2010, PARCC selected Florida to serve as its fiscal agent, a role which the state served throughout Year 3. The consortium contracted with Achieve, Inc. as its project management partner. At the end of December 2013, at the request of Florida, the Department transferred fiscal agency to Maryland. At that time, the not-for-profit organization PARCC, Inc., established by the consortium in February 2013, took on project management.

All PARCC states voluntarily adopted, consistent with each state’s established process, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the college- and career-ready academic content standards in English language arts and mathematics that member states selected and to which the assessment system will be aligned.

Figure 1. State membership in PARCC as of December 31, 2013



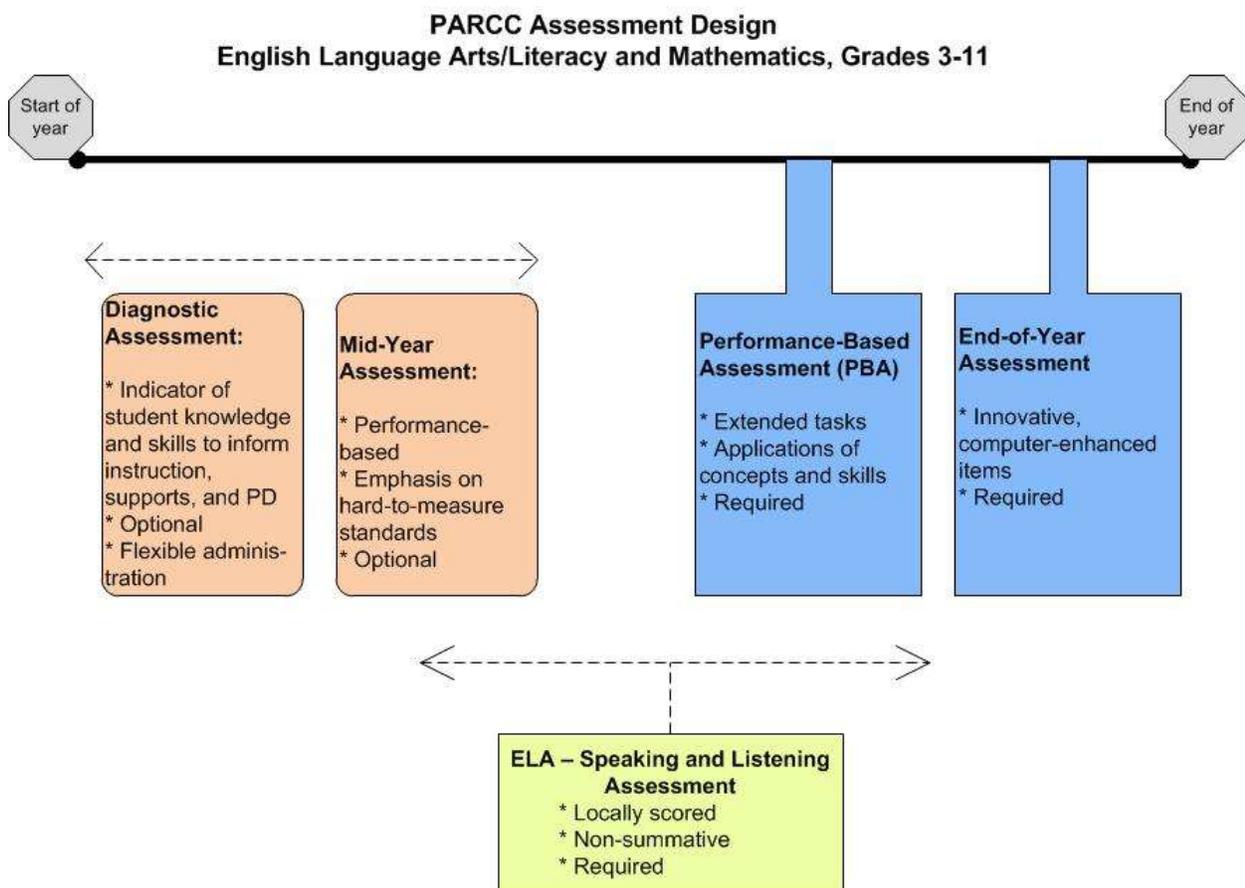
As depicted in Figure 2, the PARCC summative assessment score will consist of two components:

- Performance-based assessment administered via computer about three-quarters of the way through the school year; and
- Computer-enhanced assessment, including selected response, constructed response, and technology-enhanced constructed response items taken as close to the end of the school year as possible.

PARCC is developing assessment for high school math in two ways: one sequence includes Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II assessments that could be taken at the end of subject-specific courses. For schools that teach high school math concepts in integrated courses, there will also be assessments intended for the conclusion of Integrated Mathematics I, II, and III. College- and career-readiness determinations will be made based on either the Algebra II or Integrated Math III assessments, which will be augmented to include some content from the two prior high-school courses.

In addition to the performance-based and end-of-year summative assessments, PARCC states are developing several other components of the assessment system. A summative speaking and listening assessment will be locally scored and required, but not incorporated into the summative assessment score. Optional mid-year performance-based assessments will also be available to provide parents, students, and educators with information about student progress toward mastery of a given grade-level content. In addition, the consortium is crafting a diagnostic assessment tool, which educators can use with students to identify their specific strengths and areas of need. The diagnostic assessment will be computer-adaptive, meaning students will see different questions based on their performance on prior questions. This tool can be used multiple times during the school year. PARCC is also developing formative assessment tasks to serve as model assessments for use in kindergarten and first grade. These tasks would be used for professional development as teachers design their own classroom assessments. Such resources would be administered and scored by classroom teachers and would not be used for summative purposes. Together, the suite of summative and non-summative tools aim to provide information about student knowledge and skills as they progress throughout the school year.

Figure 2. PARCC assessment system



Assessment Design and Development

The extent to which the consortium is developing a comprehensive assessment system that measures student knowledge against the full range of the college- and career-ready standards, including the standards against which student achievement has traditionally been difficult to measure; provides an accurate measure of achievement, including for high- and low-performing students, and an accurate measure of student growth over a full academic year or course; and produces student achievement data and student growth data that can be used to determine whether individual students are college- and career-ready or on track to being college- and career-ready.

In Year 3, PARCC wrote and reviewed over 15,000 assessment items, clarified the test blueprint, and prepared for a large-scale field test in spring 2014. During the third year, PARCC developed course-level and subject-specific definitions of what it expects for students to demonstrate college- and career-readiness and being on track to be ready for college or work. The consortium also clarified its research plans and created guidelines for educators giving the field test.

ASSESSMENT DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

PARCC focused Year 3 work on writing and reviewing a substantial set of assessment items preparing for the field test, administered in spring 2014.

PARCC is using an evidence-centered design model. This means that educators, along with state and consortium content experts, wrote statements based on the content standards that defined the specific kinds of student responses and/or actions that would confirm a student has mastered each standard. Based on those evidence statements, as well as test blueprints (articulation of the number and types of items, as well as the standards they will measure, that combine to build a test for a given grade level, content area, and assessment component) developed and refined in Years 1 through 3,⁶ and item prototypes⁷ built during the first two years of the grant, PARCC created a substantial initial pool of assessment items.

The assessment design calls for multi-step problems in mathematics. PARCC items require, for example, that students manipulate graphs, use mathematical tools like number lines and graphing calculators, and provide specific responses instead of always selecting from multiple options as was the case on many prior assessments. In English language arts, the assessment includes research simulations for each grade level, in which students use multiple text passages and multi-media presentations to analyze literary and informational content. The computer administration is designed to allow for multiple layers of questioning resulting in possible partial credit, allowing PARCC states to more precisely report student understanding than items for which a student receives all or no credit.

