PURPOSE

This tool provides guidance on how to best use the PARCC English Language Arts (ELA) Practice Tests for grades 6-8 teachers. The following sections are included:

- 6-8 PARCC ELA Test Structure
- Recommended Uses
- Item Types
- General Cautions
- Interpreting and Using Results
- Resources
- Appendix

6-8 PARCC ELA TEST STRUCTURE

Specifics on the test structure and administration requirements are included in the Grades 6-8 ELA PARCC Assessment Guide. The PARCC assessment is made up of two testing administrations, the Performance Based Assessment (PBA) and the End of Year Assessment (EOY). The testing dates follow:

Component	Format and Administration
Performance-Based Assessment (PBA)	**Test Administration Dates** **Paper-based Tests (PBT): March 16-20, 2015**
End-of-Year Assessment (EOY)	**Test Administration Dates** **Paper-based Tests (PBT): May 4-8, 2015**

The structure and time allowed on the grades 6-8 assessments are outlined below:

PBA Unit 1 Literary Analysis Task (LAT)	PBA Unit 2 Research Simulation Task (RST)	PBA Unit 3 Narrative Writing Task (NWT)	EOY Unit 1* and EOY Unit 2
Literature - 2 literary texts - 6 selected-response questions - Students write an extended response that analyzes key ideas in both texts (e.g., development of theme, interaction of literary elements, etc.) **Time: 75 minutes**	Research with a set of related texts - 3 texts on a given topic - 9 selected-response questions - Students analyze some aspect of the related texts (i.e., the purpose, the use of illustrations, the argument presented, etc.) **Time: 90 minutes**	Narrative - 1 literary text - 5 selected-response questions - Students write a narrative related to the text (i.e., finish the story, retell the story in another narrative form or from a different point of view, etc.) **Time: 60 minutes**	Reading comprehension - 1 literary text with 5 selected-response questions - A pair of texts (literary and/or informational) with 6 selected-response questions - 2 informational texts with a total of 11 selected-response questions **Time for EACH unit: 60 minutes**

*The EOY at all grade levels will also include one or two passage sets with 8 embedded-field test items.

To access the Grades 6-8 PARCC Practice Tests: *http://parcc.pearson.com/practice-tests/english/*

Grade	PBA	EOY
Grade 6	Practice Test and Answer Key	Practice Test and Answer Key
Grade 7	Practice Test and Answer Key	Practice Test and Answer Key
Grade 8	Practice Test and Answer Key	Practice Test and Answer Key

RECOMMENDED USES

There are a number of ways to use the practice tests to prepare your students for the PARCC administration.

General Use	Specific Guidance	Notes for Use
Examine CONTENT to evaluate your instruction and resource materials by comparing content to practice test content	Comparison between PARCC's approach and instructional approach	• Compare the integrated approach of the PARCC questions (Reading, Writing, Language skills taught through a set of related texts) to your lessons/units • Compare the texts on the assessments to instructional texts: Are they varied (both literary and informational) and rich enough to support the standards, meaningful discussion, and text-based writing activities?
	Connection between evidence statements and standards	• See how standards are assessed (different approaches to a standard, especially multi-part standards such as RI.3.3) • Consider how more complex standards are broken up into separate questions to cover all parts of that standard • Compare your interpretation of each standard to PARCC's
	Basis of comparison for purchased and open-source assessments	• Use the practice test as a guide for text selection, test length, level of rigor, item type variety, and scoring • Examine assessments and ask questions such as: "Does the assessment offer the item variety and flexibility similar to that of the PARCC practice test?" and "What ways can I adjust a pre-made assessment to meet the level of rigor expected of my students?" • Use in conjunction with Instructional Materials Evaluation Tools provided by the LDE
	(PBA only) Using rubrics to understand expectations for written responses	• Use Scoring Activity with fellow teachers and with students to understand the Grades 6-8 rubrics and identify qualities of writing that meet grade-level standards • Use rubrics when scoring student writing in response to the practice tests or instructional tasks

Examine FORMAT and design classroom assessments that use features of practice test	Sequenced tasks/passage sets vs random questions	• Build lessons that order questions in a purposeful way and focus on essential words and ideas in a text
		    o Key vocabulary in context
		    o Text-based questions
		    o Sequence that builds understanding of a passage(PBA and EOY) and leads to culminating writing task (PBA only)

