

## PARCC MYTH-BUSTING

**MYTH:** Common Core will allow “Big Brother” to mine data. PARCC gives government bureaucrats private information about our children and families— information the government will use to track us and sell to commercial enterprises.

**FACT:** Common Core does not collect or require the collection of any data, and states are not allowed to share student data.

The Common Core standards are focused solely on what students should know and understand at each grade level. PARCC is governed by the states and cannot make policy decisions without the approval of participating states. PARCC does not change state or federal privacy protections in any way. Further, a number of additional steps have been taken to ensure the protection of student privacy, including adopting a data privacy and security policy to ensure the information gathered is used for the sole purpose of measuring student progress.

The consortium only maintains the minimum amount of non-identifiable student information necessary, and only specific people at the Louisiana Department of Education and the school/district of each student will have access to any information that could link a test to a specific student.

**MYTH:** There is no evidence that PARCC is higher quality than our current assessments.

**FACT:** Two independent studies have found the PARCC assessments to be superior to current state assessments in measuring both deeper learning and higher-order skills. Additionally:

- PARCC is aligned to the Louisiana Common Core State Standards, which makes the assessments more meaningful than the outdated LEAP and iLEAP exams.
- Despite significant gains in LEAP and iLEAP scores, Louisiana students are still failing when measured against peers across the country. We must raise the bar so our kids can compete nationally and globally!

If we are going to raise educational standards, we need a way to measure whether or not those standards are being met. A fundamental aspect of raising standards is having assessments tied to those standards.

**MYTH:** High-stakes testing and assessments are harming education

**FACT:** States that have set rigorous standards connected to strong accountability systems have seen the greatest gains for all students.

- PARCC assessments will allow principals, teachers, parents and students to have a more realistic and accurate understanding of a student’s academic needs.
- PARCC online assessments are given periodically throughout the school year. Thus, teachers are able to determine the particular needs of students and tailor their instruction to meet the students’ specific needs. This improves instruction and learning throughout the school year. Louisiana’s postsecondary institutions support more rigorous standards and assessments as preparing students across the state for college and

career. Performance on PARCC assessments will serve as an indicator of students' readiness for entry-level, credit-bearing college courses.

- Better tests, better value: PARCC exams are innovative, engaging and computer-based exams that provide results that are actionable by the end of the school year.

**MYTH: PARCC assessments lack reliability and validity.**

**FACT: The PARCC assessments explicitly align with the Common Core State Standards, which were developed with input from parents, teachers, state officials and education experts.**

The assessments themselves will be evaluated in "practice runs." Louisiana is participating in the fall 2014 test simulation day. PARCC will use the field test data to evaluate:

- Accessibility/Fairness
- Comparability: Can computer- and paper-based tests, desktop and tablet-based tests be put on the same reporting scale?
  - Construct validity: Do the assessments measure the concepts they were designed to measure?
  - International benchmarking: What are the best ways to link PARCC assessments with national and international assessments?
  - Quality of test administration: Are the manuals and directions clear?
  - Various psychometric studies: Is vertical scaling feasible?

**MYTH: PARCC is more expensive than LEAP/ iLEAP.**

**FACT: PARCC will cost roughly the same, and possibly less, than LEAP assessments.**

- Louisiana budgets about \$17 million a year for development of the LEAP tests.
- PARCC development costs are shared, and thus will not cost the state more than LEAP.
- The current median for state tests is \$29.95. PARCC will cost \$29.50 for reading, writing and math.
- Textbook costs will decrease, because companies will be producing materials in bulk for the PARCC consortia. Further, exam printing and shipping costs are eliminated.
- A recent report estimated that Louisiana would save \$71 million from eliminating the number of students under the age of twenty-five who take at least one remedial course, and realize additional earnings of \$28 million if students who were expected to have graduated finished college without requiring remedial learning.

**MYTH: Louisiana is not technologically capable of administering PARCC online exams.**

**FACT: Two-thirds of Louisiana school districts have enough computers to effectively administer the assessments, with other districts working to meet the standards set by the state. 47 of 69 districts meeting the minimum standard set by the state of one computer per seven students. Two parishes, St. James and Iberville, even have a 1:1 ratio.**

The PARCC assessments are online, and will allow for higher-quality questions that require greater critical thinking skills. For example, students will be able to create graphs and write essays using the computer, something that has previously been more difficult to do in paper-and-pencil assessments.

**MYTH: PARCC will place English Language Learners and students with disabilities at a disadvantage.**

**FACT: PARCC's goal is to enhance teaching and learning for all students, and it has developed extensive policies so all learners can access the test.**

Testing accommodations will provide equitable access during instruction and assessment and mitigate the effect of a student's disability without reducing learning or achievement expectations. PARCC has approved test supports for English language learners and students with disabilities, including test direction clarifications, oral answers transcribed to text, and written-to-word translations, depending on the student's level. These supports will be field tested in 2013-14 and adjusted before the final assessments are used in 2014-15.

PARCC accommodations will be granted to students with disabilities who have an approved IEP or 504 plan prior to the date of the test administration or students who use accommodation routinely during classroom instruction and locally-administered assessments. Louisiana is a member of English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA 21), whose assessment system will have a screener to identify ELLs in need of services, and help not only with tracking student proficiency but also reclassify students as fluent in English.