Once items were drafted, groups of educators and content experts reviewed each item several times for content, quality, and to ensure that the item did not unfairly advantage any groups of students or present information to which some students might be particularly sensitive. Those reviews included experts on students with disabilities and English learners, who examined items from the perspective of ensuring that all students can access the resulting assessments. Educators at the state-, district-, and school-level actively engaged in detailed reviews that gave states direct control over the content and quality of the assessment items. Approved items were then combined into forms of the assessment for field testing.

⁶ PARCC evidence statements and test blueprints are available at <http://www.parcconline.org/assessment-blueprints-test-specs>.

⁷ Prototype items were released in August 2012 and are available at <http://www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes>.

While developing the items and tests, PARCC also held small-scale item tryouts during spring and summer 2013 (described in *Research*) and prepared for a large-scale field test in spring 2014. To validate the assessment items and make sure that students understand how to take the tests, the field test is critical. Fourteen states and the District of Columbia participated in the spring 2014 field test, and PARCC endeavored to work with a sample of students that reflects the student body in each state and in the consortium overall.

To provide updates to the field about the items in development, PARCC released sample items during Year 3 that built on the item prototypes released in Year 2. These items expanded the set of released items in each subject area and grade level and to ensure the availability of a range of PARCC item types (such as technology-enhanced items, evidence-based selected response items, research items, questions requiring students to articulate problem-solving methods, etc.). The sample items released during Year 3, like those released in Year 2, were in a static format, such that the technology-enhancements outlined were described instead of available for use. The consortium planned to release the sample items in an interactive format during Year 3, but that effort was delayed until January 2014. In March 2014, the consortium also released practice tests concurrently with the availability of the field test to ensure that all students, even those not selected to participate in field testing, had access to PARCC items for the purpose of familiarizing themselves with the way the assessments work.⁸ PARCC created tutorials to support students in understanding how to use the testing system.

In addition to both performance-based and end-of-year summative assessment components, PARCC is developing diagnostic, formative, and mid-year assessment components. The optional mid-year assessments are included in the broader item development work and are on track for release in SY 2014-2015. The mid-year assessments will feature performance-based tasks that can be used partway through instruction to gauge student progress toward mastering the standards. During Year 3, PARCC worked to contract for diagnostic assessments, intended to give educators more precise information about student knowledge and skills early in the school year or as needed. The consortium also developed solicitations for contractor support to build formative assessment modules for kindergarten and first grade, for which they created prototypes during Year 3. At the close of Year 3, the consortium had completed substantial design work on both formative and diagnostic assessment components but had not yet contracted for this work. On June 17, 2013, the Department approved PARCC's request for a no-cost extension for the purpose of continuing non-summative assessment development through August 1, 2015.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND ENGLISH LEARNERS

In preparation for the field test, PARCC wrote test coordinator, test administrator, and accessibility and accommodations manuals for the spring 2014 field test.⁹ These documents, while technical in nature and targeted at the educators giving the field test, represented the culmination of many interconnected policy decisions. For example, the accessibility and accommodations manual articulated the consortium's commitment to ensuring that the test is accessible to all students and identified specific features of the online administration system intended to improve student access to the test content. In developing the manuals, PARCC elevated numerous policy decisions to the group of state leads¹⁰ and the Governing Board for consideration. PARCC released draft policies regarding reading access, calculator use, and

⁸ As previously noted, those items were subsequently released in interactive electronic format in January 2014 and are available at <http://www.parcconline.org/practice-tests>.

⁹ Accessibility features are aspects of the testing system that may support student understanding of the assessment items and can be made available to all students regardless of disability or English learner status. Features include such options as text magnification, color contrast settings, and highlighting tools. Accommodations are adjustments in assessment administration for students with specific needs, such as giving the test in a small group setting or reading aloud the test directions.

¹⁰ State leads are the main consortium points of contact in each state. Often, though not always, state leads are state directors of assessment.

writing access accommodations for public comment in January and February 2013. The consortium then released a full draft accessibility and accommodations manual for public comment in April 2013. In July 2013, PARCC published the first edition of the accessibility and accommodations manual, along with responses to public comment. The consortium used the policies articulated in the manual during the spring 2014 field test while also doing additional research related to students with disabilities and English learners based on the responses to the field test. The consortium plans to update the first edition of the accessibility and accommodations manual based on those results. Manuals and policy are available at <http://www.parcconline.org/policies-and-guidance>.¹¹

During the summer of 2013, PARCC conducted small-scale item tryouts and research studies, including studies focused on students with disabilities and English learners. Early results indicated that students would benefit from clear instructions, including instructions on using the accessibility features. Those studies also showed that certain accessibility features could be distracting, indicating that advance planning to make available to students only the most appropriate features for them as individuals would be helpful. PARCC will use student responses from the spring 2014 field test to conduct additional research regarding accessibility and accommodations features.

COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READINESS PERFORMANCE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

In Year 2, PARCC defined in a general way what it means by “college readiness.” To do so, the consortium established what it termed policy-level performance-level descriptors (PLDs) and a definition of the way it will validate college readiness. Generally, PLDs describe the kind of performance the consortium expects to see at each of the summative assessment rating levels (PARCC has defined five achievement levels, so these descriptors highlight what kinds of knowledge and skills students would demonstrate if they score in the highest, lowest, or the three middle achievement categories.) In Year 3, the consortium built on this work to craft grade-level and subject-specific PLDs. As it had done with the policy-level PLDs and college-readiness determination, the PARCC Governing Board (the group of K-12 chief state school officers from governing states) and the Advisory Committee on College Readiness (ACCR), composed of presidents and chancellors of IHEs from both governing and participating states as well as from higher education associations, met jointly to approve the more detailed descriptors. Their collaboration furthered the consortium efforts to align expectations across both K-12 and postsecondary levels. The joint Governing Board and ACCR agreed in April 2013 to release the initial draft of the grade-level and subject-specific PLDs for public comment, and PARCC received more than 400 comments. After revising the descriptors in response to the public input, the Governing Board and ACCR approved the final versions at their joint meeting in June 2013. PARCC will use these descriptors in setting achievement standards after the first operational administration of the full summative assessment in SY 2014-2015. More information is available at <http://www.parcconline.org/plds>.

RESEARCH

From the outset, PARCC planned to do numerous studies to ensure that the assessments the consortium builds work as intended. To that end, in Year 3, PARCC clarified its research agenda and included specific research projects in several contracts. Additionally, during the third year, PARCC undertook several research projects that provided initial information about the way students approach and interact with PARCC assessment items, the way the assessment items work on tablets, and the planned rubrics for scoring prose constructed response tasks. Additionally, PARCC studied the accessibility of items to English learners, students with disabilities, and younger students taking assessments on a computer.

¹¹ Consistent with state policy and practice, decisions regarding accommodations made available to individual students rests with a student’s individual educational plan team or 504 team, as applicable.

In Year 3, PARCC also finalized its research plan for the field test. In particular, PARCC planned for the evaluation of item statistics, scoring, and scaling; usability, accessibility, and accommodations studies; mode, device, and input comparability studies; high school math comparability studies (to examine the relationship of the Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II course sequence with the Integrated Math I, II, and III sequence); and initial standards-setting planning studies. During the field test, PARCC incorporated student and test administrator surveys to compile feedback from students and educators directly involved in the field test. The consortium will use these responses to inform revisions intended to smooth the testing process for the first operational year.

