Frequently Asked Questions about the Diagnostic Assessments

- **What are the Diagnostic Assessments from Parcc Inc.?**

PARCC's diagnostic tools provide instructionally useful information to educators about how well students have learned, or how prepared they are to learn key content and skills tied to the standards. The tools:

- Include a range of subtests that pinpoint students' learning strengths and needs in reading (decoding, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension) and mathematics (fluency and comprehension).
- Provide teachers with results that they can use to design instructional plans.
- Allow for multiple administrations to help teachers track student progress.

- **What grades and subjects are covered?**

PARCC has created sub-tests that make up the suite of Diagnostic Assessments. These assessments provide additional information on student strengths or areas of need in order to guide the teaching and learning process and to monitor learning progress.

Each subtest takes between 5 – 50 minutes to complete, depending on the subtest, and can be administered multiple times, as needed, throughout the year. The subtests are:

- **Reading**
  - Decoding. Monitors student development of the foundational phonemic awareness and the phonics skills listed in the new standards. May be used beginning in Kindergarten.
  - Fluency. Gauges expression and words per minute read accurately beginning in grade 2.
  - Vocabulary. Gathers information on how well students meet reading standard 4 and the vocabulary language standards for grades 2-8.
  - Comprehension of Literary and Informational Texts. Shows how students meet Reading Literature (RL) and Reading Information (RI) standards with item types that are similar to PARCC summative assessments for grades 2-9.
  - Independent Reading Level (2016-17). Provides each student who takes the reading comprehension subtest with an independent reading level score, which he/she can use to support appropriate text selections for independent reading.
  - Motivation Survey. Provides teachers and students with a descriptive picture of student perceptions and motivation to read to support students in selection of texts to meet the reader-task demands of the new standards. There are three survey (Grades 2-3, Grades 4-5, Grades 6-12).

- **Mathematics**
  - Mathematics Comprehension. Provides teachers with information on how well students perform on clusters selected by the teacher for grades 2-8. In 2016-2017, this assessment will a move from a fixed form to an adaptive one and provide scale scores for overall mathematics comprehension. With the adaptive assessment, teachers will be able to select from many options to focus the test items to get information on student

performance in specific clusters of standards, domains, grade levels, and/or learning progressions.
- Mathematics Fluency. Measures students' fluency skills for grades 2–6.

- **How are the tests administered?**

The tests are administered using the ADSTeach platform. A school or district administrator can first download student information into the platform (see the ADSTeach Administrator's User's Guide) or a teacher my directly input student names into the platform. Classroom teachers can learn more about how to administer each sub-test by consulting the ADSTeach Classroom Teacher's User's Guide.

- **Can the tests be used more than once per year to chart progress?**

Yes, the diagnostics are designed to be used throughout the school year to provide instructionally useful information to teachers.

- **When will the tests be ready?**

Districts and schools can begin using the diagnostics through our early adopter program in mid/late - December 2015.

- **What are the benefits of using the Diagnostic Assessments?**

The diagnostics tools help pinpoint students' strengths and needs by providing actionable data to educators throughout the school year.

- **What is the Early Adopter Program?**

As we introduce our suite of assessments in 2016, we would like to invite schools and districts to use them as part of the PARCC Diagnostics Early Adopter Program, which will provide extended access to the tools through June 2016 and a reduced cost for purchase for 2016-17. This opportunity is open to districts in PARCC and non-PARCC states.

- **Why should I participate in the Early Adopter Program?**

The overarching purpose of the PARCC Diagnostic Assessments is to provide immediate, instructionally-useful information about how well students have learned (or how prepared they are to learn) key content and skills tied to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics. With this information, educators may:

- target appropriate instructional supports and enrichment activities for students; and
- more efficiently monitor student progress on key concepts throughout the school year, including student benefits from targeted intervention and/or enrichment programs.

While any school in a PARCC consortium state can use the assessments and benefit from the information provided by the assessments, we are offering special incentives for districts that commit to participating as part of our formal Early Adopter program.

