

# The National Assessment Landscape: What Does High-Quality Look Like?

*March 2015  
(updated September 2015)*



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# What is this primer and who should use it?

**State policymakers** can use this resource to better understand:

1. The role of tests and why new and better tests of student learning are needed;
2. The characteristics of locally, privately and state consortia-developed assessments that many states are considering using;
3. The current assessment landscape – which states are using which tests to help parents and educators ensure their students will have the skills and knowledge to succeed in college and career by the time they graduate high school.

## **IN THIS UPDATED PRIMER, WHAT'S NEW?**

This primer, an update from December 2013, is based on changes over the past year to the assessment landscape. This edition focuses on why testing matters, provides an updated national map of the assessment landscape and examines each new assessment's technology requirements, accessibility features and accommodations for special populations.



## How to use the updated primer

- Policymakers and staff, education leaders and advocates can use this primer to learn more about assessments currently adopted in each state so that they can share that learning with others.
- The primer includes slides that offer information on individual assessments as well as comparison information of the various assessments.
- Please customize these slides as needed to address state-specific questions or concerns (including moving any of the content into new documents and templates).

## Table of Contents

Why tests matter 5

New assessment options available to states 12

The current assessment landscape 26

Contact information and additional  
resources 31

Appendix: Assessment comparison tables 33

# Why tests matter



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# Tests are one tool that educators and parents use to help students attain their academic goals

When well designed and used strategically throughout the school year, state and local tests work together to...

Provide teachers and parents a baseline, or starting point, about each student's knowledge and skills.

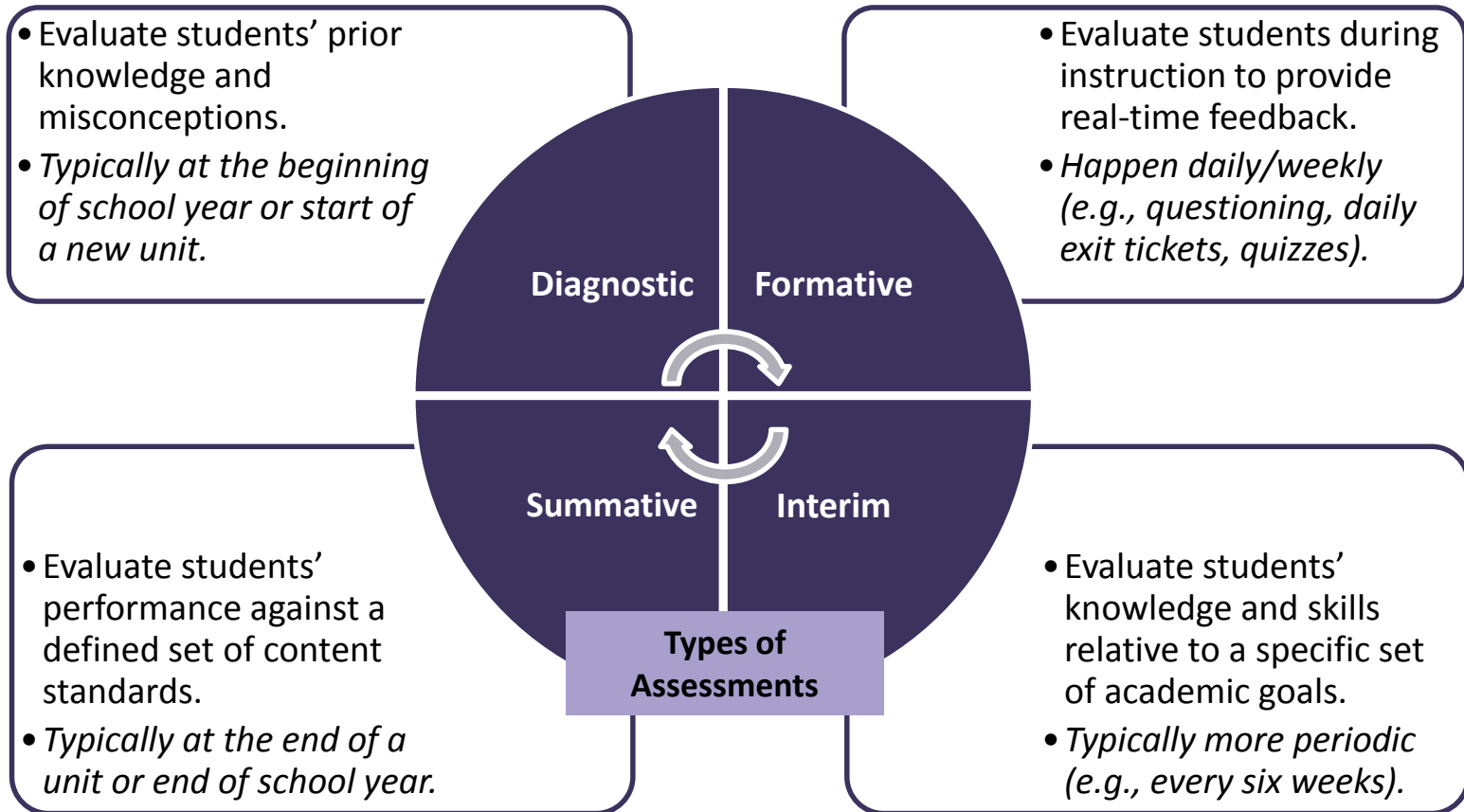
Help educators and parents measure progress toward academic goals for students and schools.

Inform where adjustments are needed in planning or instruction.

Provide comparisons of student performance across schools and districts.