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General Use	Specific Guidance	Notes for Use
	Integrated assessments	• Create task-driven assessments that integrate reading, writing, and language skills, similar to PBA tasks (AVOID tests with separate sections: Reading Comprehension, Writing Prompt only, discrete Grammar skills) • Include tasks with both multiple-choice questions and a culminating writing task
Simulate TESTING CONDITIONS[*] to help students feel more prepared for actual test administration	Strict time limits on each unit	• Practice timing by administering a unit from the practice test or a similar task/passage set created by teacher or from an EAGLE set (see timing restrictions on page 1) • Simulate exact testing conditions to determine student's current comfort level with time
	On-demand writing required at end of all PBA units	• Practice timing by working on all facets of the writing process (brainstorming, formulating thesis statement, planning/outlining, creating a rough draft, writing final draft, proofreading)
	Test materials	• Practice marking reading passages and test questions (annotating, highlighting, marking key words in stem of questions, etc.) • Incorporate test materials into lessons (scratch paper, highlighters, etc.) • Create assessments where students can practice bubbling on test itself, no separate answer sheet
	Test-taking strategies	• Be mindful of time • Keep track of skipped test questions (make a list on provided scratch paper of question numbers to return to) • Try to answer all questions • Complete all parts of each writing task (PBA only) • Write responses in space provided (four pages, PBA only) • Cross out work that you don't want scored • When crossing out answer choices or highlighting, be careful not to make marks near bubbles

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[*] PARCC has a Paper-Based Tutorial available to help students understand administration procedures and expectations. The tutorial contains items from grades 6-8, so it should not be used to examine specific content.

ITEM TYPES

Practice with various item types: prose constructed response (PCR), evidence-based selected response (EBSR), multiple-select questions.

Type	Specifics	Scoring Information	Practice Test Examples
PCR *PBA ONLY* For instructional examples, see the Connections chart in the Appendix.	• Requires student to write • Multi-part • Connected to more than one text depending on the task (LAT, 2 texts; RST, 2 or 3 texts) • Requires evidence • Measures Reading, Written Expression, and Knowledge of Conventions	• Scored with two PARCC Rubrics, one for LAT/RST and one for NWT • LAT/RST (19 total points): ○ Reading (4, 3, 2, 1, 0) ○ Written Expression (score point of 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 **times 3**) ○ Knowledge of Conventions (3, 2, 1, 0) • NWT (15 total points): ○ Written Expression (score point of 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 **times 3**) ○ Knowledge of Conventions (3, 2, 1, 0)	Grade 6 PCRs • LAT: p.15, #7 • RST: p. 37, #17 • NWT: p. 48, #23 Grade 7 PCRs • LAT: p. 16, #7 • RST: p. 36, #17 • NWT: p. 48, #23 Grade 8 PCRs • LAT: p. 17, #7 • RST: p. 38, #17 • NWT: p. 49, #23
EBSR *PBA AND EOY*	• Two-part item • One part measures reading comprehension • Other part asks for evidence to support understanding • Evidence is presented in different ways (direct quotes, details from text, paragraph references only)	Worth up to two points (0, 1, 2) • Partial credit can be earned, but must answer correctly the part asking for understanding of text (usually Part A) • no credit if **only** evidence part (usually Part B) is correct	• Grade 6 PBA, p. 44, #19 (paragraph references) • Grade 6 EOY, p. 7, #2 (direct quotes from text, most common) • Grade 7 PBA, p. 13, #4 (direct quotes from text, most common) • Grade 7, EOY, p. 27, #15 (details from the text) • Grade 8 PBA, p. 24, #9 (details from the text) • Grade 8 EOY, p.34, #20 (paragraph references)
Multiple-Select *PBA and EOY*	• Items that require more than one answer (number of answers required in bold face in question)	Worth up to two points (0, 1, 2) • Partial credit can be earned, but must answer correctly the part asking for understanding of text (usually Part A) • no credit if **only** evidence part (usually Part B) is correct	• Grade 6 PBA, p. 9, #3 • Grade 6 EOY, p. 35, #21 • Grade 7 PBA, p. 32, #14 • Grade 7 EOY, p. 7, #1 • Grade 8 PBA, p. 14, #4 • Grade 8, EOY, p. 6, #1

GENERAL CAUTIONS

- Teachers should **not** limit instructional content based on specific items on the practice test (e.g., teach only expository and narrative writing because none of the three prose-constructed response items on the grade-level Practice Tests mention argument).
- Teachers should **not** limit strategies used in class instruction to only those required when taking the practice test (e.g., write only under timed circumstances, teach only parts of the writing process, design assessments where all test questions are two-part, etc.).

