



River Forest  
Public Schools

## **PARCC 2016 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment is aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards and represents an updated way to assess the progress of students. PARCC focuses on students' mastery of key concepts as well as critical thinking skills, problem solving, and writing competency. Below are answers to several Frequently Asked Questions that are adapted from information provided by the Illinois State Board of Education.

### **What has changed for PARCC?**

This is Illinois' second administration of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). It assesses students in grades 3-8 in English/Language Arts (ELA) and math. In response to feedback from school districts, the 2016 PARCC assessment featured a shorter, simplified format to improve the testing process for students and educators.

Though the test structure has changed, the PARCC assessment will continue to test the full range of standards and provide valuable information about whether students are mastering the knowledge and skills they need to stay on track for success in college and/or their chosen career field. While no single assessment can give a complete picture of achievement, the PARCC exam provides more accurate data about how each child is performing against our internationally benchmarked learning standards. This information helps teachers and parents determine if a student requires remediation or more advanced instruction earlier in his or her schooling, ensuring they graduate from high school ready for college and career.

### **What do the test scores mean?**

Students scoring a 4 or 5 demonstrate a thorough understanding of grade-level standards and are on the right track to being ready to enter college or the workforce. Students receiving a 3 are approaching expectations, but may need additional assistance mastering some aspects of the

content. Students receiving a 1 or 2 need more assistance in mastering the content and are in need of greater supports. More than a score, the PARCC assessment is aligned to higher standards, asks students to demonstrate their understanding in a different way, and reflects student performance across five more nuanced performance levels than earlier previous assessments.

### **How do these results from PARCC differ from results of earlier assessments?**

The PARCC assessment helps to inform teachers, students and parents whether a student is on track for the next steps in their education and mark students' progress from third grade up. In addition to evaluating a student's progress, PARCC also indicates to teachers and parents where a student needs help. This information enables teachers to better personalize instruction to meet individual student needs. PARCC also serves as an educational GPS system, assessing where a student currently is and the best route to get to where they need to be so they are career and college ready.

### **How does my student compare with others in the district and state?**

The PARCC reports enable families to compare their students' proficiency in relationship to others in their school, district, or state. PARCC results are included in the online state report card for the District and features an interactive component that enables families to compare schools along several indicators

District 90 is fully committed to providing a rich and stimulating curriculum within our nurturing instructional environment. Overall, our students continue to demonstrate competitive levels of performance when measured against others in the state and nation.

### **Why do PARCC results indicate an opportunity gap between various categories of students?**

District 90 is entrusted with the charge of inspiring a love of learning and ensuring educational excellence for every child. We take that obligation very seriously and are well aware of certain performance gaps between students, even before PARCC results were released. These gaps and other issues were the reasons behind the formation of the Inclusiveness Advisory Board two years ago and the Equity Committee last year. While the two entities have a different focus, both share the commitment of ensuring that District 90 offers an inclusive and equitable environment to every student, family, and faculty and staff member. The PARCC results simply indicate that the District was well-advised to begin these initiatives and discussions within our community. We intend to

continue working on the policies, practices, and procedures that impact our climate of inclusion. And the Board of Education and administration will continue to investigate and support evidence-based practices that have been shown reduce and/or eliminate performance gaps between students.

**How does PARCC compare to other current assessments?**

While the PARCC assessment does provide useful information to families and District 90, it represents only one tool to help gauge student, school, and District progress. Families who have questions about their student’s PARCC results are encouraged to contact their student’s classroom teachers or school principal for assistance.

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