# Different assessments throughout the school year serve different functions (and all these functions are important)





## The focus of this primer is on end-of-year statewide summative assessments

These assessments are federally required but locally created or adopted.

- **Federal law**—the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as No Child Left Behind—requires students in grades 3-8 and in high school to take annual summative tests in reading and mathematics. Many states have similar laws and other laws that require assessments in additional grades and/or subject areas.
- **Each state can choose or design its own assessment system and how the test results are used** beyond federal accountability (e.g., state accountability for schools and districts, teacher evaluation, student promotion and graduation). As a result, state and local testing requirements and time vary dramatically, with some states expecting much more than others.
- **Overall, statewide summative testing takes up a small percentage of the overall amount of time students spend testing each year** and an even smaller fraction (less than two percent) of students' total instructional time, according to a variety of research studies.

Sources: *The Student and the Stopwatch: How much time do American students spend on testing?* (2014), Mark Teoh, Celine Coggins, Christine Guan and Tamara Hiler at TeachPlus, <http://www.teachplus.org/news-events/publications/student-and-stopwatch-how-much-time-do-american-students-spend-testing>; *Testing More, Teaching Less: What America's Obsession with Student Testing Costs in Money and Lost Instructional Time*, (2013) Howard Nelson at American Federation of Teachers (AFT), <http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/news/testingmore2013.pdf>; *Testing Overload in America's Schools* (2014), Melissa Lazarin of the Center for American Progress, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2014/10/16/99073/testing-overload-in-americas-schools/>

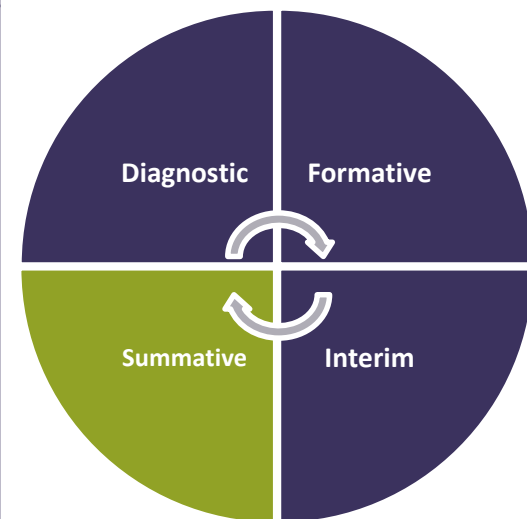




## The focus of this primer is on end-of-year statewide summative assessments

Updated summative assessments aim to measure each students' college- and career- readiness.

- The new end-of-year summative tests aim to **measure whether students are on track for being competitive and successful in today's world**—especially in critical thinking, problem solving, reading and writing.
- Nearly all states are administering new summative tests in mathematics and reading in spring 2015 or are in the midst of choosing or developing new tests to align to updated academic standards.
- These summative assessments allow students more opportunities to:
  - **Use technology** (e.g., computers and tablets)
  - **Answer questions in a variety of formats**—not just multiple choice—and demonstrate a range of critical thinking skills
  - **Get meaningful feedback** on their academic strengths and areas of growth



**Types of Assessments**



# States have tried to improve statewide summative assessments by making them in line with today's higher standards

## Old Tests

Most statewide annual assessments only tested students' basic understanding of math and English language arts (ELA) concepts by having multiple choice questions focused on memorization and following steps.

These older tests also didn't provide parents and teachers helpful information about each student's progress.

## New Tests (Starting 2014-15)

New assessments emphasize writing, critical thinking and problem solving.

*As a result, students will have more variety in the types of questions they encounter on their tests.*

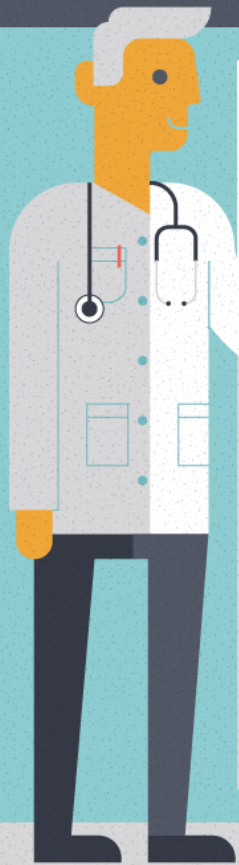
New assessments will tell students, parents and teachers whether students are ready for the next grade and on track to be college- and career-ready by high school graduation.

*As a result, students will have better information to help them meet their future goals.*



# Here's an example of how one state advocacy organization is helping parents understand the new tests being developed.

## HOW DO I KNOW WHAT A GOOD TEST LOOKS LIKE?



### COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

**It helps your child succeed in college or career.** Testing should be used to measure progress towards high expectations that set them up for success beyond high school.

### PROBLEM SOLVING & CRITICAL THINKING

**Gone are the days of guessing "C" on an answer sheet.** Good tests ask students to use critical thinking and problem solving by showing their work and providing evidence.

### FAIRNESS

**Your child's cousin in a neighboring city is held to the same expectations.** All kids should have fair tests that holds them to the same high benchmarks.

### INFORMS TEACHERS

Teachers can help students reach higher expectations by identifying early warning signs when a student is behind. Good tests should give teachers the data to identify when students are falling behind and tailor instruction to their needs.

### EMPOWERS PARENTS

**Things parents should get out of good tests:** timely feedback, clear results to discuss with their child's teacher, and ways to support their child's learning at home. Things they shouldn't get: confusion, frustration and delayed results.



