



PARCC Recommendation for 2015

Presentation to School Committee
09/17/2014

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Background

In 2013, the MA Board of Elementary and Secondary Education endorsed a **two-year “test-drive”** of the new assessment program called PARCC.

In 2013-14, Year 1 of the two-year test-drive, students participated in the field test.

- In Boston, **81 schools participated in field tests** (roughly 5,000 students in grades 3 -11). The BPS PARCC team supported schools on-site to prepare for field tests. Lessons learned about the test items and the new technology platform for online testing helped refine PARCC for 2015.

What did students* say about the PARCC field test?

- The majority of students expressed a preference for online tests over paper-and-pencil tests (74% ELA, 56% Math)
- All or most test questions asked students about things they had learned in school this year (87% in ELA, 70% in math)
- 28% reported that the ELA test was more difficult than their school work; 61% of students reported that the math test was more difficult

**Statewide results*

What did students say about the PARCC field test?

- How hard it is to type answers depends on the subject area:
 - **ELA:** 87% found it easy to type answers
 - **Math:** 58% found it easy to type answers; 41% found it hard
- Many students experienced a technology-related problem
 - **ELA:** 31% reported a problem during testing
 - **Math:** 46% (22% had trouble changing answers)
- The test was easy to navigate
- Accessibility tools were easy to use

What did teachers say about the PARCC field test?

- 81% had never administered a computer-based test before
- Most students were able to complete the test without needing the additional time allotted
 - 29% said none of the students in their class needed additional time
 - 44% said less than 1/3 needed additional time
 - 28% said half to most needed additional time
- 48% said the training did not prepare them to solve basic problems related to technology; 46% agreed that the training was adequate

BPS Lessons Learned from Field Tests

- **Planning is key:** Schools that prepared for field test had higher level of success during the actual administration
- **Technology facilitated administration (maybe):** Students completed the test in a shorter amount of time when using the online assessment - although this could be result of the trial
- **Keep it simple:** "Simple" devices, such as Chromebooks or iPads, had a higher level of success – fewer issues with needed updates and battery life

Testing Options for 2015

This year, in Year 2 of the test drive, Boston Public Schools may administer PARCC or MCAS across schools in ELA and Math*. This decision applies to students in grades 3-8, 9, and 11.

For 10th grade students, the graduation requirement does not change: 10th graders will only take the MCAS test, at least through the class of 2018.

*Students required to take the Science test will continue to take MCAS Science. Students with disabilities who take the Alternative form of MCAS will continue to take the MCAS Alt.

Key considerations: Instruction

BPS is implementing the MA Curriculum Frameworks, which include the Common Core standards. The frameworks articulate key shifts in rigorous expectations for what students should be able to do:

- **ELA:** focus is on building knowledge through content-rich non-fiction; reading and writing grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational; and regular practice with complex text, its syntax, and vocabulary.

Key Considerations: Instruction

- **Math:** Deeper focus on the major works of each grade; the standards are designed around coherent progressions from grade to grade; and there is an attention to rigor, with equal importance given to conceptual understanding; procedural skills; and application.



While individual MCAS items are aligned to the new standards, it does not fully measure what students are expected to know. A next generation assessment is necessary to capture the full breadth of the standards.

Key Considerations: Instruction

- BPS has developed explicit **Core Actions** in each content area for effective implementation of learning standards, including specific scaffolds and supports for English language learners and students with disabilities
- BPS has identified **Student Learning Outcomes** by grade level for schools and teachers
- **Professional development** will be conducted through the Networks
 - Academics/Instructional Research & Development
 - New Network Directors of Academics

Key Considerations: Students

- Students participating in PARCC will have a head start on experiencing a next generation assessment aligned to the new learning standards
- Students will have gain exposure to demonstrating their learning in ELA and Math with technology
- Students will transition to a new assessment in a “low-stakes environment”

Key Considerations: Data & Accountability

- Student, school, and district level results will be available to inform instruction in Fall 2015.
- Schools administering the PARCC assessment in Spring 2015 will be **“held harmless*”** on their accountability levels; accountability levels for schools can only improve, not decline.
- DESE will create a “bridge” between MCAS and PARCC

* This provision does not apply to Level 4 schools: the Commissioner has the discretion to designate these schools as Level 5 regardless of assessment.

