



# Arkansas Measures of Academic Success: PARCC-developed English Language Arts and Mathematics

In July of 2010, Arkansas voluntarily adopted new, college and career-ready academic standards in an effort to better prepare children for the next steps in their education and in life, and to bolster a competitive and thriving state economy.

School districts have determined their own curriculum to meet the new standards and teachers are providing daily instruction to ensure that students can meet the new expectations set by the standards. Honest, fair and transparent assessments aligned with these new standards will help teachers and parents keep their students on track for college and career by graduation.

## What is Arkansas's PARCC Assessment?

Arkansas's PARCC assessment is a set of modern learning tools developed by educators to allow students to show what they know and what they can do. The assessment helps students improve their skills and gain knowledge to succeed in school and life.

These carefully prepared tests are engaging for students and effectively measure achievement across all levels, including students who struggle and those who are more advanced, something few tests offer. The tests tell teachers, students and parents whether a student is on track for the next steps in their education and mark students' progress from third grade up.

## What is PARCC?

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a group of states that have worked together to develop high quality tests in English language arts and math for grades 3-8 and high school.

Arkansas joined the PARCC consortium as a Governing Member in the fall of 2010. Since then, Arkansas educators in elementary, middle, and high schools and colleges and universities have contributed thousands of hours to the development of Arkansas's PARCC Assessment.

## Why PARCC?

PARCC assessments are aligned to new, rigorous standards that measure not only knowledge but also skills, like critical thinking and problem-solving. Rather than lending themselves to "test prep," these assessments do a better job of measuring what happens in the classrooms of effective teachers throughout the year.

Unlike most assessments, these tests evaluate whether students are ready for the next step in school and in life and provide the necessary information to correct the course if they are not. These tests:

- Are **modern learning tools developed by educators** who understand what students need to know and be able to do to succeed in college and good jobs.
- **Serve as an "educational GPS system"** to assess where a student currently is and help teachers and parents determine the best route to prepare them for a career and/or college by the time they graduate.
- **Provides better information so teachers can determine where a student needs help** so they are able to personalize instruction to meet individual student needs at the start of the following school year.
- Adequately measure the **full range of student performance for high, low and mid-performing students.**
- **Use computer-based questions** that are more interactive and engaging and **return important information to teachers faster.**

## Quick View of Arkansas's PARCC Assessment

More than **100 Arkansas educators** contributed to test development.

Arkansas educators spent **thousands of hours** over the past four years to develop.

**More than 40 Arkansas educators and content experts review test questions.**

Assesses English Language Arts and Math in **grades 3-8 and high school.**

The test is designed to **measure critical thinking and problem solving.**



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## When do students take the assessments?

Students will participate in tests once in early spring and once in late spring.

## Why are there two components to the test?

Think of it as one test in two parts. Students take the performance-based assessment in early spring because it takes more time to score. It captures critical thinking, reasoning and application skills through “extended tasks.” Students read passages from real texts – fiction and non-fiction, and sometimes watch video or listen to audio. They write, using what they’ve learned from the passages and multi-media sources to support their arguments. Students solve multi-step math problems that require mathematical reasoning and address real world situations, make sense of quantities and their relationships, and show their understanding. These skills are critically important in college and in the workplace.

The late spring end-of-year assessment consists of innovative, short-answer questions and items to measure concepts and skills – reading comprehension and vocabulary, and mathematical concepts and short applications. Both components of the test are essential to getting a complete picture of student understanding and achievement. Together, they measure the full range of learning standards, including knowledge, concepts and skills.

## Can students take just the PBA or the EOY?

No. The two components together make a single test. Single components cannot provide valid scores.

## How much time will the tests take?

Students will take only one or two PARCC assessment units per day. Each unit is scheduled for 60 to 90 minutes, with most students expected to finish in less time. Students with disabilities and English learners may have more time, if identified in advance (e.g., via IEP, 504, EL plan).

## Sample Spring Performance-Based Assessment Schedule

Students will take this component of the assessment in the early spring. Schools schedule the full amount of time below, though most students are expected to finish in less time.

The window is four weeks long to accommodate schools that may not have the technology to allow all students in a grade to test at the same time. Schools may choose to have students within a grade complete testing in one week, as shown below, or rotate through the units, extending the testing beyond a week for a grade.

	<b>Monday March 16</b>	<b>Tuesday March 17</b>	<b>Wednesday March 18</b>	<b>Thursday March 19</b>	<b>Friday March 20</b>
<b>Grade 3</b>	ELA Unit 1 (75 min)	ELA Unit 2 (75 min)	ELA Unit 3 (60 min)	Math Unit 1 (75 min)	Math Unit 2 (75 min)
<b>Grade 4-5</b>	ELA Unit 1 (75 min)	ELA Unit 2 (90 min)	ELA Unit 3 (60 min)	Math Unit 1 (80 min)	Math Unit 2 (70 min)

## Sample End-of-Year Assessment Schedule

Students will take this test at the end of the school year. The results will be combined with the performance-based assessment to produce a comprehensive report for each student.

	<b>Monday May 4</b>	<b>Tuesday May 5</b>	<b>Wednesday May 6</b>
<b>Grade 3-5</b>	Math Unit 1 (75 min)	Math Unit 2 (75 min)	ELA Unit 1 (75 min)

\*Grades 6 through high school have differing unit times with an additional ELA unit.

## Arkansas PARCC Testing Windows

Performance Based Assessment (PBA):  
March 9 – April 10, 2015\*

(Note: No testing from 3/23/2015 – 3/27/2015 during uniform spring break)\*

End of Year (EOY) Window: April 27 – May 22, 2015