INTERPRETING AND USING RESULTS

When scoring student performance on the practice tests, do **not** make assumptions about a student's score (i.e., 70% equals a D). Unlike daily assignments, statewide assessments—LEAP, EOCs, PARCC, etc. —are not scored on a grading scale where, for example, answering 95% of questions correctly is always an A, nor answering only 40% of questions correctly is always an F. To score the practice test in this way would be inaccurate. Instead, consider trends, such as those presented in the table that follows, and adjust instruction appropriately.

Trends to Look For	Example of Trend	Recommendations
Strengths and Weaknesses with Standards/Skills	Students struggle (or do very well) with specific skills associated with broader standards (central idea, structure of text, point of view, etc.).	Address weaknesses through mini-lessons that focus on key ELA skills/elements. Build connections between standards students are having success with and the standards creating issues for students (i.e., show connections between character's actions and theme).
Specific types of questions	Students struggle with two-part or multiple-select items.	Have students create two-part and/or multiple-select items and discuss them in groups. Carefully discuss each answer option, ask students to explain the correct answer and why the other options are incorrect.
Evidence	Students struggle with providing appropriate evidence in written responses.	Make sure that you are asking students to provide evidence in class discussions and when writing to sources. Discuss quality of evidence by using rubric language (*relevant*, *convincing*, *effective*, etc.)
Different types of texts	Students miss more questions attached to literary texts than informational texts.	Examine the literary texts on the practice tests and make sure that students are encountering literary texts with same level of difficulty. Expose students to all kinds of literature (poetry, drama, stories, etc.).
Different types of tasks	Students create expository responses to the PCR attached to Narrative Task.	Review narrative techniques and offer opportunities for students to write stories. Find Guidebook tasks that focus on different task types (see Appendix).
Rubric Dimensions	Students receive low scores on a particular dimension of the PARCC rubrics (Reading, Written Expression, Conventions).	Examine each dimension and create mini-lessons that address a dimension: • Emphasize annotating reading passages • Work on development of ideas • Use application of grade-level grammar skills Repeat Scoring Activity.

RESOURCES

- [Teacher Leader Collaboration Presentations](#)
- [PARCC's Online Professional Learning Site](#)
- [PARCC Paper-Based Tutorial](#)
- [PARCC English Language Arts Documents](#)
- [EAGLE](#)
- [Louisiana English Guidebook: Grades 6-8](#)

APPENDIX

Scoring Activity: Scoring Student Writing Using Rubrics

PURPOSE: To establish common expectations for student writing

OUTCOMES:

- Learn to use a writing rubric and identify qualities of writing that meet standards

- Reveal grade-specific expectations in a school

- Learn about and discuss different approaches that can improve instruction

PROCESS:

1. Have students respond in writing to a common prompt. Available prompts:

    a. English language arts guidebooks (e.g., Culminating Writing Task, writing task from the Express Understanding section in a lesson, Extension Task essay, Cold-Read Task essay)

    b. PARCC Practice Tests (e.g., prose-constructed response items from the Performance-Based Assessment)

    c. Tasks created at the school/district level

2. Collect student written responses to the common prompt.

3. Work collaboratively to understand the rubric.

    a. Review the scoring criteria on the chosen rubric. Read through each row. Highlight the key words on the rubric that show the differences between each score.

    b. Create anchor papers. These are papers that all participants agree represent a solid score (e.g., a 4 in Reading: Comprehension of Key Ideas and Details, a 2 in Content, etc.). Annotate the papers to identify which qualities match the rubric. They will serve as models of each score according to the rubric.

4. Score the compositions collaboratively.

    a. Individually score the essays using the rubric and anchor set.

    b. Then come together as a group. Read each essay aloud and, as a group, discuss the individual scores using the rubric and the anchor papers.

    c. Try to reach consensus on the scores for each essay. Discuss any scores that are not consistent.

5. After the essays are scored, discuss the essays in general—strengths, weaknesses, different approaches to the task, etc. Determine any patterns that exist in the essays as a whole (e.g., difficulty with a particular construct, such as comprehension of the text, relevance of the evidence, or the organization of the ideas). Individual teachers should also consider their own students' papers to determine any patterns.

6. Finally, discuss the instructional implications: How will we address the general weaknesses? How will I address my own students' weaknesses, etc.? Develop a plan.

For more information about how to use this activity with teachers and students, see the presentation materials for the Teacher Leader Workshop presented in December, *Scoring Student Writing Using Rubrics.*

To demonstrate how the practice tests reflect instruction, the grade-level tables that follow show connections between the Guidebook Tasks and the PARCC Performance Based Assessment Tasks (LAT: Literary Analysis Task, RST: Research Simulation Task, NWT: Narrative Writing Task). Each table provides an example for each task type. Teachers are encouraged to use these examples as models when creating additional practice for the PARCC test.