# New assessment options available to states



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# States have multiple options to implement new assessments

Two consortia, private testing companies and individual states are developing new tests to align to the Common Core State Standards for mathematics and English language arts (ELA):

- **Consortia** (nonprofit, state-led): Partnership for Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced
- **Private testing company**: ACT, Inc. partnered with Pearson to develop ACT Aspire for purchase and use by any state or district
- **Individual states/nonprofit testing organization**: Arizona, Florida and Utah have each separately procured contracts with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to develop state-specific summative assessments, though the tests will be aligned to similar standards and use similar testing platforms
- Other states are planning to procure assessment contracts or develop their new statewide summative assessments internally

## Assessment Comparison: Focusing on PARCC, Smarter Balanced and ACT Aspire

*This primer examines the PARCC, Smarter Balanced and ACT Aspire assessments because a majority of states are administering them and because detailed information is available for each.*

PARCC, Smarter Balanced and ACT Aspire assessment systems are similar in:

- Costs
- Assessment types
- Grade levels tested
- Flexible, state-determined timelines

However, these assessments differ in some important details, including:

- Use of technology
- Planned writing and performance tasks
- Estimated testing time



# PARCC and Smarter Balanced were created by two groups of states

In 2010, groups of states created two consortia—PARCC and Smarter Balanced—to develop new assessments in mathematics and English language arts/literacy aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Both consortia conducted extensive field tests in spring 2014 and are administering operational tests during the 2014-15 school year.

## Background on the PARCC and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortia

### What is each consortium creating?

- Summative assessments aligned to Common Core standards in English language arts/literacy and mathematics for grades 3-8 and high school
- Formative assessment tools
- Sample instructional materials for educators

### How is each consortium governed?

- States in each consortium make final decisions on all assessment policy issues (e.g., performance levels, test data security) through PARCC or Smarter Balanced governing boards

### How was each consortium funded?

- PARCC received about \$186 million; the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium received about \$176 million—both provided by the U.S. Department of Education through a four-year grant to research and develop next generation assessments. Individual states, including consortium member states, must purchase the assessments they choose to administer.



# PARCC overview

|  | Context  | PARCC  |
|--|--|--|
| Summative Assessments  | Annual tests provide a measure of <b>student growth</b> over time on a vertically aligned set of standards that builds on the knowledge and skills in one grade to the next. | Each grade, 3-11   |
| Subjects   | Common Core standards measure <b>math</b> and <b>ELA/literacy, with an emphasis on writing grounded in evidence from text</b> at each grade level.                           | ELA/literacy, including writing, and math  |
| Estimated Per-Student Costs  | Nationally, the current <b>average per-student cost</b> for state ELA/literacy and mathematics assessments is about <b>\$27</b> .  | \$23.97 summative only for both ELA/literacy and math; non-summative assessment costs not yet finalized                                      |
| <p>Costs are for computer-based tests; paper and pencil tests will be available for three years and cost more.</p> |  |  |
| Estimated Testing Time   | Students will require <b>additional time to fully engage with complex texts, writing tasks</b> and real-world, in-depth math tasks required by the Common Core standards.    | 6 ½-7 ½ total hours (over the course of multiple sessions) for most students to complete summative assessments in both ELA/literacy and math |



## PARCC overview, *continued*

|                                     | Context   | PARCC  |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Use of Performance Tasks            | Performance tasks <b>require students to conduct real-world exercises</b> , such as web-based research, and <b>demonstrate multiple high-level skills and knowledge</b> . | Summative Performance-Based ELA/literacy and math assessments in each grade 3-11   |
| Optional, Non-Summative Assessments | Formative and interim assessment tools <b>give teachers more immediate feedback to help them adapt instruction to better meet students' needs</b> .                       | Optional grades K-2 formative assessments, and grades 3-11 speaking & listening, diagnostic and mid-year assessments                               |
| Educator Involvement                | Collaboration with educators, who work closest with students, can <b>strengthen both the design of the tests and their engagement</b> during implementation.              | Educators create and review test items and provide feedback on instructional resources; Educator Leader Cadres engage colleagues in implementation |
| External Evaluation or Validation   | Transparent development and reviews <b>allow educators, parents, students and policymakers to understand details</b> of tests.  | Test specifications analyzed by Technical Advisory Committee of national experts   |

The Center for Assessment, Fordham Institute and HumRRO are conducting alignment and validation studies of PARCC, Smarter Balanced and ACT Aspire. Educators will also participate in the studies.





## PARCC overview, *continued*

|   | Context  | PARCC   |
|---|--|---|
| Technology  | <p>New tests can leverage technology to provide students with <b>more engaging testing experiences</b> and provide students, teachers and parents with <b>more timely results</b>.</p> <p>Although not all states and districts currently administer their assessments on computers, initial surveys show that a <b>large majority of districts already have the technology infrastructure to give new computer-based assessments</b>.</p> | <p>Computer-based tests in all subjects and grades*</p> <p><i>*Paper and pencil version available at an additional cost.</i></p>  |
| Accessibility Features – Students with Disabilities | <p><b>Students with disabilities</b> require and deserve <b>supports</b> to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the tests just like any other student.</p>   | <p>Includes numerous features for all students (highlighting tool, pop-up glossary) and accommodations for students with disabilities, including assistive technology, text-to-speech and speech-to-text for math and ELA</p> |
| Accessibility Features – English Language Learners  | <p>Students who are <b>English language learners (ELLs)</b> require and deserve <b>supports</b> to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the tests just like any other student.</p>  | <p>Universal design enhances accessibility for all students. Additional accommodations for ELLs include text-to-speech in math and ELA for all grades</p>   |