Those participating in the Early Adopter Program are eligible to receive the following additional benefits:

- Parcc Inc. support to roster students at the district level, thereby reducing per school roster work
- Participation for up to 25 district and/or school leaders in a live Webinar on how to use the data from the Diagnostic tools to improve instructional decision-making
- Free use of the diagnostic assessments through the end of June 2016
- A discount off of the retail per student price for the 2016/2017 school year for schools and districts (discount proportional to 2015-2016 participation rates)

- **How does a district sign up? What information is required?**

To sign up to participate and receive more information about the Early Adopter program, go here**.**

Use the form to share key information to begin the process.

- Enter your district name and point of contact information
- Estimate the total number of students, by grade level, whom you anticipate will participate in each of the subtests for the 2015-2016 school year
- Enter the names of district/school leaders whom should be invited to participate in the live webinars. (This information will allow us to ensure availability of staff to support in rostering supports and access to the planned webinars.)

- **When does the Early Adopter Program begin and end?**

The early adopter program begins in December 2015 and each student contributing to early adopter program counts will have to participate in at least a pre-test and post-test by April 2016. However, educators will be able to continue using the diagnostic tools through the rest of the school year.

- **How many students need to take the test and when?**

To reap the full set of Early Adopter benefits, school districts must commit to having a minimum of 1,000 students or 10% of the student population at designated grades (whichever is larger) participate in either the math comprehension, reading comprehension, and/or vocabulary subtests.

- **How long can one use the Diagnostic tests as part of the Early Adopter Program?**

One can use the diagnostics starting in December 2015 and until June 30, 2016.

- **How does one purchase the test? What is the price?**

Diagnostics are free to all consortium members for the 2015-16 school year. Others interested in purchasing access to the diagnostics should contact learn@parcconline.org.

- **What support is available for teachers who want to use the Diagnostic Assessments?**

Several options for support are available for teachers who want to use the Diagnostic Assessments. First, PARCC has developed a self-paced Professional Learning Module on the Diagnostic Assessments which can be accessed via the Professional Learning Library of PARCC's Partnership Resource Center (https://parccresources.org/). In addition, the ADSTeach User's Guide contains both technical support for administering the assessments and ideas for how to use the information from the assessments to support student learning. For more extensive supports on how to use the information from the subtests to guide

instructional planning, those interested in learning more about Parcc Inc.'s fee-based professional learning offerings can contact learn@parcconline.org.

- **What are the plans to enhance and expand the Diagnostic Assessments?**

In 2016-17 in addition to enhancements linked to changing the reading comprehension, vocabulary, and mathematics comprehension assessments to adaptive assessments, the following subtests will be added:

  - Independent Reading Level (2016-17). Provides each student who takes the reading comprehension subtest with an independent reading level score, which he/she can use to support appropriate text selections for independent reading.
  - Writing Performance-Based Tasks. Allows students to complete tasks like those found on PARCC summative assessments. Provides teachers with annotated student responses to help guide scoring of the written responses.

Frequently Asked Questions about the ELA Diagnostic Assessments

What are the key features of the resource?

- **What are the different ELA Diagnostic Assessments and what is their primary purpose?**

The ELA Diagnostic Assessments consist of Reading Comprehension, Reading Vocabulary, Reading Fluency, Decoding, and a Reader Motivation Survey. The purpose of these tools is to provide information related to student strengths and needs with each grade's relevant Common Core State Standards.

ELA Diagnostic Assessments	Grade Levels
Reading Comprehension	2 – 9
Reading Vocabulary	2 – 8
Reading Fluency	2 – 8
Decoding	any
Reader Motivation Survey	2 – 12

How does one access the resource?

- **How does one access the Diagnostic Assessments?**

The assessments are accessible from the Partnership Resource Center located in the Assessment section.

How is the resource designed to support student learning?