Key Considerations: Technology

- BPS encourages teachers and schools to blend technology in learning opportunities in every classroom for every student for prepare students for college and career success in the 21st century.
- District can choose online or paper-based administration by school.
 - This fall, BPS will conduct school-level technology readiness assessments and inventories
 - In schools where tech investments are still being made, we will recommend a paper administration of PARCC

Key Considerations: Technology

- BPS invested \$3 million in **student devices** last year, including 10,000 Chromebooks for classroom use
- In FY15, BPS will invest another \$1 million to increase student access to technology
- BPS is expanding its **technology infrastructure** to support next generation learning & assessment
 - \$1 million above and beyond annual capital investments for wireless and network infrastructure
 - Upgrades to the district's core infrastructure in the new Bolling building for increased Internet speed and access

Key Considerations: Accessibility

- Many accommodations for MCAS built into computer-based PARCC tests and available to **all students** as “accessibility features”
 - use of keyboard
 - audio amplification
 - highlighter
 - magnification
 - spell checker
 - text-to-speech (Math)
- Other accommodations available only to **students with disabilities** and **English language learners**

Key Considerations: Accommodations

- PARCC accommodations for **students with disabilities** include:
 - Read-aloud, scribe, calculator for Math non-calculator session, spell-checker, and word prediction, *under conditions similar to MCAS*
- Accommodations available to **ELLs** include:
 - Extended time, scribing Math assessments, word-to-word bilingual dictionary, repeat/clarify directions in English or native language
- Accommodations for **time** are provided:
 - All students can receive 50% more time
 - “Extended time” available for SwDs and ELLs students per IEPs and 504 plans

Feedback from School Leaders

- School leaders were surveyed in June on preliminary decision
- At the 2014 August Leadership Institute, school leaders in each Network were asked to weigh-in on this recommendation*
 - Overall, 95% of schools agree with the decision to administer PARCC in 2015
 - Among high schools, 86% would prefer to administer to 11th graders, where a College and Career Ready Performance Level will inform instruction; 14%, or 3 schools, would prefer to administer to 9th graders

Engagement & Outreach

BPS is partnering with stakeholders to prepare for a smooth transition to PARCC

- Focus groups with **teachers** to identify needed supports
- Engagement with BSAC to incorporate **student voice**
- Collaborate with **school leaders** to build school capacity for assessment administration
- Build understanding among **families** on new standards and PARCC

Engagement & Outreach: Families

- Developing engagement strategies and tools aligned with learning standards and curricular materials
 - Family Guide to Learning, Teachers Guide to Engaging Families (Gr.K-5 and Family Clubs)
- Collaborate with schools to build capacity to engage families with MA Curriculum Framework Standards and PARCC
 - Tech Goes Homes, Family Learning Clubs, School Parent Councils, Parent University Learning Sessions
 - Develop PARCC toolkit for schools designed for families to build understanding of PARCC and what it means for their children

Superintendent's Recommendation:

As a District, we must ensure our students, teachers and schools are ready for this strengthened assessment sooner rather than later. Put simply, this is not a decision about whether to transition to a new assessment - it is a decision about whether to transition well. – Superintendent McDonough

- Administer PARCC in all grades, 3 through 8, instead of MCAS in ELA and Math
- Administer PARCC in Grade 11, ELA and Math

Preliminary decision was submitted to the state in June; deadline for final decision is October 1st.

Spring 2015 PARCC Assessment Schedule

Component	Administration Dates
Performance-Based Assessment (PBA)	March 24 – April 11
End-of-Year (EOY)	May 5 – June 6

Next Steps

- Ensure all schools have common understanding of standards and needed curriculum resources to strengthen core instruction in every classroom.
- Continue to provide implementation feedback to schools through standards-based formative assessments and data inquiry supports.
- Engage school leaders, teachers, families, and students to prepare for the transition
- Establish cross-functional team to manage implementation and provide technical and professional development support to schools