During the third year of the grant, PARCC continued to convene its technical advisory committee (TAC), which is comprised of nationally recognized assessment experts. The TAC provides advice to the consortium on validity, reliability, research, and operational topics at three annual meetings. In Year 3, these meetings occurred in June, September, and December 2013. At those meetings, the TAC discussed and provided advice to the consortium on field test design and sampling plans, overall research strategies and specific research study plans, results of small-scale item development and tryout studies, setting achievement standards, measuring student annual progress, and reporting assessment results.

In articulating a comprehensive research plan, PARCC determined that several studies based on the field test will need to be completed beyond the end of the grant period in September 2014 because researchers would not have time to complete needed analyses and finalize reports using data received as late as June 2014. On June 17, 2013, the Department granted PARCC's request for a no-cost extension, allowing the research projects to continue until August 1, 2015. PARCC also identified longer-range studies initially outlined in the grant application that will need to occur during operational implementation, such as studies examining the comparability of assessment results across years and the external and predictive validity of student performance on the PARCC assessments compared with their performance in postsecondary courses. Such projects will need to be supported through future non-grant funding, whether from states or other entities.

In April 2013, during Year 3, the Department engaged PARCC and Smarter Balanced in the Race to the Top Assessment Technical Review. The review provided the consortia with an opportunity to share technical documentation and items under development with external experts in assessment design and development, educational testing validity, accessibility, psychometrics, and English language arts and mathematics content. These experts provided feedback¹² to the consortium while the consortia were still in the middle of their assessment development and had the opportunity to revise and improve their development processes.

In general, the technical reviewers responded positively to the work PARCC had done to date. Several reviewers reported that the consortium appeared to be implementing evidence-centered design as intended. Multiple reviewers appreciated the quality of the reading passages and the use of high-quality authentic texts rather than commissioned passages for English language arts/literacy assessment items and the focus on requiring students to use evidence from the text to support their responses, even for selected response items. Regarding mathematics assessment development, reviewers appreciated the clarity of the assessment design documentation and encouraged expanded use of items like those PARCC presented that required modeling and simulations. In response to a review of the research strategy, most reviewers saw evidence that the consortium is planning for critical future research projects and suggested additional near-term research, particularly regarding accessibility and accommodations. PARCC incorporated this

¹² The Department requested that the technical experts, each nationally renowned in their fields, provide individual feedback to the Department and the consortium. The Department did not seek consensus advice or recommendations. A list of individuals who served as technical experts is available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/bios/technical-review-031313.pdf>.

feedback into its summer 2013 research strategy. Additional information about the Race to the Top Assessment Technical Review is available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/performance.html>.

In Year 3, PARCC developed an approach to student growth measures. The consortium clarified in these plans that it is not proposing a particular student growth model, but rather articulating measures of student annual progress. The approach separates absolute and relative measures of student progress; absolute measures would be based on a vertical scale, if this proves viable when the assessment is administered.¹³ Relative measures of student progress would be possible regardless of the eventual feasibility of a vertical scale and would articulate increases in student performance related to overall student scores. The consortium discussed approaches to reporting student achievement results, clarifying that each individual state will maintain control over what, if any, information about student performance is shared. States are interested in publishing aggregate performance at the consortium, state, and potentially district levels, consistent with all applicable federal, state, and local privacy statutes and regulations. The consortium also developed data privacy and security policies during Year 3, which are available at <http://www.parcconline.org/data-privacy-security>, which emphasizes state and district ownership of and responsibility for data.

During Year 3, the consortium also identified districts and schools willing to participate in the spring 2014 field test of the assessment system. PARCC designed an approach to field test recruiting intended to produce a sample of responses from students that is representative of member states and of the consortium as a whole. The consortium also articulated the specific logistical and policy-related tasks necessary for administering the tests, which it compiled in the test coordinator, test administrator, and accessibility and accommodations manuals. These documents were the result of numerous important policy decisions, and they will need to be updated based on the field test.

LESSONS LEARNED

PARCC made substantial progress in assessment development during Year 3. In particular, during Year 3 the consortium managed writing and review of over 15,000 individual assessment items as well as review of sets of items developed for the spring 2014 field test. In the process, the consortium used a rigorous passage and item review process to clarify for its vendors the states' expectations for next-generation assessments. PARCC will need to maintain and reinforce those quality expectations to ensure that the overall item pool matches consortium expectations. PARCC also worked with its contractors to manage, thus far successfully, a complex item development process across multiple vendors.

During Year 3, PARCC conducted small-scale item tryouts and targeted cognitive laboratory studies in spring and summer 2013. PARCC tested two rubrics for scoring students' extended written responses and found that both worked well with sufficient rater training. The consortium also investigated the way students approach test items through cognitive laboratories in which students explained their thought processes as they responded to assessment items. From this study, PARCC learned that it will need to clarify some instructions and provide tutorials on using the interactive tools on the assessment. PARCC made such tutorials available before the spring 2014 field test. The consortium also held cognitive laboratories specifically with students with disabilities and English learners to test available accessibility and accommodations features. These studies showed that students will need clear, consistent instructions and opportunities to practice test questions in the PARCC format. The study also resulted in recommendations that the consortium clarify the available accessibility features and present instructions

¹³ A vertical scale articulates student scores across grade levels on a single scoring continuum, making it easier to quantify progress as students learn, and demonstrate on the assessments, increasingly complex skills and knowledge.

in multiple ways. Researchers also recommended simplifying the language in the instructions wherever possible. PARCC considered these results as it continued assessment development in Year 3.

LOOKING AHEAD

Year 4 will build on and expand the assessment development work done in Year 3. PARCC plans to continue “phase two” of its item development, during which it expect to create over 16,000 additional items by the end of the grant period for a total of over 31,000 items. The consortium will conduct a field test of approximately one million students in spring 2014 and analyze results of that field test. PARCC will then prepare operational assessment forms while also updating all assessment administration manuals. PARCC will use student and administrator feedback on surveys to update and improve the assessment system, including the accommodations and accessibility guidelines. Despite beginning research efforts during summer 2013 and planning for other major research projects, the majority of research analysis has not yet taken place, since it depends on field test and operational assessment results, which will take place during Year 4 and the no-cost extension period. The consortium will also begin building non-summative assessment components in Year 4. As Year 4 draws to a close, SY 2014-2015 will begin, and states will prepare to use the resulting assessment system in its fully operational form.

Professional Capacity, Outreach, and Communications

The extent to which the consortium is supporting member states in implementing rigorous college- and career-ready standards, supporting educators in implementing the assessment system, and informing and building support among the public and key stakeholders.

During Year 3, PARCC continued to provide information about the assessment under development to a wide range of interested stakeholders. The consortium engaged both the elementary and secondary and higher education sectors, convened cohorts of educator leader cadres, and communicated through a variety of media. As a more and more diverse group of interested students, parents, educators, and policymakers focus on PARCC progress, the consortium will continue to expand its engagement and professional development.

PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY

In Year 3, PARCC continued to engage the Educator Leader Cadres (ELCs). These groups of 24 educator representatives from each PARCC state meet virtually and in person to learn about PARCC resources and the assessment system, provide early feedback for states and PARCC, and serve as implementation leaders in their states and districts. These representatives may be classroom teachers, school leaders, district leaders, state curriculum leaders, higher education faculty, or other individuals who can effectively disseminate information about the assessment system to school-based staff, the public, and other stakeholders in their region. In Year 3, the groups met in late February/early March and October 2013 and also used online resources to hold virtual meetings during summer 2013.