- **When should one administer the assessments?**

The diagnostic assessments are meant to be flexible, such that a teacher chooses the assessment and time to administer them based on the needs of the students. Most of the assessments can be given multiple times during the school year; however, it is important to note that it is not necessary or recommended that every student take every subtest. If the student seems to be progressing adequately with the appropriate grade level skills, participation in the diagnostic assessments may not be needed. Also note that the computer system (ADS Teach) is designed, such that if one administers an assessment (in Reading Comprehension and Reading Vocabulary) to a group of students, and then administer the same assessment to the same group of students some time thereafter, the students will automatically be given a different but similar assessment form than the one they already completed.

- **Should one administer these diagnostic assessments to all students?**

One can choose to administer an assessment to one student, a group of students, or an entire class depending on the needs of the students. These assessments are meant to give teachers, parents, and students information about student strengths and weaknesses.

- **Where can one go to learn more about the Standards, Evidence Tables, and shifts in the standards?**

One may find the following links helpful:

  - Common Core State Standards
  - Key Shifts in English Language Arts
  - PARCC Model Content Frameworks for ELA/Literacy
  - Evidence Tables

Any tips on best practice for using the Diagnostic Assessments?

- **Can one give an assessment more than once?**

Most of the assessments can be given multiple times during the school year; however, it is important to note that it is not necessary or recommended that every student take every subtest. If the student seems to be progressing adequately with the appropriate grade level skills, participation in the diagnostic assessments may not be needed. Care should be given to allow for effective instruction and student opportunity to learn new material between test administrations of a given sub-test.

- **Should one try to use as many of the diagnostic sub-tests as possible?**

The diagnostic subtests are meant to be flexible, such that one chooses the test and time to administer an assessment based on the needs of the students. One also chooses which students will take the test; one may choose to administer a test to one student, a group of students, or all students. The assessments are meant to provide educators, parents, and students information to help inform next steps in learning. It is not necessary or recommended that every student take every subtest. If the student seems to be progressing adequately with the appropriate grade level skills, participation in the diagnostic tools may not be needed.

- **Is there a recommended order in which the diagnostic assessments should be given to students?**

For students for whom there is not reliable data on student strengths and needs in reading comprehension, the teacher will want to begin by administering one form of the reading comprehension assessment for informational texts and one form of the reading comprehension assessment for literary texts. The teacher should also administer the reader motivation survey to determine the extent to which engagement with reading may affect student performance in reading comprehension.

If student strengths and needs in reading comprehension indicate that a student may struggle with meeting on-grade level expectations due to factors beyond engagement, additional sub-test administrations are recommended. The teacher should begin by administering the reading fluency assessment. If the student

demonstrates a lack of fluency, then the teacher should administer the decoding assessment to determine if all needs stem from a lack of decoding sufficiency. If the student's decoding skills are sufficient, but the student is not demonstrating fluency, the student will likely need additional direct support in developing fluency skills. On-going monitoring of fluency development will be important in these instances. If the student demonstrates he/she is a fluent reader, the teacher may wish to administer a vocabulary subtest to determine if the student's lack of comprehension is linked to needs in vocabulary accuracy and/or abilities to derive evidence to support contextual vocabulary use. If the student shows strengths in vocabulary, the student may need support in developing metacognitive reading strategies that support comprehension. If the student shows needs in vocabulary, the teacher will likely wish to provide additional instruction and practice for the student in RI/RL 4 and the appropriate language standards.

Other?

- **What is the relationship between the ELA Diagnostic Assessments and the PARCC Model Content Frameworks and Evidence Tables?**

PARCC developed the Model Content Frameworks for ELA and Evidence Tables prior to the development of the diagnostic assessments. These documents provided the developers and reviewers of the assessments guidance on interpretation of the standards. Teachers will likely find a review of the frameworks and evidence tables prior to administration of the diagnostic assessments helpful, as they give contextual meaning to the design features built into the assessments.

