

A BIG WIN FOR NEW YORK STUDENTS

New York State Common Core Learning Standards



Before adopting the New York State Common Core Learning Standards in 2010, the bar was set far too low for New York students. As a result, many students graduated high school lacking the skills they needed for success. The former state standards were vaguely worded and did not prioritize essential skills like critical thinking and reasoning.

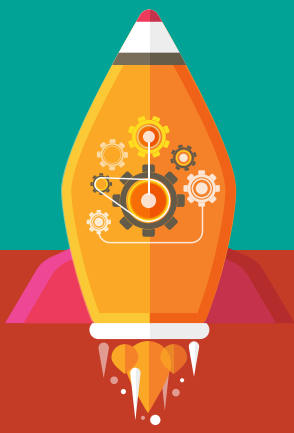
The results of the former standards are illustrated by disheartening statistics on New York student academic achievement. In 2013, 74.9% of our students graduated high school on time, but even of those graduates, 63% did not achieve college readiness indicators. In 2012, 27% of students in the state university system had to enroll in at least one remedial course because they lacked the skills to complete college-level work. The Nation's Report Card, also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), shows that in every grade and subject, only about one-third of New York students are proficient.

New York's Proficiency Rates on the Nation's Report Card

Year	4th Math	4th Reading	8th Math	8th Reading
2011	36%	35%	30%	35%
2013	40%	35%	32%	35%

In 2010, the Board of Regents adopted an updated set of standards that were higher, clearer, and more focused on the skills that matter most for college and careers. Parents and teachers provided input on the standards during two public comment periods. The result was a set of standards unique to New York that help teachers guide instruction and create a more interactive classroom environment for all students. The standards help teachers identify gaps in student understanding so the most at-risk students can get the support they need. Almost 70% of New York teachers support the standards and believe they will continue to have a positive impact on student learning.

By 2020, 67% of jobs in New York will require a postsecondary credential. However, only 48% of adults in the state currently have this credential, resulting in a 19% skills gap. Raising the bar will allow New Yorkers to be confident that our students will be qualified to fill these jobs, contributing to the growth of our economy.



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What is PARCC?

- A group of states working together to create new computer-based assessments that will measure whether a student is on track to graduate high school prepared for college and careers.
- The PARCC tests aim to:
 - Accurately measure students' progress toward college and career readiness;
 - Assess a wide range of skills, including real-world skills like critical thinking and writing; and
 - Provide real-time information on student progress to help guide teacher instruction and improve learning.

Higher Standards Deserve Better Assessments

For more than three years, New York teachers have participated in professional development on the standards, and more than half of the teachers in the state have served on local standards committees. It has been a significant undertaking involving countless hours of training, curricula development, and learning strategies to engage students in their learning.

Now that there are stronger standards in place, New York needs a test that can identify the skills students have mastered and where they need more support so the necessary interventions can be put in place. On average, students currently spend more time on district benchmark assessments than state tests. Since the new state tests assess a wider range of skills and provide better information, they have the potential to eliminate many of the district assessments, reducing the overall time students spend testing.

These assessments must be part of the larger education accountability system, at the heart of which is the need to ensure that all students across New York receive the same high-quality education. New York became a governing member of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) in 2010. Since 2012, students have been taking revised New York State Regents exams that are aligned to the Common Core standards and follow the PARCC model framework. Schools will continue to administer these revised exams this spring in 4th and 8th grade math and English language arts. The Board of Regents has not yet determined if they will administer the PARCC assessments in the future; if they are not used, the Board stated that the selected assessment will still follow the PARCC framework.

The improved tests will offer a more accurate indication of students' progress than before. There has been some controversy as early results of the aligned tests showed drops in student scores, but they are heading in the right direction—and provide a more accurate picture of how students are performing. On last year's math test, proficiency increased more than 5% from 2013 and held steady in reading. As students and teachers become more familiar with the standards, these scores are sure to continue improving.

It is important to advocate for the criteria that will make our test a great measuring stick of how our students are performing both at the state and national level. Leaders continue to be enthusiastic about the improved assessments because they include many of the criteria that make up a high-quality test and result in better quality instruction for all students. As advocates, we need to ensure that our state test—and any future revision—not only accurately measures real-world skills, but also possess these characteristics that will make it a useful tool to help students improve.

What Does a High-Quality Assessment Look Like?

A high-quality assessment:

- Is developed with input from both content specialists and test experts, as well as teachers;
- Is fully aligned to the standards;
- Is field-tested and reviewed before full implementation;
- Assesses a wide range of real-world skills using a variety of question formats;
- Includes formative (or interim) assessments that act as “academic checkups” to make sure students are keeping pace;
- Provides detailed and timely feedback that sends an early warning signal to teachers if students are struggling so interventions can be put in place; and
- Is comparable across states so that students who move from one state to another are held to the same standards of performance and have a smoother transition.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How were teachers involved in the test development process?

- Teachers were involved in the development and review of PARCC test items and reading passages. Teachers also served as members of the Education Leader Cadres that meet to share best practices, review PARCC state-developed instructional materials, and become active leaders in state and local implementation.

2. What kind of professional development did teachers receive in preparation for the standards?

- Over the past few years, thousands of teachers attended Network Team Institute training sessions throughout the state and accessed the content on the EngageNY teacher webpage. Expert teachers from the Institute teamed up with districts and schools to build the capacity of New York educators to implement the standards.



Why Support the New York State Common Core Learning Standards?

- They are consistent, high-quality standards for all of New York’s students.
- They help give all students an equal shot at success.
- They focus on real-world skills like critical thinking and problem-solving.

Why Do We Need Good Tests?

- They give us an honest, objective report of how our students are doing.
- They ensure all students are held to the same expectations.
- They identify struggling students so they can get the help they need.

3. What kind of data will be collected? Will it be released?

- The only information that will be publicly available will contain school-based aggregate data for schools, districts, and subgroups. Under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, New York is required to collect data on the performance of schools. The state will collect information on student achievement and progress, but will not release any personally identifiable student information. Federal law protects the privacy of student information and education records through the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

4. How will test scores impact teachers?

- Since the 2012–2013 school year, student learning objectives, which include student test scores, have been used as a portion of a teacher's evaluation. However, this only counts for 20% of a teacher's total evaluation score.

5. How will test scores impact schools and districts?

- School-wide test results will be used as one measure for school accountability. Just as we use tests as academic checkups for individual students, they also serve as checkups on our schools. We need to identify areas of low performance so that interventions can be put in place to help all students receive a high-quality education.

6. Will the tests take longer?

- No matter what test is chosen, there is a good chance it will take longer. The aligned tests are of much higher quality, so the time invested will provide us with more detailed and useful information on student progress than ever before. The time will be spent reading complex text, writing essays, and explaining reasoning, which are essential skills to master and practice.
- The PARCC assessments are estimated to take between 9 to 11 hours for both the performance-based task and the end-of-year piece. This is split into nine different testing sessions. As students get older, testing time increases.

7. Do students need to be computer literate?

- Students will need to be computer literate. Paper and pencil versions will be available during the first three years of testing for schools that cannot meet the technology requirement.
- While it may take some time to ensure that every school has the hardware necessary and meets the technology requirements, this is a smart investment. Technology is not going away. Ensuring that all students, regardless of geography or household income, have equal access to technology is critical to preparing students for a 21st century competitive workforce.

8. Will the new test replace the old state test?

- Yes. The new assessments will be aligned to the new standards and replace the old Regents exams.

9. Where can I go for more information?

- www.parcconline.org
- www.engageny.org
- www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment
- www.BusinessForCore.org