PARCC released useful tools for educators during Year 3. During summer 2013, the consortium posted test blueprints and item specifications that articulate the kind of assessments the consortium is building. Since these documents are technical, PARCC also included narrated presentations that explain the information each portrays. All related information is available at <http://www.parcconline.org/assessment-blueprints-test-specs>. The grade-level and subject-specific PLDs described in *Assessment Design and Development* also frame the expectations against which the assessments will measure student knowledge and skills.

An important component of the consortium’s professional resources is the planned interactive online professional development modules. While these were not completed during Year 3, PARCC released a request for proposals (RFP) for their development in October 2013.¹⁴ According to the consortium, PARCC will build modules to assist educators in understanding the overall PARCC assessment system, administering and using the results of non-summative assessments, and deploying accessibility and accommodations features. The consortium reports that it will deliver some modules in summer 2014, before the start of SY 2014-2015 and the initial administration of the operational assessments.

COMMUNICATIONS

Interest in consortium work increased during Year 3. To provide necessary information, PARCC sought full-time communications staff, and in January 2014, PARCC hired a new communications director. Focused leadership will assist the consortium in meeting the increasing demand for clear information about the work underway.

During Year 3, PARCC continued and expanded its use of social media, such as Twitter. In summer 2013, for example, the consortium held a series of topic-specific Twitter “townhall” meetings, during which the consortium answered a range of questions from interested stakeholders. This series included a

¹⁴ The contract was executed in April 2014, during Year 4.

session with Rhode Island Commissioner Deborah Gist discussing state leadership in developing the assessment system as well as with English language arts/literacy and mathematics experts. PARCC reported a strong response to these events.

During Year 3, the consortium continued several efforts that began earlier in the grant. In particular, PARCC continued sending its monthly newsletter to a wide list of individuals who had signed up to receive information and updates.¹⁵ The consortium also held briefings for national stakeholders, including tailored briefings addressing the interests of students with disabilities and English learners. Communications staff also worked to strengthen their relationships with state communications teams.

PARCC cultivated several partnerships in Year 3. In collaboration with the Tennessee Department of Education, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) developed multi-media resources related to PARCC, including educator interviews regarding standards and assessments. Those resources are available at <http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/07734c7b-ddd2-4011-a01f-2e834f3fc690/parcc-for-educators/>. The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) developed state-specific information regarding assessments in each state that has adopted the CCSS which are publicly available at <http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3816>. As previously, state and consortium staff made numerous presentations to discuss PARCC with stakeholders.

In Year 3, PARCC had substantial internal communication demands within and across working groups, between states and project managers, and across state leadership. State leads continued meeting in person each month throughout Year 3, which ensured dedicated working group time and the opportunity to share state-level progress. The consortium also implemented a more sophisticated project management tool (described in greater detail in *Governance*), which became a vehicle for concrete communication about the specific steps the consortium needed to take for success. PARCC continued using the SharePoint site launched during Year 3 to create a collaborative online workspace. The consortium also continued hosting quarterly Governing Board meetings for chief state school officers from governing states along with weekly calls of a sub-group of chief state school officers called the Executive Committee that addresses issues arising between Governing Board meetings.

HIGHER EDUCATION ENGAGEMENT

In Year 3, as in the previous two years, PARCC conducted meetings in member states that convened postsecondary educators and leaders to engage them in the ongoing PARCC development process. Higher education delegations from PARCC states met in summer 2013 to plan for implementing policies in their states and IHEs around using PARCC scores for placement into credit-bearing courses without the need for remediation. Throughout Year 3, the consortium also involved the postsecondary community deeply in the development, review, and finalization of the grade-level and subject-specific PLDs. As previously, PARCC also made funds available to governing states to help them fund positions, portions of positions, or travel/release time for higher education faculty or staff to facilitate higher education collaboration with PARCC.

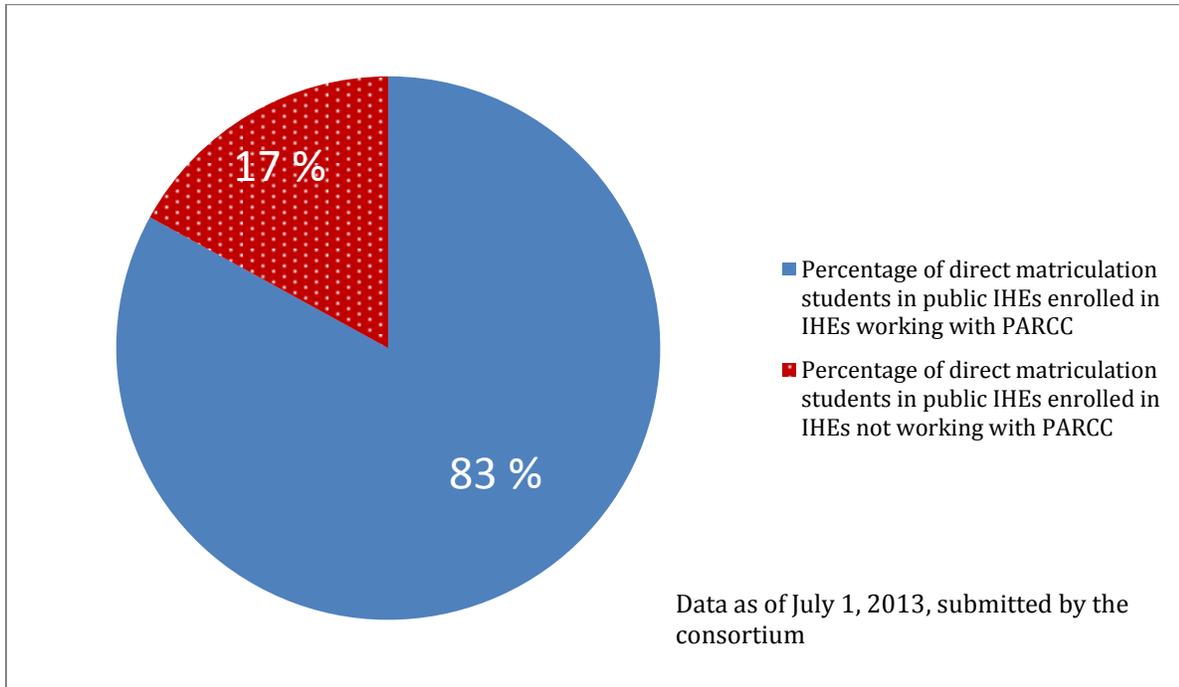
Data from the annual performance report (APR) documenting higher education involvement in PARCC are provided below in Figure 3. Specifically, as of July 1, 2013, PARCC is working with 640 distinct IHEs¹⁶ that have committed to implementing policies that exempt from remedial courses and place into entry-level, credit-bearing college courses any student who meets the consortium-adopted achievement standard for college- and career-readiness. That achievement standard will be set collaboratively by K-12

¹⁵ Beginning in January 2014, PARCC shared weekly newsletters.

¹⁶ Changes in the number of IHEs working with PARCC since the application and the Year 2 report are due primarily to changes in state membership, specifically the departure of Alabama (as of July 1, 2013, PARCC had not been notified of other state decisions; decisions sent to PARCC after that point will be reflected in the Year 4 APR and therefore the Year 4 report).

and higher education leaders. The large numbers of IHEs that remain committed to working to use PARCC results indicate a strong level of support for the consortium.

