

Q & A: Standardized Testing in CPS

How can I find out what tests my child is taking?

State law requires each public school to report to the IL State Board of Ed and to parents what standardized tests are being administered, when, and what the results will be used for. If your school has not yet sent this information home or posted it online, ask your principal to provide it. CPS administers more than a dozen standardized tests; some students may be taking standardized tests every month or even biweekly. Some testing is required by federal or state law, but much is at the discretion of districts and schools.

Why is CPS administering PARCC in elementary school?

CPS administers PARCC because IL requires all public schools to administer PARCC to 3rd-8th graders to comply with federal law. States can choose which test to administer; IL selected PARCC. The state pays for PARCC.

Why doesn't CPS administer PARCC in high school?

After two years of massive opposition, Illinois discontinued PARCC in high school. IL now requires schools to administer the SAT to all 11th graders to comply with the federal requirement for annual testing in high school. The SAT replaced the ACT in high school last year. The state will only pay for districts to administer the SAT, not the ACT.

Will IL keep PARCC for 3rd-8th grade?

The IL State Board of Ed has put out a Request For Proposals for a \$216M contract for state testing in 2019 and beyond. The RFP says any new contract must “maintain comparability with prior 3-8 assessment administrations” and that “the majority of the test items[...] will remain constant.” And the test will eventually be adaptive (like the NWEA MAP) and have results returned in weeks instead of in months.

How many states besides IL are still using PARCC?

Maryland, New Mexico and the District of Columbia. In January, the governor of New Jersey announced they will no longer use PARCC. Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Colorado use some PARCC questions on their state test.

Why is CPS still administering NWEA MAP in elementary school?

There is no state or federal requirement for CPS to administer NWEA MAP. When the state switched to PARCC in 2015, CPS decided to use NWEA MAP as an interim high-stakes test for elementary schools, i.e. for rating schools, evaluating teachers and promoting students in 3rd, 6th and 8th grades. In summer 2016, CPS told schools that 2016-2017 would be the last year for MAP in elementary schools, but in fact, they have continued to use MAP for high-stakes purposes. CPS will not be using this year's PARCC scores for selective-enrollment admissions. Private schools are

not using the PARCC, and the PARCC lacks national percentiles used for selective admissions.

Are PARCC scores a reliable and/or useful measure of what my child is learning?

All answers on PARCC tests are scored by computers, including essays and extended responses. Computer algorithms rely on superficial features and statistical patterns to score answers and cannot meaningfully evaluate high-level thinking skills. PARCC score reports provide canned descriptions of a child's performance level. Teachers can only see a tiny portion of the actual test questions and no student answers. PARCC is longer and more expensive but does not provide substantially different information about students than older standardized tests.

Why would it be problematic for CPS to adopt PARCC as a high-stakes district test?

PARCC scores have been set so that the majority of students who take PARCC are labeled as not meeting expectations (a score of 3 or lower on a 5-pt scale). Less than 1/3 of students are labeled proficient. For English-language learners and students with disabilities, fewer than 1 in 10 students are labeled as proficient based on PARCC. If high-stakes decisions like school closings, teacher ratings and student promotion are based on PARCC, these policies would become even more damaging to under-resourced schools and students.

Can my child refuse PARCC this year?

Yes, all students can refuse to participate in PARCC. The fewer students that take the test, the more difficulty CPS will have in creating statistical formulas to rank and rate students, teachers and schools based on PARCC in the future. PARCC scores from Spring 2018 will **not** be used for any high-stakes decisions for any CPS students (promotion, graduation, selective enrollment admissions.)

Will low participation on PARCC hurt our school or district?

CPS had <95% participation in both 2015 and 2016 with no consequences. After three years of mass opt outs across the country, the federal government has still never penalized any state or district for high opt-out rates on state tests. Illinois has a new tier-rating system, and schools that do not have at least 95% participation will not be able to receive the top rating. After three years in a row of <95% participation, schools may be assigned a Tier 3 rating of “Underperforming School” and could be eligible for “targeted support and improvement”, which includes things like additional funding and professional development programs.

