

An electronic version of this document can be found at <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/parents-students>.

PURPOSE

Students in grades 3-8 will take the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA/literacy) beginning this spring. Parents can use this guide to better understand the content and use of the PARCC practice tests.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PARCC ASSESSMENT

In order to ensure that Louisiana students are prepared for the demands of college and the workplace, Louisiana is raising expectations for students. As a part of this transition, students in grades 3-8 will take the PARCC assessment. The PARCC assessments are aligned to Louisiana's standards and were field tested with nearly 50,000 Louisiana students in spring 2014. In addition, the assessment has other important advantages for Louisiana.

1. Students can demonstrate that they are on par with their peers across the country.
2. Students will be asked to demonstrate their learning through writing and problem solving, rather than multiple choice.
3. Educators are involved in test development.
4. PARCC testing allows increased accessibility features for all students and more comprehensive accommodations for students with disabilities.

DIFFERENCES WITH THE PARCC ASSESSMENT

What sets the PARCC tests apart from our previous standardized tests is that they look more like what is happening every day in English and Mathematics classrooms, which means more critical-thinking and opportunities to practice the skills with different types of problems and writing tasks. The table below illustrates some of the most important differences between the previous ELA and math assessments and the PARCC assessments.

Previous Tests	PARCC Tests
More than one session given each day (English and Math on the same day)	Only one session a day so that students can demonstrate their best effort; no overlap between English and Math
Separate sections for writing, reading, research, and grammar	Students practice the connections between English skills just like they do in everyday life through reading a passage or set of related passages and answering questions that lead to a final writing assignment
Handful of questions that require written responses (usually just providing an answer and showing work)	Tasks that ask students to explain their reasoning or demonstrate modeling of math (questions with more than one part that ask students to show how and why the math works)
Test booklet and answer document (student has two books to keep track of)	Test booklet only (student writes answers in same booklet as questions)
Multiple-choice questions with four possible answers (offer fewer ways for students to show what they know)	A range of question types that include not only multiple-choice, but fill-in-the-blank and multiple-select (students have multiple opportunities to show what they know in scenarios more like what they see in class and everyday life)

PARENT USE OF THE PARCC PRACTICE TESTS

Parents can access the paper-based practice tests for a specific grade level on the LDOE website at <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/practice-tests>.

To access other versions of the practice tests (large print, braille, computer-based, Spanish version), parents should go to <http://parcc.pearson.com/practice-tests/>.

Using the Practice Tests

- Look through the PARCC practice tests to get a feel for each part of the test.
- Based on what you see in the practice tests, ask questions about the different ways your child's school is helping prepare for these new assessments and how you can help at home.

Looking at Results

- Unlike daily assignments, statewide assessments (e.g., PARCC) are not scored on a grading scale where, for example, answering 80% of questions correctly is always a C, nor answering only 40% of questions correctly is always an F. Like previous assessments, student performance will be identified by achievement levels, either a description or a number (Advanced, Mastery, Basic, etc. or a Level 5, 4, 3, etc.) and a description of the skills required at each achievement level.
- Because results will not be available until fall 2015, the spring PARCC tests in math and ELA/literacy will not be used to make decisions about student promotion or summer remediation. Schools will use other measures when making these individual student decisions. For more information about these decisions, please contact your child's school.

Next Steps

- Parents should keep in mind that the PARCC practice tests are designed as a tool for classroom teachers. However, by knowing more about what is expected, parents can better understand what is happening in the classroom and the best ways to support their child's learning. If you have questions about how your child is being prepared for the assessments, please contact your child's teacher or school.
- Test results will provide teachers and parents valuable information on what English and math skills students have and do not have. Additionally, it provides parents and schools – for the first time - information on how students' performance compares not just parish to parish but state to state, similar to the ACT in high school.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

- [LDOE Family Support Toolbox](http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/family-support-toolbox-library) includes links to the Louisiana academic standards, the practice tests, and parent guides published by the national PTA that explain grade-specific expectations (<http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/family-support-toolbox-library>)
- [Math practice](http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/k-12-math-year-long-planning): The Department released practice problems for teachers to use with their students. These problems include sample student answers for parents and students to check their work from. (<http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/k-12-math-year-long-planning>)
- [Eureka math parent guides](http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/family-support-toolbox-library): These guides help parents of students using the Eureka Math series of better understand the content of each unit of instruction. (<http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/family-support-toolbox-library>)