- **What are the implications of the Reader Motivation Survey?**

Teachers can utilize the survey results in conjunction with the Reading Comprehension subtest data to help students become stronger readers. Student responses to survey questions provide valuable insight that can inform instructional decisions at multiple points throughout the school year. For example, a student who self-reports a low interest in reading, but a strong preference for a genre, can be strategically provided with greater access to reading materials in that genre to increase interest overall in reading. Educators may choose to re-administer the survey as the school year progresses, to gauge how students' perceptions and preferences are changing and to increase use of Reader-Task connections to promote increased efficacy in selecting texts for libraries and for instruction.

- **Is there a plan to incorporate writing into the diagnostic assessments?**

PARCC has released multiple writing tasks from its operational assessment, along with sample student responses and materials to guide scoring of these tasks. Teachers can administer these released items to students and use the additional released materials to diagnose student strengths and needs in writing. PARCC will continue to release items annually, thereby growing the bank of potential writing prompts teachers may use for diagnostic assessment of writing

- **Why are points broken up by "Accuracy" and "Evidence" on the Reading Comprehension and Reading Vocabulary subtests?**

This allows teachers to more easily target strengths and areas of improvement as "Accuracy points" provide information regarding standards 2 and 3 while "Evidence points" provide information about standard 1. This structure is consistent with the structure of the PARCC Summative Assessments.

- **Why doesn't the Decoding Subtest have a grade level designation?**

The Decoding Assessment measures mastery of skills in six key domains: CVC Words, Blends and Digraphs, Complex Consonants, Complex vowels, Words/Recognition/Inflectional Endings, and Affixes (prefixes, suffixes)/Syllabication. This adaptive test can be used at any grade level as it allows teachers to gauge student strengths and needs in phonemic awareness and phonics, as well as gauge student progress over time by comparing student mastery levels from one testing date to another.

- **Approximately how long will it take for a student to complete a single diagnostic subtests?**

The time required for students to complete the diagnostic subtests will vary based on the individual student, but the times anticipated for testing are as follows:

  - Reading Comprehension (45 minutes)
  - Vocabulary (40 minutes)
  - Fluency (5 minutes)
  - Decoding (20-30 minutes)
  - Reader Motivation Survey (20-30 minutes)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Mathematics Diagnostic Assessments

What are the key features of the resource?

- **What are the Mathematics Comprehension Assessments and what is their primary purpose?**

The Mathematics Comprehension Assessments consist of a group of cluster tests which focus mostly on the major content in grades 2 – 8 as defined in the Model Content Frameworks. These assessments are meant to provide information about student strengths and areas of improvement with regard to the content in the given clusters. This information can then be used to inform instructional decisions.

- **Regarding Mathematics Comprehension, are there cluster tests for every cluster in the standards?**

There are cluster tests for most of the major clusters, Grades 2 – 8, as defined in the Model Content Frameworks. There are a minimum of 2 unique test forms for each cluster for which there is an assessment; these forms were reviewed by PARCC state educators to ensure similarity in terms of content and rigor allowing for educators to use these assessments in a pre/post-test manner if desired.

- **What is the primary purpose of the Mathematics Fluency Assessments?**

The Mathematics Fluency Assessments measure the fluency standards in grades 2 – 6. They are meant to provide information about how fluent students are with respect to the fluency standards. This information can then be used to inform instructional decisions.

- **Regarding Mathematics Fluency, for how many fluency skills are there assessments?**

There are 11 skills for which there are assessments. Nine of those skills have 4 unique test forms each while the other two skills have 2 unique test forms each. The unique test forms within each fluency skill were designed to be similar in terms of difficulty.

- **Regarding Mathematics Fluency, why are some of the fluency standards split into multiple assessments?**

This occurs only with standards 2.NBT.B.5 and 6.NS.B.3. These standards were split in order to provide information at a finer grain level making it easier to pinpoint where students need support.

  - 2.NBT.B.5 was split into two separate assessments: add within 100 and subtract within 100.
  - 6.NS.B.3 was split into 3 separate assessments: add/subtract with multi-digit decimals, multiply with multi-digit decimals, and divide with multi-digit decimals.

How does one access the resource?

- **How does one access the Diagnostic Assessments?**

The assessments are accessible from the Partnership Resource Center located in the Assessment section.