# Smarter Balanced overview

|                             | Context   | Smarter Balanced   |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Summative Assessments       | Annual tests provide a measure of <b>student growth</b> over time on a vertically aligned set of standards that builds on the knowledge and skills in one grade to the next.  | Each grade 3-8 and 11  |
| Subjects                    | Common Core standards measure <b>math</b> and <b>ELA/literacy, with an emphasis on writing grounded in evidence from text</b> at each grade level.  | ELA/literacy, including writing, and math  |
| Estimated Per-Student Costs | Nationally, the current <b>average per-student cost</b> for state ELA/literacy and mathematics assessments is about <b>\$27</b> .<br><br><b>Costs are for computer-based tests; paper and pencil tests will be available for three years and cost more.</b> | \$22.50 summative only for both ELA/literacy and math; \$27.30 including interim and formative   |
| Estimated Testing Time      | Students will require <b>additional time to fully engage with complex texts, writing tasks and real-world, in-depth math tasks</b> required by the Common Core standards.   | 7-8 ½ total hours (over the course of multiple sessions) for most students to complete summative assessments in both ELA/literacy and math |



## Smarter Balanced overview, *continued*

|                                     | Context   | Smarter Balanced   |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Use of Performance Tasks            | Performance tasks <b>require students to conduct real-world exercises</b> , such as web-based research, and <b>demonstrate multiple high-level skills and knowledge</b> . | Summative Performance Tasks ELA/literacy and math assessments in each grade 3-8 and 11   |
| Optional, Non-Summative Assessments | Formative and interim assessment tools <b>give teachers more immediate feedback to help them adapt instruction to better meet students' needs</b> .                       | Optional grades 3-12 interim and formative assessments   |
| Educator Involvement                | Collaboration with educators, who work closest with students, can <b>strengthen both the design of the tests and their engagement</b> during implementation.              | Educators create and review test items; State Leadership Teams and Networks of Educators are working to develop a digital library of formative tools and professional learning resources |
| External Evaluation or Validation   | Transparent development and reviews <b>allow educators, parents, students and policymakers to understand details</b> of tests.  | Test specifications analyzed by Technical Advisory Committee of national experts   |

The Center for Assessment, Fordham Institute and HumRRO are conducting alignment and validation studies of PARCC, Smarter Balanced and ACT Aspire. Educators will also participate in the studies.



## Smarter Balanced overview, *continued*

|   | Context  | Smarter Balanced   |
|---|--|--|
| Technology  | New tests can leverage technology to provide students with more <b>engaging testing experiences</b> and provide students, teachers and parents with <b>more timely results</b> . | Computer-adaptive end-of-year tests and computer-based performance tasks*<br><br><i>*Paper and pencil version available at an additional cost</i>  |
| Although not all states and districts currently administer their assessments on computers, initial surveys show that a large majority of districts already have the technology infrastructure to give new computer-based assessments. |  |  |
| Accessibility Features – Students with Disabilities   | <b>Students with disabilities</b> require and deserve <b>supports</b> to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the tests just like any other student.                        | Includes numerous features for all students (highlighting tool, pop-up glossary) and accommodations for students with disabilities, including text-to-speech for math and ELA (grades 6+ only) |
| Accessibility Features – English Language Learners  | Students who are <b>English language learners (ELLs)</b> require and deserve <b>supports</b> to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the tests just like any other student. | Stacked English/Spanish translation, text-to-speech and glossaries in 10 languages other than English are all embedded in the computer platform  |



# ACT Aspire overview

|  | Context  | ACT Aspire  |
|--|--|---|
| Summative Assessments  | Annual tests provide a measure of <b>student growth</b> over time on a vertically aligned set of standards that builds on the knowledge and skills in one grade to the next. | Each grade 3-8 and 9 or 10 (“early high school”); does not include the ACT college admissions test  |
| Subjects   | Common Core standards measure <b>math</b> and <b>ELA/literacy, with an emphasis on writing grounded in evidence from text</b> at each grade level.                           | English, reading, writing, math, science  |
| Estimated Per-Student Costs  | Nationally, the current <b>average per-student cost</b> for state ELA/literacy and mathematics assessments is about <b>\$27</b> .  | \$17.00 for English, reading, writing, math and science for summative only (each subject can also be purchased separately); \$23.00 including interim                   |
| <div style="background-color: #4a5568; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">           Costs are for computer-based tests; paper and pencil tests cost more.         </div> |  |   |
| Estimated Testing Time   | Students will require <b>additional time to fully engage with complex texts, writing tasks and real-world, in-depth math tasks</b> required by the Common Core standards.    | 3-3 ¼ total hours (over the course of multiple sessions) for most students to complete summative assessments in English, reading, writing and math; 55 min. for science |



## ACT Aspire Overview, *continued*

|                                     | Context   | ACT Aspire   |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Use of Performance Tasks            | Performance tasks <b>require students to conduct real-world exercises</b> , such as web-based research, and <b>demonstrate multiple high-level skills and knowledge</b> . | Includes constructed-response items and brief writing exercises but no extended performance tasks                                      |
| Optional, Non-Summative Assessments | Formative and interim assessment tools <b>give teachers more immediate feedback to help them adapt instruction to better meet students' needs</b> .                       | Grades 3-12 classroom-based (5-item tests) and periodic (interim) assessments  |
| Educator Involvement                | Collaboration with educators, who work closest with students, can <b>strengthen both the design of the tests and their engagement</b> during implementation.              | Unknown at this time   |
| External Evaluation or Validation   | Transparent development and reviews <b>allow educators, parents, students and policymakers to understand details</b> of tests.  | All items undergo reviews by internal and external content experts to ensure they are developmentally appropriate, error-free and fair |

The Center for Assessment, Fordham Institute and HumRRO are conducting alignment and validation studies of PARCC, Smarter Balanced and ACT Aspire. Educators will also participate in the studies.