Figure 3. Percentage of direct matriculation students in PARCC states enrolled in IHEs that are working with PARCC¹⁷



LESSONS LEARNED

PARCC continued many practices in Year 3 that were successful in prior years, as the consortium facilitated briefings, ELC gatherings, and postsecondary convenings. The third year of the grant was a time of dramatic expansion in public interest in both professional development resources and general information. The level of interest in technical test specifications, which PARCC reported generated substantially more traffic to the consortium website in the two days after posting, indicates the extent to which educators and the public are seeking more details regarding the assessment system in development. The move to hire a communications team will assist the consortium in responding to the full range of stakeholders.

The consortium reported that ELC members continued to display interest and enthusiasm. Some ELC members shared information with colleagues in their region through presentations, videos, social media, and publications. Similarly, the PARCC higher education team continues to work productively with faculty and staff of IHEs in PARCC states. During Year 3, PARCC clarified its project timelines; in so doing, the consortium recognized that it needs additional time to complete the diagnostic and formative assessments. Accordingly, in June 2013, PARCC requested and the Department approved a no-cost extension to the grant period for the purpose of continued development of those assessment modules through August 1, 2015.

¹⁷ “Direct matriculation student” means a student who entered college as a freshman within sixteen months of graduating from high school.

During Year 3, PARCC developed partnerships with such organizations as PBS and the National PTA. The support of those organizations in sharing basic information about standards and assessments assists members of the public in understanding the work PARCC is doing. PARCC maintains critical relationships with member states and with educators in each member state. The over 300 educators involved in item, passage, and forms review and the nearly 600 who met as part of the ELCs, in coordination with the multitude of higher education faculty and staff involved in PARCC preparation and policy, both contribute to assessment design and development and receive professional development from such efforts.

LOOKING AHEAD

Year 4 will include a great deal of professional capacity, outreach, and communications work for PARCC. The Partnership Resource Center and the professional development modules, for which the consortium was still trying to contract at the close of Year 3, will need to be built. The consortium will begin to develop the non-summative assessment components during Year 4 to support educators and students. As Year 4 began, PARCC also planned to communicate more directly and clearly with the full range of interested stakeholders, including by making the content on the consortium website more straightforward, by providing real-time updates during the spring 2014 field test, and by continuing and expanding social media and other public engagement. One aspect of this communication will include collaboration with the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers to engage union affiliates and classroom educators in the development and implementation of the assessment systems. This partnership, made possible through a grant from the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, was announced in January 2014 and will continue through June 2015. By widely supporting and engaging partners and stakeholders, PARCC will share broadly the work it has done over the course of the grant.

Technology

The extent to which the consortium is using technology to the maximum extent appropriate to develop, administer, and score assessments and report results.

The PARCC assessments will be primarily delivered using technology, on a computer or a tablet. This format creates the opportunity for the consortium to develop new item types that better measure the skills and knowledge students need in college and the workforce. Throughout the grant period, technology considerations have been central to PARCC's work.

During Year 3, PARCC technology efforts focused on creating a plan for the technology delivery of the field test and initial operational assessment, communicating technology system requirements to states and districts, coordinating the technology-related components of item development, and preparing for the spring 2014 field test.

DELIVERING TECHNOLOGY-BASED ASSESSMENTS

In Year 3, PARCC states decided to use a vendor-developed technology system to prepare and deliver the spring 2014 field test by exercising an option included in the field test administration contract. This decision followed delays in the consortium's plan to build its own technology-based assessment delivery system. After exercising this contractual option, the consortium supported states, districts, and schools in preparing for the technology-based assessments.

Based on the system the consortium will use to deliver the field test, PARCC further specified for states, districts, and schools the minimum technology required for test administration. During Years 2 and 3, the consortium released information about the devices and operating systems it intended to support and recommended network capacity. In September 2013, PARCC shared minimum expectations for network bandwidth. PARCC will allow proctor caching options for schools and districts, which reduces the overall bandwidth a school needs to administer the tests. Table 1 below summarizes the minimum technology specifications, including updates PARCC made in Year 3.

PARCC endeavored to assist schools in planning the logistics of the field test and, ultimately, the operational assessments. The consortium developed a tool that helped schools simulate scheduling student tests given the particular configuration of the devices in a given school. Late in Year 3, PARCC released information about the technical logistics of administering the field test along with tools to help local staff test the system and determine whether it would be ready to administer the field test in spring 2014. These tools included an optional system check and an infrastructure trial, in which a school or district could simulate the conditions and performance of the assessment on their devices and network. To further support schools preparing to participate in the spring 2014 field test, the consortium also offered regional workshops in each state that will administer the field test to clarify the system features and requirements as well as the administrative process for setting up the assessment sessions.

In addition to moving forward with a vendor-developed technology solution for the field test, during Year 3, PARCC continued to advance a plan to contract for its own open-source technology platform. In September 2013, PARCC released a solicitation for technology platform development. By the end of Year 3, the consortium was still in the process of reviewing technology proposals and therefore had not begun development work. The consortium plans to use the platform for non-summative assessment delivery as well as for summative assessment delivery in the future.

INTEROPERABILITY

In addition to determining the technology delivery system the consortium will use to administer its assessments and its related system requirements for schools, during Year 3, PARCC also worked closely

with item development contractors to develop items in an interoperable way. For PARCC, with two separate item development contracts, interoperability at the level of items is critical both during and after the grant period. Although both vendors are developing items, the consortium will ultimately need the resulting items to populate a single item bank. As the consortium managed item development and review in Year 3, it became apparent that, particularly with respect to new and innovative item types, the two vendors were coding in different ways. Identifying, addressing, and rectifying this issue required substantial attention from PARCC technology leaders, which they successfully resolved before the spring 2014 field test. This work also resulted in the item developers building on initial experiences as the consortium moved into the second phase of item development at the end of Year 3.

Table 1. PARCC technology specifications

Element	Minimum PARCC Requirements for Current Computers	Recommended PARCC Specification for New Purchases
Bandwidth – External connection to the internet	5 kbps/student with caching; 50 kbps/student without caching	100 kbps per student or faster
Bandwidth – Internal school network	5kbps/student (caching)	100 kbps per student or faster
Connectivity	Computers must be able to connect to the Internet via wired or wireless networks.	Computers must be able to connect to the Internet via wired or wireless networks.
Screen size	9.7 inch screen size or larger (“10 inch class” tablets or larger)	9.7 inch screen size or larger (“10 inch class” tablets or larger)
Screen resolution	1024 x 768 resolution or better	1024 x 768 resolution or better
Input device requirements [2]	Keyboard Mouse, Touchpad, or Touchscreen	Keyboard Mouse, Touchpad, or Touchscreen
Headphone/ Earphone and Microphone Requirements	Headphones/Earphones Microphone (required in SY 2016-2017 for Speaking and Listening section) Headphones/earphones are required for all students for PARCC English Language Arts/Literacy assessments. Some student accommodations may also require headphones/ earphones (e.g., text to speech) and/or microphones (e.g., speech to text, voice controls).	Headphones/Earphones Microphone (required in SY 2016-2017 for Speaking and Listening section) Headphones/earphones are required for all students for PARCC English Language Arts/Literacy assessments. Some student accommodations may also require headphones/ earphones (e.g., text to speech) and/or microphones (e.g., speech to text, voice controls).
Memory	512 MB of RAM	1 GB RAM or greater
Windows – for desktop, laptop, netbook, or thin	Windows XP – Service Pack 3	Windows 7 or newer

Element	Minimum PARCC Requirements for Current Computers	Recommended PARCC Specification for New Purchases
client/VDI computers		
Mac OS - for desktop, laptop, netbook, or thin client/VDI computers	Mac OS 10.6	Mac OS 10.8 or newer
Linux	TBD summer 2014	TBD summer 2014
Chrome OS	Chrome OS 33	Chrome OS 33 or newer
Windows – for tablets	Windows 8	Windows 8.1 or newer
Apple iOS – for tablets	iPad 2 running iOS 6	iPad 2 running iOS 6 or newer
Android	TBD summer 2014	TBD summer 2014

Note: Additional detail about the PARCC technology system requirements is available at <http://parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/Technology%20Guidelines%20for%20PARCC%20Assessments%20v%204.1%20May%202014.pdf>, which is also the source of this summary information. PARCC anticipates releasing additional guidelines after the spring 2014 field test.