How is the resource designed to support student learning?

- **When should one administer the diagnostic assessments?**

The diagnostic assessments are meant to be flexible, such that one chooses the assessment and time to administer them based on the needs of students. One may choose to administer an assessment after instruction to determine how well students have learned the material. One may also choose to administer the assessments in a pre/post-test manner if desired. Note that the computer system (ADS Teach) is designed, such that if one administers an assessment to a group of students, and then administers the same assessment to the same group of students some time thereafter, the students will automatically be given a different but similar assessment form than the one they already completed.

- **Should one administer these diagnostic assessments to all students?**

One may choose to administer an assessment to 1 student, a group of students, or the entire class depending on the needs of students. These assessments are meant to give teachers, parents, and students information about student strengths and needs.

- **Where can one go to learn more about the Standards, Model Content Frameworks, and Evidence Statements?**

Educators may find the following links helpful:

  - Mathematics Standards
  - Model Content Frameworks
  - Evidence Statements

Any tips on best practice for using the Diagnostic Assessments?

- **Should one try to use as many of the diagnostic assessments as possible?**

The diagnostic assessments are meant to be flexible, such that one chooses the test and time to administer an assessment based on the needs of students. One also chooses which students will take the test; a test may be administered to one student, a group of students, or the entire class of students. The assessments are meant to provide teachers, parents, and students with information to help inform next steps in learning.

- **Regarding the Mathematics Fluency Assessments, is there a certain score that students should achieve and time frame for them to complete the assessment to be considered fluent?**

There is not a norm-referenced score or amount of time designated for a student to be considered fluent. As more students use these assessments and more data is gathered, Parcc Inc. plans to analyze the data and other relevant information and may provide guidance at that time. For now, educators may find it useful to discuss student levels of fluency within their school and district. Keep in mind that students need to develop procedural skill and fluency, conceptual understanding, and modeling/application and it's important to be mindful of this balance.

Other?

- **What is the relationship between the Mathematics Diagnostic Assessments and the PARCC Model Content Frameworks and Evidence Statements?**

PARCC developed the Model Content Frameworks for Mathematics and Evidence Statements prior to the development of the Diagnostic Assessments. The Frameworks and Evidence Statements provided the developers and reviewers of the assessments guidance on the interpretation of the standards and key areas of focus.

- **Regarding Math Comprehension, why are there cluster tests that include kindergarten, 1st grade, and Algebra I content?**

The Mathematics Comprehension Assessments are designed to be fixed forms for the 2015-16 school year; however, these assessments are being built to be computer adaptive in future years. Thus, there are questions that align to grade level standards above and below the lowest and highest grade level assessments (grades 2 and 8). Consider this example: when a grade 2 student is taking the computer-adaptive version and not doing very well, they may be given questions that align to 1st grade and kindergarten content. Likewise, a grade 8 student who is doing very well on the assessment may be given questions that align to Algebra I content.

- **Regarding Mathematics Comprehension, why do some of the cluster tests have questions that align to content standards from the previous grade level and grade level thereafter?**

Most of the cluster tests include a small number of "linking items" – items aligned to the grade above and below the grade being assessed. These items will not be included in the student score report; however, it's necessary for PARCC to gather data on these linking items in order to develop computer-adaptive tests for future assessments.

- **Regarding Mathematics Comprehension, why are some of the clusters split into two separate assessments?**

This "splitting" occurs only with the following clusters: 5.NF.B, 6.NS.C, 6.RP.A, and 7.NS.A. These clusters were split into two tests due to the high number of evidence statements within the given clusters. In the summary

excel file which can be accessed on the PRC in the same Library resource as this FAQ, one can see, for example, that there is a 5.NF.B1 cluster test as well as a 5.NF.B2 cluster test. These two tests assess the standards/evidence statements in the 5.NF.B cluster.

- **Can students use a calculator on the Mathematics Fluency Assessments?**

Use of calculators and other calculation devices does not allow for valid measures of mathematics fluency.