# ACT Aspire Overview, *continued*

|   | Context  | ACT Aspire   |
|---|--|--|
| Technology  | <p>New tests can leverage technology to provide students with <b>more engaging testing experiences</b> and provide students, teachers and parents with <b>more timely results</b>.</p> <p>Although not all states and districts currently administer their assessments on computers, initial surveys show that <b>a large majority of districts already have the technology infrastructure to give new computer-based assessments.</b></p> | <p>Computer-based tests in all subjects and grades*</p> <p><i>*Paper and pencil version available at an additional cost</i></p>  |
| Accessibility Features – Students with Disabilities | <p><b>Students with disabilities</b> require and deserve <b>supports</b> to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the tests just like any other student.</p>   | <p>Includes numerous features for all students (highlighting tool, pop-up glossary) and accommodations for students with disabilities, including text-to-speech in writing, math and science</p> |
| Accessibility Features – English Language Learners  | <p>Students who are <b>English language learners (ELLs)</b> require and deserve <b>supports</b> to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the tests just like any other student.</p>  | <p>Embedded text-to-speech and word-to-word Spanish dictionaries for writing, math and science only</p>  |



## Current and upcoming studies on assessment quality and alignment

- In February 2015, the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education contracted the Center for Assessment to conduct a comparison of the MCAS and PARCC. The study concluded:
  - MCAS does not indicate a student's preparedness for post-high school success; and,
  - the PARCC design and plans make it likely to better indicate college and career readiness.
- In late 2015/early 2016 the Center for Assessment, Fordham Institute and HumRRO will release findings on the quality and alignment of PARCC, Smarter Balanced and ACT Aspire to the Common Core State Standards.





## What we Know (and don't know) about testing time—and what states can do

- A number of states have conducted or are considering studies of their assessment systems, with an eye toward reducing overall testing time for students and schools.

### Common findings from national research on testing and testing time include:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The federal government requires states to test all students in grades 3-8 and in high school in reading and mathematics.</li><li>■ Total time devoted to testing (including all state and district tests) takes up a fraction of learning time.</li></ul> | <p>However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ State testing requirements vary dramatically, with some states expecting much more than others.</li><li>■ Locally mandated or administered standardized tests take up more time during the school year than state tests.</li></ul> |
|---|--|

- States and policymakers planning this type of study should consider:
  - Assessment review studies take time (and resources) to be done well.
  - Review processes should involve key stakeholders—including educators, parents, employers and higher education leaders.
  - Policymakers should examine requirements and practices at both the state and local levels.

# The current assessment landscape



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# Summary of 2014-15 assessment landscape

Over the past year, many states debated—in state education agencies, state boards of education and state legislatures—the best path forward for statewide assessments in math and English language arts. The debate is sure to continue, but the majority of states are moving to new tests to measure its standards.

## Assessment Options

- The majority of states that adopted the Common Core are members of one or both of the Common Core-aligned assessment consortia (PARCC and Smarter Balanced).
- A few states are developing new assessments independently, while many other states are continuing to use current tests.

## Assessment Transitions

- Most members of PARCC and Smarter Balanced are administering the consortia's summative assessments statewide in the 2014-15 school year.
- Two states (Alabama and South Carolina) have adopted ACT Aspire statewide.

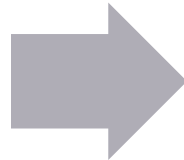
## Assessment Numbers

- Nearly half of all grades 3-8 and high school test-takers in the U.S. are projected to take either the PARCC or Smarter Balanced assessments for statewide summative tests.
- The other half will take states' current tests or other newly-procured tests, like the ACT Aspire.



# About 12 million students (~47% of all test-takers) took either PARCC or Smarter Balanced summative assessments in the 2014-15 school year.

