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PARCC FIELD TEST BEGINS ON MONDAY

NEW ASSESSMENTS ALIGN TO MARYLAND COLLEGE AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS

BALTIMORE (March 21, 2014) -- Maryland and 11 other States will begin field-testing the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) assessments on Monday, March 24. The new, computer-based assessments, covering English language arts/literacy and mathematics in grades 3-8 and at the high school level, are aligned with the new Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards, which were built on the Common Core State Standards.

The field test in Maryland is one of the nation's most extensive. Virtually every Maryland elementary, middle and high school is involved, with at least one classroom in each school slated to take part. Approximately 65,000 students in the State will be taking either the math or the English language arts/literacy exam.

Here is some background on the new assessments some of our students will be test driving next week.

- **The PARCC Assessment Represents a Total Reset**

The PARCC assessments have been three years in the making. They are replacing the Maryland School Assessments (MSA), which have been in place for the last decade. These new advanced assessments are aligned to new standards, the user experience will be totally different, the scoring is different, and for the first time, Maryland will be able to examine deeper learning, critical-thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills needed for career and college readiness.

Both the English language arts/literacy and mathematics portions of the test are designed to be taken online, although a paper and pencil version will be available for at least three years. PARCC is working to keep the assessments "device neutral," allowing students to take PARCC on a range of devices including desktops, laptops, netbooks, and tablets.

Next year, PARCC will replace the MSA in reading and mathematics for students in grades 3-8 and the HSA in algebra/data analysis and English 10 for students entering grade 9. The PARCC assessments will measure the content and skills contained in the new standards.

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Over time, the computer-based PARCC assessments will yield results more quickly than traditional paper-and-pencil tests, delivering information on student learning that teachers can use to help inform instruction. The PARCC assessments will also be more engaging to students, asking them to solve problems, write essays, and answer questions that resemble the kind of high-quality coursework found in effective classrooms.

The PARCC assessments in English and mathematics are completely new exams, based on new Standards, and scored on a different scale. The results will not be able to be compared with MSA results.

- **Maryland Teachers Have Helped Build PARCC and are Receiving Support**

Maryland is a governing state in PARCC and Maryland educators in K-12 and higher education have participated in the test's design and development. Additionally, State educators are playing an important role in providing information about PARCC to their peers and public through the State's Educator Leader Cadre.

MSDE and PARCC are providing a variety of training tools to prepare school personnel for the field test and next year's full implementation of the PARCC assessments. Local Accountability Coordinators (LACs) in every school system have received training from MSDE on administering the field tests and the LACs are, in turn, providing training to local School Test Coordinators.

Teachers will receive instruction from their School Test Coordinators. Test Coordinators also will be able to provide access to PARCC training modules, tutorials, and other resources through PARCC's training management system.

- **English Language Arts/Literacy**

Sixty percent of the PARCC ELA/literacy assessments will involve writing. Unlike previous assessments that chiefly assessed ELA through multiple choice questions, writing will be a key element of PARCC. In all tested grade levels, students will be asked to analyze text and use that information to create a written response.

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More information about the three writing task types, as well as some sample items can be found at: www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes. All text passages in the ELA/literacy portions of the assessments will come from authentic texts.

The PARCC passage selection guidelines state: “The texts students encounter on tests should be worthy of careful attention, be content rich and challenging, and exhibit professional published quality.” Unlike previous assessment passages, written for the purpose of the test, PARCC will feature only previously published texts. Multiple-choice and selected-response questions on the ELA/literacy assessments will focus on reading and vocabulary. All multiple-choice questions will be based on a text and require students to provide evidence to support their answer. Additionally, vocabulary questions will focus on meaning as presented in the text. Students will not be expected to have prior knowledge of the content of the text.

- **Mathematics**

Unlike pencil-and-paper bubble tests, the PARCC assessments will more closely resemble high-quality classroom work. More than 60 percent of the mathematics questions will focus on the mathematics standards that have been identified as the “major work of the grade” (as outlined in the PARCC Model Content Frameworks, available at: www.parcconline.org/parcc-model-content-frameworks).

Students who do well with the major work of the grade in mathematics will do well on PARCC. Mathematics Reference Sheets for grades 5-8 and for high school will be available to students during the assessment. In addition, there will be calculator and non-calculator sections. Assessments in grades 6-7 will allow for a four-function plus square root calculator, assessments in grade 8 will allow for a scientific calculator, and assessments in high school will allow for a calculator similar in functionality to a TI-84 graphing calculator. PARCC’s calculator policy and other PARCC assessment administration guidance is available at: <http://parcconline.org/assessment-administration-guidance>.

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