TECHNOLOGY READINESS

Throughout the grant, PARCC has collaborated with Smarter Balanced in contracting for a technology readiness tool (TRT). This optional tool allows state, district, and schools to aggregate technology data. Based on each consortium’s minimum technology specifications, the tool compares data on devices and network capacity entered by local schools to present a summary of overall readiness at the school, district, or state level. The consortium reports that states use the readiness tool in a variety of ways, so the data captured by the TRT may not fully represent the readiness or resources available in member states. Additionally, the tool affirms that an LEA is “ready” only if data are entered for all aspects of readiness for all reported devices (e.g., screen size, resolution, etc.) and schools indicate sufficient network capacity, so it does not distinguish between districts that are very close to ready and those that need far more infrastructure. Therefore, the information may underestimate the overall readiness of a state. Nonetheless, the data from the TRT represent the available comparable information in this area and are shown below in Table 2. The readiness tool remains continuously available for state, district, and school use in planning for technology-related expansion. In particular, since bandwidth specifications are now available, states and districts can view the extent to which the technology they identified makes them ready to give the test and see any gaps they need to bridge to be fully ready.

Several states either used the PARCC readiness tool or augmented the tool with their own data to communicate about technology capacity. In particular, in Year 3, Louisiana continued a practice it began in Year 2 of issuing LEA-level reports about technology readiness based on the consortium tool. New Jersey and New Mexico each created tools to demonstrate technology readiness across their states and support districts and schools in identifying and meeting needs.¹⁸ Although the tool can be useful to states, the data are not comprehensive since state use varies.

¹⁸ The New Mexico Public Education Department’s “Technology Footprint” interactive website is available at <http://webapp2.ped.state.nm.us/SchoolData/TechFootPrint.aspx>. New Jersey’s technology support portal is available at <http://njdigitallearning.org/>.

Table 2. Technology readiness data

State	Total LEAs in SY 2009-2010	Number that submitted data on technology capacity ¹	Number meeting consortium-defined technology specifications. ²
Arizona	676	668	104
Arkansas	295	258	46
Colorado	262	189	51
District of Columbia	59	N/A ³	N/A ³
Florida	75	76	— ⁴
Illinois	1076	1,036	260
Indiana	387	355	39
Kentucky	194	N/A ³	N/A ³
Louisiana	123	124	21
Maryland	25	26	— ⁴
Massachusetts	393	408	61
Mississippi	165	153	54
New Jersey	686	740	456
New Mexico	108	147	49
New York	912	2,576	198
Ohio	1064	831	182
Pennsylvania	799	N/A ³	N/A ³
Rhode Island	54	43	14 ⁴
Tennessee	140	141	6 ⁴

Source: Draft technology inventory data, as of January 27, 2014 snapshot, based on Pearson’s report to the consortia and data shared by PARCC.

Notes for Table 2:

Note: Data in this table were captured as part of a snapshot taken January 27, 2014 and reflect only the data present in the technology readiness tool (TRT) at the time of the snapshot. These numbers do not represent complete school data within a state, or complete device or network availability in the schools that are reporting data in the TRT. States have taken different approaches to requiring or encouraging district and school participation in TRT data entry. Some states are using alternate state and district level readiness tools in addition to or instead of the TRT to estimate readiness for both PARCC and other state administered assessments. Data from these alternate tools are not captured in the data. As a result, data completeness in the technology readiness tool is uneven across and within states.

¹ The TRT data may include school districts, administrative entities (e.g., Board of Cooperative Educational Services), correctional facilities, online schools, charter entities, and other out-of-district locations that may serve as testing centers. This definition may cause the reported number to be higher than the number of LEAs in an individual state. In the TRT, LEA participation data are self-reported, so some of the difference in district counts may also be an artifact of how accounts were defined and created in the database by state users. For continuity across all years of reporting, Table 2 uses the SY 2009-10 National Center for Education Statistics data for total number of LEAs.

² The Number of Districts Meeting Consortium Defined Specifications represents the number of LEAs with both 100% of their TRT-reported devices meeting PARCC’s minimum device specifications, and 100% of their reported network capacity meeting PARCC’s minimum specification of 5 kbps per student (with caching) for external connections to the Internet.

³ State did not submit data.

⁴ Unable to calculate the percentage, or the percentage is underestimated, due to unreported elements of required device data. Some states and districts did not report data for one or more aspects of device specifications (e.g., screen size, screen resolution, or device availability for test-taking) that are used to calculate overall device readiness. This leads to underreporting of device readiness in some schools, districts, and states.

LESSONS LEARNED

During Year 3, PARCC made an interim technology delivery plan for the field test and initial operational assessments since the consortium was delayed in developing its own technology resources. As a result, in Year 3, the consortium was able to communicate the system requirements to states and districts in greater detail and support them in planning for administering assessments on computers or other devices. The consortium received feedback from state and district leaders who attended the regional technology preparation workshops and adjusted subsequent workshops to better meet the stated needs.

In Year 3, the consortium learned the importance of clarity in defining expectations regarding item interoperability and managing against those expectations. The experience represents fruitful evidence for the importance of operationalizing technology interoperability in a sufficiently detailed way, and the phased development approach gave PARCC the opportunity to leverage those lessons in Year 4 item development practices.

LOOKING AHEAD

In Year 4, PARCC will finalize its plans for the consortium's delivery system in future operational years. Given the rapidly closing window for system development during the grant period, the consortium must make critical decisions and address future implications in a timely manner. PARCC will also clarify its interoperability expectations and test all assessment items and technology components for their consistency with the technology standards. The consortium will develop a data management and reporting system while ensuring all necessary privacy considerations are upheld. As with previous state assessments, states will control access and use of student assessment results.

For PARCC, the spring of 2014 entailed deploying the technology-based field test across consortium states. Approximately one million individual students tested, serving as a strong "dry run" for the assessment items and overall system. After the field test, PARCC will work to improve functionality based on student, educator, and state feedback regarding the overall experience with the assessment system. The consortium will have the opportunity to make any necessary adjustments before the operational test in SY 2014-2015.

Governance

The consortium's approach to internal organization and capacity, project management, and procurement to permit timely decision-making and the efficient development and implementation of its assessment system.

PARCC states, having voluntarily come together for the common purpose of developing high-quality assessments of student readiness for college and work, have faced the daunting task of coordinating both policy and project management throughout the grant period. In Year 3, as the concrete tasks of writing and reviewing items unfolded, the consortium made critical adjustments to both decision making and operational management.

