



Illinois State Board of Education

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Gery J. Chico
Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

February 2014

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am writing to let you know about changes with state assessments. These changes may modify your child's assessment experience this spring before assessments permanently change in 2015.

As you may have heard, Illinois is among a group of leading states participating in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) – an internationally-benchmarked assessment of applied knowledge designed to measure the new Illinois learning standards. PARCC will replace the ISAT and PSAT in 2015. As a member state, our educators are helping to develop these computer-based tests in math, reading, and writing that are of exceptional quality. These tests will measure students' content knowledge and key skills, such as their ability to think critically, solve problems, and use information from their reading material to write well-developed essays.

Before we can administer these PARCC-developed tests statewide, we must conduct field tests this spring. This is really a "test of the test" to see how well it works and whether we need to make any adjustments before students take the actual PARCC exams in the 2014-15 school year. This is also a chance to make sure that students can use their schools' tablets, laptops, and desktop computers to take the tests and learn of any issues for those taking the paper-and-pencil version of the new tests. Students won't get scores back based on the results, but they will get a chance to engage in challenging math or English problems and writing exercises. By taking part in the field tests, our teachers and students will play an important role in the development of Illinois' future tests.

The Illinois State Board of Education expects that by participating in the field test, students will take an additional two to six hours of testing this spring, depending on the content area, the PARCC component(s), and the grade level.

Teachers and principals throughout the state have told me that they are looking forward to the opportunity to become more familiar with PARCC, which is aligned to the new Illinois' learning standards. Together, we hope these new, more rigorous standards and exams will help better prepare students for success in college and careers.

Thank you for all you do on behalf of your children. If you have any questions, please contact your child's school principal or my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher A. Koch".

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