PARCC



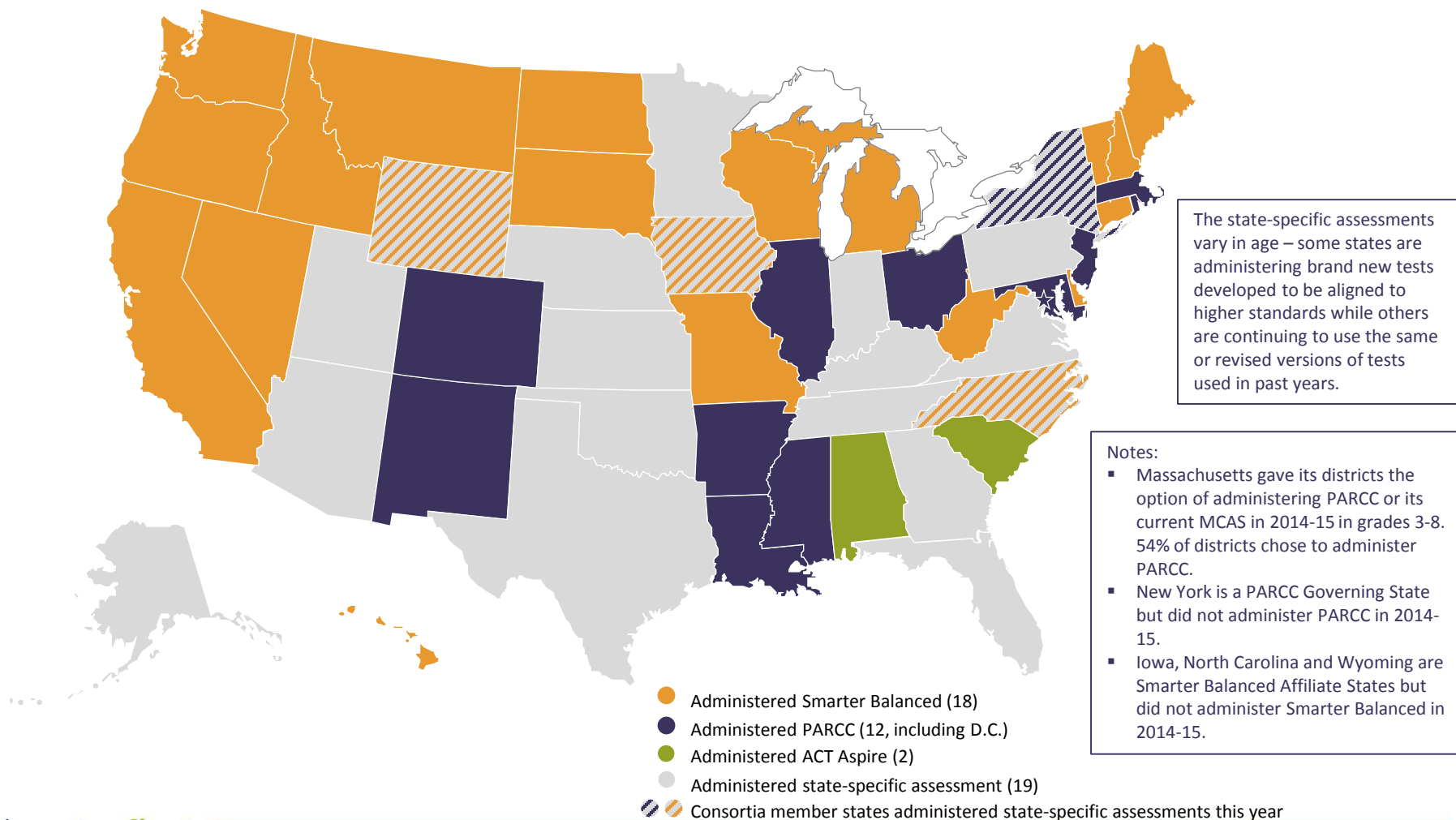
Smarter  
Balanced

- This total represents about **24% of all students** in all grades in 2014-15
- This total represents about **47% of test-takers** (grades 3-8 and 11) in 2014-15



# Looking Back: States' Assessments for 2014-15

Note: The assessments states administered in 2014-15 do not necessarily align with their current consortia membership.



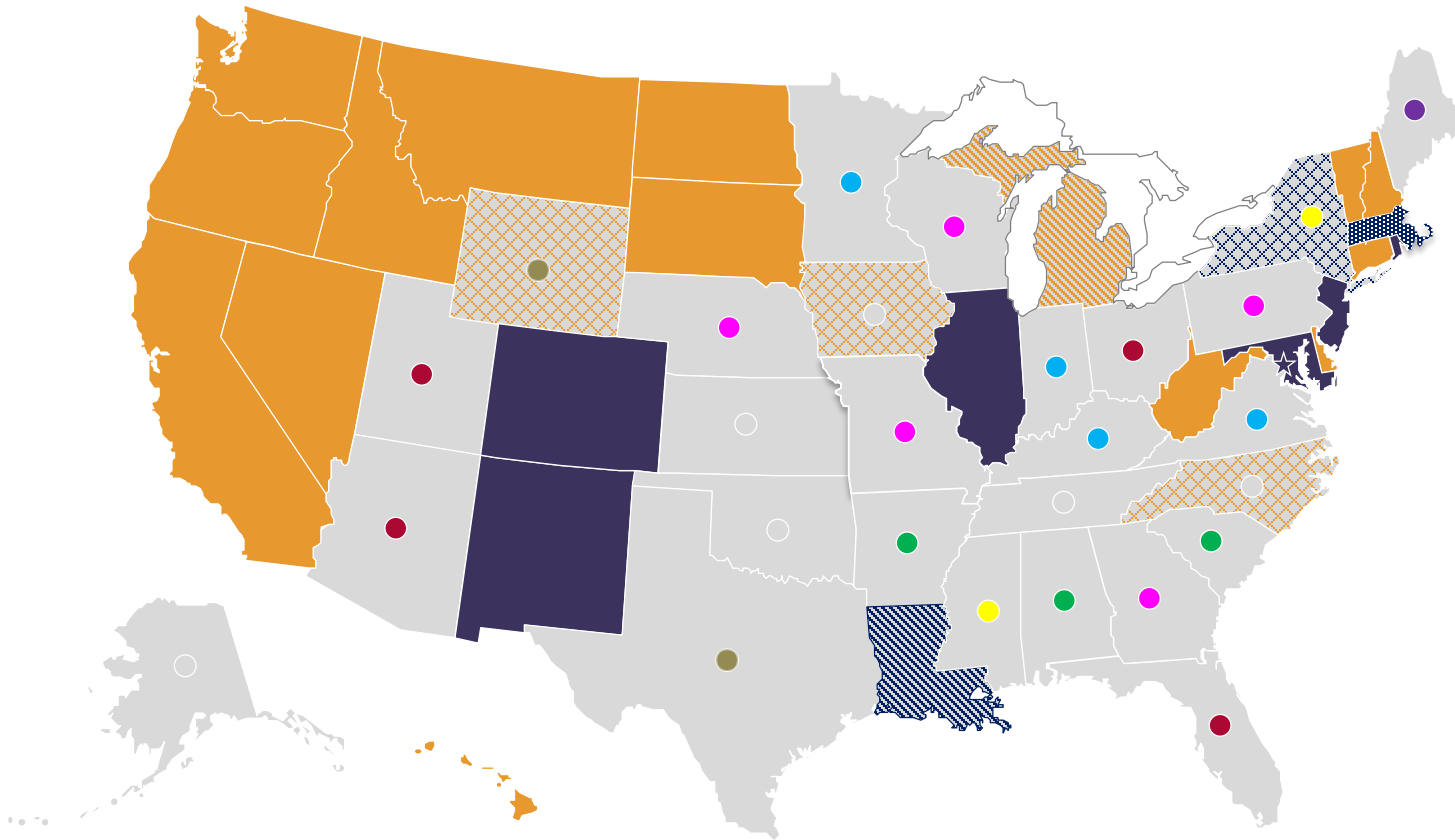
The state-specific assessments vary in age – some states are administering brand new tests developed to be aligned to higher standards while others are continuing to use the same or revised versions of tests used in past years.