LEADERSHIP

The chief state school officers in PARCC states have maintained deep involvement in the management and organization of the consortium since the inception of the collaborative effort. Accordingly, during the early years of the grant, numerous policy decisions were placed before the entire group of chief state school officers, which PARCC terms its Governing Board. The Governing Board meets quarterly under the leadership of its chair, Mitchell Chester of Massachusetts, who has been re-elected annually to steer the group. While PARCC previously established a Steering Committee from among the Executive Committee to address issues arising between full Governing Board meetings, this group met only as needed and often deferred to the larger group. During Year 3, in response to the growing number of operational questions requiring time-sensitive resolution, the Governing Board amended its by-laws to establish an Executive Committee. The Executive Committee includes chief state school officers elected by the Governing Board members,¹⁹ non-voting ex-officio representative(s) of the fiscal agent state(s) (the chief state school officer in that state), and two non-voting representatives of the state leads (James Mason of Mississippi and Mary Ann Snider of Rhode Island). This group meets weekly by phone and is empowered by their colleagues to resolve issues or to call a meeting of the full Governing Board by phone.

PARCC maintained its strong connection across K-12 and postsecondary communities throughout Year 3. Consistent with the by-laws requiring involvement of the ACCR for “key matters” related to the definition of college- and career-readiness, the PARCC Governing Board met jointly with its higher education counterparts in approving the grade-level and subject-specific PLDs. Including the ACCR in such conversations and decisions supports PARCC’s mission to allow students attaining college- and career-readiness as defined by PARCC to enroll directly in credit-bearing courses at the postsecondary level. PARCC also coordinated with the postsecondary community through the higher education leadership team (HELT), a group of higher education representatives from each state that meets regularly.

PARCC state educators, content experts, and assessment leaders articulate decisions the Governing Board needs to make and lead consortium work. A core group of those individuals, termed the “state leads,” serve as primary points of contact for the consortium in each state. During Year 3, PARCC state leads convened each month to execute tasks, define needed policy decisions, and collaborate and share successful efforts within states. As in the first two years of the grant and in service of supporting PARCC’s activities during the life of the grant, the consortium made funding available in Year 3 to all governing states for both elementary and secondary and higher education PARCC-related support. Though available to all governing states, not all states took full advantage of this resource.

¹⁹ As of December 31, 2013, members were Christopher Cerf (NJ), Hanna Skandera (NM), Mitchell Chester (MA), Deborah Gist (RI), Robert Hammond (CO), and Kevin Huffman (TN); ex-officio members Pam Stewart (FL) and Lillian Lowery (MD); and non-voting state leads members James Mason (MS) and Mary Ann Snider (RI).

During Year 3, PARCC sought outside support for developing and maintaining a more detailed, actionable project plan. Given the complexity of the PARCC project, the many interdependencies, and the additional pressure added to the timeline by delays in the first years of the grant, the consortium needed staff to focus exclusively on the project plan. Through the enhanced project plan, PARCC has been better able to track and resolve questions that arise, highlight threats to project completion, manage risks, and generate concise reports based on interconnected progress across work streams, states, and contractors.²⁰

In February 2013, PARCC established a not-for-profit organization called PARCC, Inc. As a way of planning for the sustainability of the assessment system following the conclusion of the grant, PARCC, Inc. took on some portions of project management and procurement projects.²¹

WORKING GROUPS

Over the three years of the grant period, PARCC convened working groups, both committees of internal (state) staff in operational working groups (OWGs) and external experts on technical working groups (TWGs). PARCC has taken different approaches during each of the grant years to managing specific content and functional issues within the operational working groups. During Year 2, PARCC organized numerous OWGs into six committees, focused on: 1) Project Management and Operations; 2) Summative Development; 3) Non-summative Development; 4) Research and Psychometrics; 5) Technology; and 6) CCSS Implementation and Educator Engagement. However, over the course of Year 3, the committee structure was de-emphasized, and individual working groups continued to lead on specific tasks. These working groups were largely staffed by state leads, who could meet in person during the monthly state leads meetings. State leads also share working group progress and policy questions that arise in working group discussions on the weekly state leads calls.

PROCUREMENT

Procurement has proven challenging for PARCC. Florida, as the fiscal agent state for PARCC in Years 1 through 3, agreed in Year 2 to collaborate with Indiana for the purpose of ensuring appropriate procurement-focused capacity. However, changes in leadership in Indiana created the need for Florida to administer the field test administration contract that Indiana competed.

During Year 3, PARCC endeavored to procure for technology, non-summative, and professional development efforts. The procurement process includes numerous phases, from defining the requirements and writing the solicitation to evaluating responses and negotiating with potential contractors to finalizing contract language and executing the contract consistent with state practices. However, at the close of Year 3, contracts were not in place for these aspects of the project. Continued delays in procurement put some aspects of the effort at risk of not being completed during the grant period.

In Year 3, PARCC states developed a plan for administering the assessments in SY 2014-2015. Since the Race to the Top Assessment grant funds only the development of these next-generation assessments, ongoing operational assessment administration will be the responsibility of the states. Therefore, during Year 3, a PARCC state released an RFP for the operational assessment. Depending on specific state statute, policy, regulations, and expectations, other member states may be able to purchase the assessment administration for their students based on that competitive process, consistent with each state's own procurement procedures.

²⁰ On August 21, 2013, the Department approved PARCC's work plan and budget updates.

²¹ At the close of Year 3, in coordination with the fiscal agency transfer from Florida to Maryland, full project management shifted to PARCC, Inc.

LESSONS LEARNED

During Year 3, PARCC addressed two major needs in the area of governance by streamlining the executive leadership and developing and maintaining a detailed project plan. These two advances gave the consortium a more stable, timely way to address the varied questions and issues that arise in the course of developing a comprehensive assessment system across numerous states. While the dramatic advances in these two areas were impressive, procurement challenges persisted in Year 3. PARCC tried to distribute procurement across multiple states and entities, but delays continued. As previously mentioned, at the request of Florida, PARCC and the Department transferred fiscal agency from Florida to Maryland at the close of Year 3.

LOOKING AHEAD

During Year 4, the consortium will continue regularly convening the Governing Board, state leads, ACCR, HELT, committees, and working groups as well as state, district, and school-level educator leaders on the Educator Leader Cadres (as described in *Professional Capacity, Outreach, and Communications*). Ongoing state work will include phase two of item development; administering and scoring the field test; analyzing field test results through research; and continuing coordinated policy conversations. As the consortium nears the end of the grant period, it will transition into supporting its efforts with state resources while continuing many of the projects begun during the grant period. To facilitate this transition, a PARCC state will procure for the operational delivery of the assessment. States will execute contracts to procure the services of the operational assessment. A second PARCC state will issue a solicitation for project management related to PARCC, and states will similarly work together to support that coordination of services.

Conclusion

Year 3 was an active and important period for PARCC. The consortium developed a major pool of items, prepared content, logistics, and technology for a large-scale field test in spring 2014, and made course corrections in governance and project management. PARCC also addressed some challenges regarding technology interoperability. Procurement remains a challenge for PARCC, one which becomes even more critical for the consortium in Year 4 given the short timeline to complete the work.

