



Illinois State Board of Education

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www.isbe.net

James T. Meeks
Chairman

Tony Smith, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Education

March 8, 2016

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The testing window for the spring 2016 administration of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment opened March 7 and continues through June 10. Districts have selected their 30-day testing period within this time frame and will provide those specific dates for your child's test.

This is the second year Illinois has participated in PARCC assessment. The 2016 exam has a simpler format to improve the testing process while still providing reliable information about student achievement. This year's results will allow you to see how your child is growing in his or her knowledge and understanding of the state's learning standards, which are focused on college and career readiness.

No assessment can ever fully capture the skills and abilities of a great teacher or the extraordinary benefits and positive impact of a great school. This assessment is simply one reflection of your child's academic growth. Assessments help provide a sense of where and how we are succeeding and where and how we must improve, along with other indicators, such as classroom work samples and teacher observations. The PARCC assessment is designed to give schools and teachers more information to support improvement efforts and personalize teaching to better guide your child's learning.

These spring assessments correspond with what your child is learning in the classroom and with the performance expectations of the Illinois Learning Standards in English language arts and mathematics. They should not require time outside of school to prepare for the test.

This year ISBE expects to receive PARCC assessment scores much sooner than the 2015 results, allowing our teachers to tailor instruction to meet specific student needs. Districts should receive score reports in the fall.

The PARCC states have released many test items from last year's assessment to help parents and teachers understand the types of questions their students will be asked. These questions are available through the Partnership Resource Center at <https://prc.parcconline.org/assessments/parcc-released-items>, which houses a variety of supports available to teachers in PARCC states.

About 85 percent of students are expected to take the assessment online this spring, compared to 75 percent in 2015. You may enjoy sitting down with your child to take the PARCC practice assessment. This is a good opportunity for you and your child to go through what will be expected and become more familiar with the format before your child takes the assessment. You may access the PARCC practice assessments at www.parcconline.org/assessments/practice-tests. You may also find more information at

ISBE's PARCC Place at www.isbe.net/parcc-place/default.htm and ISBE's Hot Topics page at www.isbe.net/hot-topics.htm.

Scores from last year's test administration have provided a new baseline for student performance going forward.

The State Board is proud of our students who took the PARCC assessment last year and is confident in their abilities as we work together to prepare them for success in college and career. Learning begins at home, and we thank you for your partnership in your child's education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Smith", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Tony Smith, Ph.D.

State Superintendent of Education