- Notes:
- Massachusetts gave its districts the option of administering PARCC or its current MCAS in 2014-15 in grades 3-8. 54% of districts chose to administer PARCC.
  - New York is a PARCC Governing State but did not administer PARCC in 2014-15.
  - Iowa, North Carolina and Wyoming are Smarter Balanced Affiliate States but did not administer Smarter Balanced in 2014-15.



# Looking Forward: States' Assessments for 2015-16

Note: This map shows states' likely assessments for 2015-16 based on current contracts and any recent policy changes.



- Notes:
- Massachusetts gave districts the option of administering PARCC or its current MCAS in 2014-15. It will decide in November 2015 which assessment to administer statewide moving forward.
  - Maine will no longer administer Smarter Balanced and has issued an RFP for a new assessment for 2015-16.
  - New York is a PARCC Governing State but will administer its own state-specific test in 2015-16.
  - Iowa, North Carolina and Wyoming are Smarter Balanced Affiliate States but will administer their own state-specific tests in 2015-16.
  - Louisiana and Michigan plan to use a portion of PARCC and Smarter Balanced items, respectively, in their state-specific tests.

## PARCC\*

- Administering PARCC (7, including D.C.)
- Embedding PARCC items in state-specific test (1)
- PARCC member but administering state-specific test in 2016 (1)
- Member of PARCC but undecided for 2016 (1)

## Smarter Balanced\*

- Administering Smarter Balanced (14)
- Embedding Smarter Balanced items in state-specific test (1)
- Member of Smarter Balanced but administering state-specific test in 2016 (3)

## Other Assessments

- AIR (4)
- ACT Aspire (3)
- Pearson (4)
- ETS (2)
- Questar Assessment Inc. (2)
- Data Recognition Corp.\*\* (5)
- Other vendor or state-designed (6)
- Undetermined as of Fall 2015 (1)

\* All PARCC states use Pearson as their vendor for test administration. Smarter Balanced states procure their own test administration vendors.

\*\* includes state contracts acquired from CTB/McGraw-Hill



**For More Information**

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**Or visit: <http://www.education-first.com>**



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## Helpful resources

### Assessment Options:

- PARCC: [parconline.org/](http://parconline.org/)
- Smarter Balanced: [www.smarterbalanced.org/](http://www.smarterbalanced.org/)
- ACT Aspire: [www.discoveractaspire.org/](http://www.discoveractaspire.org/)

### For Parents and Educators:

- National PTA: [www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3816](http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3816)
- Council of the Great City Schools: [www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageID=1](http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageID=1)
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation: [www.businessforcore.org/](http://www.businessforcore.org/)
- Stand for Children: [stand.org/academic-check](http://stand.org/academic-check)

### Recent State Reports on Assessments:

- Summary document: What We Know (and Don't Know) About Testing Time—and What States Can Do: Resources for Legislators: [wiggio.com/yui/folder/stream\\_file.php?doc\\_key=7kNog5dLhQe3UZaeuC29XLLigQDWkvIxlho8mIJxo8U=](http://wiggio.com/yui/folder/stream_file.php?doc_key=7kNog5dLhQe3UZaeuC29XLLigQDWkvIxlho8mIJxo8U=)
- Michigan: [www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Common\\_Core\\_Assessment\\_Option\\_Report\\_441322\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Common_Core_Assessment_Option_Report_441322_7.pdf)
- Ohio: [education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Testing/Ohio-s-State-Tests/Testing-Report-and-Recommendations-2015.pdf.aspx](http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Testing/Ohio-s-State-Tests/Testing-Report-and-Recommendations-2015.pdf.aspx)
- Colorado: [www.cde.state.co.us/cdedepcom/taskforce](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdedepcom/taskforce)
- New Jersey: [www.state.nj.us/education/studycommission/](http://www.state.nj.us/education/studycommission/)