Connections Between Guidebook Tasks and Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) Tasks Grade 6					
Task Type	**Text(s) Used**	**Task**	**Unit**	**Lesson/Task**	**Page**
LAT	*The Witch of Blackbird Pond* and "Identity" by Julio Noboa Polanco	Compare and contrast how each text, "Identity" and *The Witch of Blackbird Pond,* approaches a similar theme. Cite textual evidence to support your explanation.	*The Witch of Blackbird Pond*	Cold-Read Assessment	52
RST	"Archaeologists and Their Theories," "The Ever-Changing Time Line of Stonehenge" and *"*Profiles of Archaeologists" from *Intrigue of the Past*	Explain the following quote by Carnes-McNaughton: "It is not what you find, it is what you find out that's important." How is this idea explored throughout the texts in the unit?	*If Stones Could Speak: Unlocking the Secrets of Stonehenge*	Cold-Read Assessment	85
NWT	*Hatchet*	Have students select a short passage from the text that demonstrates a change in Brian's attitude and supports the quote "Feeling sorry for yourself doesn't work." Then have students write the passage of Brian's survival from his point of view, instead of the third person point of view, bringing his rule for survival to the forefront of the writing.	*Hatchet*	Lesson 4, Express Understanding	76

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	Connections Between Guidebook Tasks and Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) Tasks Grade 7				
Task Type	**Texts Used**	**Task**	**Unit**	**Lesson/Task**	**Page**
LAT	"The Eighth Tuesday We Talk About Money" and *A Christmas Carol*	According to Morrie, "We put our values in the wrong things. And it leads to very *disillusioned* lives." Explain what Morrie means by explaining how a character in *A Christmas Carol* and one of the short stories is *disillusioned* by valuing the wrong thing.	*A Christmas Carol*	Cold-Read Assessment	172
RST	"Chapter 3: How I Gained My Freedom" from *Behind the Scenes*, Elizabeth Keckley; Paragraphs 3-11 from Chapter 11 of *A Narrative on the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Frederick Douglass; "The Great Escape From Slavery of Ellen and William Craft" from *SmithsonianMag.com*, Marian Smith Holmes (June 2010)	Explain how the experiences of Keckley, Douglass, and the Crafts were similar and different and how the presentation of events in each text contributed to your understanding of the experiences of each individual.	Excerpts from *Behind the Scenes*	Lesson 2, Express Understanding	197
NWT	Various texts from the unit	Throughout this unit we read many stories about life in Jamestown. What story did we not hear? Whose perspective was left out of this unit? What event went undiscovered or was not discussed? What area deserves additional exploration and "digging"? For example, you may want to learn more about "The Starving Time," the lives of Africans in colonies, Pocahontas, even the job of a forensic anthropologist. Select a "story" not told in the texts of this unit and tell that story. Research your topic and then write an essay that narrates and conveys the experiences or events (real or fictionalized).	*Written in Bone: Buried Lives of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland*	Extension Task	140

		Connections Between Guidebook Tasks and Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) Tasks Grade 8				
Task Type	**Text(s) Used**	**Task**	**Unit**	**Lesson/Task**	**Page**	
LAT	Chapter 4 of *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, Progress Report 10 (April 21-April 28) of "Flowers for Algernon," Daniel Keyes,	Have students work in groups to compare and contrast the point of view and structure of the chapter from *Frankenstein* with "Flowers for Algernon." Ask them to provide a group written response that gives an explanation of the similarities and differences between the two texts.	"Flowers for Algernon"	Lesson 6, Express Understanding	257	
RST	*Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science*, "200 Years of Progress in the Louisiana Sugar Industry: A Brief History" by Dr. Charley Richard of the *American Sugar Cane League* and "State of Sugar" (video) from *This Week in Louisiana Agriculture*	What connections exist between the global history of sugar and the local history of sugar in Louisiana? Write a multiparagraph essay in which you identify and describe three important contributions that propelled sugar toward success in Louisiana. How do these contributions support or contradict the global history and development of sugar presented in *Sugar Changed the World*? Where do the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation?	*Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science*	Cold-Read Assessment	228	
NWT	"The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe	Rewrite "The Tell-Tale Heart" from a new perspective (i.e., one of the police officers who visits the narrator). Establish a different point of view, word choice, and tone to reflect the narrator's "real" motives and personality. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop events and characters. Incorporate details and dialogue from the original text.	"The Tell-Tale Heart"	Culminating Writing Task	265	

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