

Update on 2014-2015 PARCC scores for Edwardsville

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EDWARDSVILLE - This past spring, Illinois students participated in a new state assessment, called the **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)** exam, in English/Language Arts and math. The PARCC assessment replaces the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) and marks a significant change from these previous assessments.

The PARCC exam asks students to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and skills, rather than recite facts and fill in a bubble for the correct answer. The test is aligned with the New Illinois Learning Standards and measures students' problem-solving abilities, critical thinking, and writing skills, which are abilities all students need to stay on track for college and career readiness after high school.

In preparation for this change, District 7 curriculum review teams in K-12 English Language Arts and K-12 Math spent nearly four years aligning the District 7 curriculum to the New Illinois Learning Standards. Revised curricula were implemented in 2014-2015. Intensive staff development continues to be provided for teachers of English Language Arts and Math, and students have been given the opportunity to work sample items to help them become familiar with the format of the PARCC exam.

The new test also signals a change in how student performance will be reported. The PARCC exam score reports will show how each child performed on each portion of the test. It will also reveal their overall score, which will fall within one of five performance levels instead of the four performance levels utilized in ISAT and the PSAE. One important note is the addition of a performance level which shows student scores that are "Approaching" state standards, but not failing. The scores from these students are no longer included in the meets/exceeds percentages.

Students whose scores fall within levels 1 (Did Not Yet Meet) or 2 (Partially Met) require greater supports to understand content. Students receiving a 3 (Approaching) are approaching expectations, but may need additional assistance to master content. Those who receive a 4 (Met) or 5 (Exceeded) have shown a thorough understanding of grade-level content and are on track to be ready for college-level coursework.

Student scores, as well as the school and district averages, look much different and may be lower than what is typically experienced on previous state assessments. It is important to remember that the percentage of students meeting and exceeding standards is not comparable to previous meet/exceed percentages on the ISAT or PSAE.

While the PARCC exam uses higher expectations to measure student mastery of content and grade level standards, the state did not:

- Establish a target for the 2014-2015 administration of the assessment
- Include an Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) component
- Include the ACT as a component of the high school assessment

The 2014-2015 PARCC test scores provide a new baseline to measure student progress going forward. These results do not mean our students know less or are less capable. Our schools are continuing to do great work to teach the updated learning standards and prepare our students to the demands of college and careers. The bar has been raised for the type of skills and knowledge students must possess before moving onto the next grade level.

As with any change, District 7 anticipates some growing pains as students and teachers adjust to the new format of the PARCC exam and the higher expectations of the New Illinois Learning Standards. Our staff will work hard to keep you informed about our progress as a district.

Our ultimate goal is to ensure that all students are prepared for success in college and beyond. No single test provides a complete picture of student performance, and the PARCC exam results are simply one of many factors that we use to measure progress. District 7 will continue to develop and implement local assessments in reading and math along with other diagnostic and achievement measures to ensure that our students are able to realize academic success in all subject areas.

Notes about High School PARCC Assessments

In December 2014, the Illinois State Board of Education released an option for districts to choose the high school courses that would be tested in spring 2015.

This option was provided in direct response to feedback from high school educators concerned that the Algebra 2 and English 3 test, originally slated for testing, came too soon, as students had not had an opportunity to be exposed to the newly aligned prerequisite courses leading up to Algebra 2 and English 3.

District 7 maintained the original decision to assess students who were enrolled in Algebra 2 and English 3 (Junior American Literature) – both rigorous, higher-level courses, even though many neighboring districts made the decision to assess Algebra 1 or Geometry.

Unlike the elementary and middle school levels where all Illinois students took the same exam, the decision by the Illinois State Board of Education to allow districts a choice in determining the high school course that was assessed on the PARCC, makes it close to impossible to compare high school scores.