# Appendix: Assessment comparison tables





# Comparison of PARCC, Smarter Balanced and ACT Aspire

|   | Context   | PARCC  | Smarter Balanced   | ACT Aspire  |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Summative Assessments</b>  | Annual tests provide a measure of <b>student growth</b> over time on a vertically aligned set of standards.   | Each grade 3-11  | Each grade 3-8 and 11  | Each grade 3-8 and 9 or 10 (“early high school”); does not include the ACT college admissions test  |
| <b>Subjects</b>   | Common Core standards measure <b>math</b> and <b>ELA/literacy, with an emphasis on writing grounded in evidence from text</b> at each grade level.                                      | ELA/literacy, including writing, and math  | ELA/literacy, including writing, and math  | English, reading, writing, math, science  |
| <b>Estimated Per-Student Costs</b>                                    | Nationally, the current <b>average per-student cost</b> for state ELA/literacy and mathematics assessments is about <b>\$27</b> .   | \$23.97 summative only for both ELA/literacy and math; unknown for non-summative   | \$22.50 summative only for both ELA/literacy and math; \$27.30 including interim and formative                                 | \$17.00 for English, reading, writing, math and science for summative only; \$23.00 including interim   |
| Costs are for computer-based tests; paper and pencil tests cost more. |   |  |  |   |
| <b>Estimated Testing Time</b>   | Experts agree students will require <b>additional time to fully engage with complex texts, writing tasks and real-world, in-depth math tasks</b> required by the Common Core standards. | 6 ½-7 ½ total hours (during multiple sessions) for most students to complete summative assessments in both ELA/literacy and math | 7-8 ½ total hours (during multiple sessions) for most students to complete summative assessments in both ELA/literacy and math | 3-3 ¼ total hours (during multiple sessions) for most students to complete summative assessments in English, reading, writing and math; 55 min. for science |



# Comparison of PARCC, Smarter Balanced and ACT Aspire, *continued*

|  | Context   | PARCC  | Smarter Balanced   | ACT Aspire   |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Use of Performance Tasks</b>            | Performance tasks <b>require students to interact with a variety of real-world stimuli</b> , such as web-based research, and <b>integrate high-level skills and knowledge</b> across standards. | Summative Performance-Based ELA/literacy and math assessments in each grade 3-11   | Summative Performance Tasks ELA/literacy and math assessments in each grade 3-8 and 11   | Includes constructed-response items and brief writing exercises but no extended performance tasks                                      |
| <b>Optional, Non-Summative Assessments</b> | Formative and interim assessment tools are <b>helpful for adapting instruction to better meet students' needs</b> .   | Grades K-2 formative, grades 3-11 Speaking & Listening, diagnostic and mid-year assessments  | Grades 3-12 interim and formative assessments  | Grades 3-12 classroom-based (5-item tests) and periodic (interim) assessments  |
| <b>Educator Involvement</b>                | Collaboration with educators, who work closest with students, <b>strengthens both the design of the tests and their engagement</b> during implementation.                                       | Educators create and review test items and provide feedback on instructional resources; Educator Leader Cadres engage colleagues in implementation | Educators create and review test items; State Leadership Teams and Networks of Educators are working to develop a digital library of formative tools and professional learning resources | Unknown at this time   |
| <b>External Evaluation or Validation</b>   | Transparent development and reviews <b>allow educators, parents, students and policymakers to understand details</b> of tests.  | Test specifications analyzed by Technical Advisory Committee of national experts   | Test specifications analyzed by Technical Advisory Committee of national experts   | All items undergo reviews by internal and external content experts to ensure they are developmentally appropriate, error-free and fair |

The Center for Assessment, Fordham Institute and HumRRO are conducting alignment and validation studies of PARCC, Smarter Balanced and ACT Aspire. Educators will also participate in the studies.



## Comparison of PARCC, Smarter Balanced and ACT Aspire, *continued*

|  | Context  | PARCC  | Smarter Balanced   | ACT Aspire  |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Technology</b>  | New tests can leverage technology to provide students with <b>more engaging testing experiences</b> and provide students, teachers and parents with <b>more timely results</b> . | Computer-based tests in all subjects and grades<br><br>Paper and pencil version available at an additional cost  | Computer-adaptive end-of-year tests and computer-based performance tasks<br><br>Paper and pencil version available at an additional cost   | Computer-based tests in all subjects and grades<br><br>Paper and pencil version available at an additional cost   |
| <p>Although not all states and districts currently administer their assessments on computers, initial surveys show that a large majority of districts already have the technology infrastructure to give new computer-based assessments.</p> |  |  |  |   |
| <b>Accessibility Features – Students with Disabilities</b>   | <b>Students with disabilities</b> require and deserve <b>supports</b> to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the tests just like any other student.                        | Includes numerous features for all students (highlighting tool, pop-up glossary) and accommodations for students with disabilities, including assistive technology, text-to-speech and speech-to-text for math and ELA | Includes numerous features for all students (highlighting tool, pop-up glossary) and accommodations for students with disabilities, including text-to-speech for math and ELA (grades 6+ only) | Includes numerous features for all students (highlighting tool, pop-up glossary) and accommodations for students with disabilities, including text-to-speech in writing, math and science |
| <b>Accessibility Features – English Language Learners</b>  | Students who are <b>English language learners (ELLs)</b> require and deserve <b>supports</b> to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the tests just like any other student. | Universal design enhances accessibility for all students. Additional accommodations for ELLs include text-to-speech in math and ELA for all grades   | Stacked English/Spanish translation, text-to-speech and glossaries in 10 languages other than English are all embedded in the computer platform  | Embedded text-to-speech and word-to-word Spanish dictionaries for writing, math and science only  |

Sources: PARCC, "Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers," (2015), <http://www.parcconline.org>; Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, "Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium," (2015), <http://www.smarterbalanced.org>; ACT, "ACT Aspire," (2015), <http://www.discoveractaspire.org/pages/home>; Education Week, "Common-Assessment Groups Differ on Accommodations," (2014), <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/04/23/29cc-accommodations.h33.html>