SUCSESSES

- *Assessment development*
During Year 3, PARCC made substantial strides in writing and reviewing the items the consortium will use on its mid-year and summative assessments. The consortium provided evidence to Department technical reviewers that it is faithfully implementing evidence-centered design, from clearly articulating the kinds of student responses that will demonstrate mastery over content standards through writing and reviewing high quality items and placing them in appropriate forms. Even in the face of tight timelines, PARCC worked constructively with item development contractors to develop a strong initial body of items to be field tested in spring 2014 and used in the first operational year of the assessment. The consortium leveraged state educator expertise in reviewing items to maintain a high-level of rigor and alignment to the content standards and the test blueprints.
- *Governance structure mid-course corrections*
At the close of Year 2, PARCC recognized the critical need for time-sensitive decision making. Developing and leveraging the Executive Committee allows PARCC committees and working groups to surface and resolve policy issues in a much more timely fashion while also ensuring that chief state school officers remain closely and actively involved in determining the direction the group takes.
- *Research*
In Year 3, the consortium further articulated its overall research strategy.²² This plan explains when and how PARCC will do the numerous studies it anticipates conducting to establish the validity and reliability of the assessment system. PARCC also completed several initial small-scale research projects during summer 2013, allowing the consortium to get early information on the way students, particularly students with disabilities and younger students, interact with PARCC assessment items. Since results of these research projects indicated a need for students to learn system features, PARCC developed tutorials on the assessment system functionality for use before the field test. Results from Year 3 research will also inform Year 4 PARCC item development and studies in Year 4 and beyond.
- *Sustainability*
During Year 3, PARCC made important progress toward developing a sustainable assessment system. It established the nonprofit organization, PARCC, Inc. The consortium also further defined the expected testing time and estimated cost and a developed a plan for how the states will continue to work together to administer the assessment system following the conclusion of the grant period. This work will be expanded in Year 4.

CHALLENGES

- *Technology*
During Year 3, PARCC made some important progress in the area of technology by selecting an assessment delivery platform option for the field test and supporting states, districts, and schools in

²² The PARCC research plan is available at <http://www.parcconline.org/assessment-research>.

preparing for the field test. Year 3 did not include any development of PARCC’s own assessment technology. The consortium still needed to award a contract for the assessment delivery platform, item bank, data management and reporting system, and Partnership Resource Center at the end of Year 3.

- *Procurement*
Timely procurement was challenging for PARCC during Year 3, as it was in prior years. The resulting decrease in time available to complete the contracted work requires PARCC to focus careful attention on managing these projects during Year 4 and the no-cost extension period.
- *Professional capacity, outreach, and communications*
During Year 3, PARCC continued effective practices begun in Years 1 and 2, such as holding state-specific convenings for higher education faculty and staff, training Educator Leader Cadre members, and sharing briefing materials. Communicating clearly about the work states are doing and the valuable resources states have developed individually and collectively is critical in supporting parents, educators, and other stakeholders’ understanding of the complex project and its value to their ongoing effort to support students. Hiring a full-time communications director in January 2014 was a valuable step toward addressing these needs.

Moving forward, PARCC will administer the field test in spring 2014. This will be a major milestone in the work the states have done through this grant, providing an essential opportunity not only to test the items and assessment delivery system but also to provide stakeholders with a concrete demonstration of the work the states have been doing together over the first three years of the project. Giving approximately one million instances of the field test will generate strong information for the consortium to use in continuing to build a valid, reliable, and fair assessment system. PARCC will use the results to inform ongoing assessment development and prepare for the first operational administration of the assessment system in SY 2014-2015. As the consortium enters “the final lap” of the grant, the progress to date is notable, as are the remaining challenges. Member states have dedicated themselves deeply to this work and will continue to shape the nature and direction of their shared project.

Glossary

Accommodations means changes in the administration of an assessment, including but not limited to changes in assessment setting, scheduling, timing, presentation format, response mode, and combinations of these changes, that do not change the construct intended to be measured by the assessment or the meaning of the resulting scores. Accommodations must be used for equity in assessment and not provide advantage to students eligible to receive them.

Achievement standard means the level of student achievement on summative assessments that indicates that (a) for the final high school summative assessments in mathematics or English language arts, a student is college- and career-ready; or (b) for summative assessments in mathematics or English language arts at a grade level other than the final high school summative assessments, a student is on track to being college- and career-ready. An achievement standard must be determined using empirical evidence over time.

The **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)** was signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009. This historic legislation was designed to stimulate the economy, support job creation, and invest in critical sectors, including education. The U.S. Department of Education received a \$97.4 billion appropriation.

College- and career-ready (or readiness) means, with respect to a student, that the student is prepared for success, without remediation, in credit-bearing, entry-level courses in an institution of higher education (IHE) (as defined in section 101(a) of the HEA), as demonstrated by an assessment score that meets or exceeds the achievement standard for the final high school summative assessment in mathematics or English language arts.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are K-12 English language arts and mathematics standards developed in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders including states, governors, chief state school officers, content experts, teachers, school administrators, and parents. The standards establish clear and consistent goals for learning that will prepare America's children for success in college and careers. As of January 2012, the Common Core State Standards were adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia.

Common set of college- and career-ready standards means a set of academic content standards for grades K-12 that (a) define what a student must know and be able to do at each grade level; (b) if mastered, would ensure that the student is college- and career-ready by the time of high school graduation; and (c) are substantially identical across all states in a consortium. A state may supplement the common set of college- and career-ready standards with additional content standards, provided that the additional standards do not comprise more than 15 percent of the state's total standards for that content area.

Direct matriculation student means a student who entered college as a freshman within sixteen months of graduating from high school.

English learner means a student who is an English learner as that term is defined by the consortium. The consortium must define the term in a manner that is uniform across member states and consistent with section 9101(25) of the ESEA.

Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust on-going teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes. Thus, it is done by the teacher in the classroom for the explicit purpose of diagnosing where students are in their learning, where gaps in knowledge and understanding exist, and how to help teachers and students improve student learning. The assessment is generally embedded within

the learning activity and linked directly to the current unit of instruction. The assessments are typically small-scale (less than a class period) and short-cycle. Furthermore, the tasks presented may vary from one student to another depending on the teacher's judgment about the need for specific information about a student at a given point in time. Providing corrective feedback, modifying instruction to improve the student's understanding, or indicating areas of further instruction are essential aspects of a classroom formative assessment.

Governing state means a state that (a) is a member of only one consortium applying for a grant in the competition category, (b) has an active role in policy decision-making for the consortium, and (c) is committed to using the assessment system or program developed by the consortium.

Interim assessment is the term for the assessments that fall between formative and summative assessments. They typically evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic goals within a limited timeframe and are designed to inform decisions at both the classroom and school or district level. They may be given at the classroom level to provide information for the teacher, but unlike true formative assessments, the results of interim assessments can be meaningfully aggregated and reported at a broader level. As such, the timing of the administration is likely to be controlled by the school or district rather than by the teachers. They may serve a variety of purposes, including predicting a student's ability to succeed on a large-scale summative assessment, evaluating a particular educational program or pedagogy, or diagnosing gaps in a student's learning.

On track to being college- and career-ready means, with respect to a student, that the student is performing at or above grade level such that the student will be college- and career-ready by the time of high school graduation, as demonstrated by an assessment score that meets or exceeds the achievement standard for the student's grade level on a summative assessment in mathematics or English language arts.

The **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)** is one of two consortia of states awarded grants under the Race to the Top Assessment program to develop next-generation assessment systems that are aligned to common K-12 English language and mathematics standards and that will accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness.

The **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced)** is one of two consortia of states awarded grants under the Race to the Top Assessment program to develop next-generation assessment systems that are aligned to common K-12 English language and mathematics standards and that will accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness.

A **student with a disability** means, for purposes of this competition, a student who has been identified as a student with a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as amended (IDEA), except for a student with a disability who is eligible to participate in alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards consistent with 34 CFR 200.6(a)(2).

Summative assessments are generally given one time at the end of some unit of time such as the semester or school year to evaluate students' performance against a defined set of content standards. These assessments typically are given statewide and these days are usually used as part of an accountability program or to otherwise inform policy.

The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

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