

# Top 10 Things Parents Need to Know about Testing in Maryland

Updated November 2014

Maryland implemented new, higher standards for student learning in all schools across the State in 2013. The Maryland College and Career Ready Standards are based on the Common Core State Standards, which have been adopted by Maryland and over 40 other states, and provide students with the relevant, real world knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers. In order to measure student mastery of the new standards, this year Maryland will implement new statewide tests – the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments – which replace the current statewide tests, the Maryland School Assessment (MSA). The PARCC tests in English 10 and Algebra will replace the High School Assessments (HSAs) in those subjects this year, while the HSAs in Government and Biology will continue to be administered. As we continue this transition to the PARCC assessments, the Maryland State Department of Education has compiled a list of the 10 most important things parents need to know about testing.

#1

**The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) tests in English language arts/literacy and mathematics will be given each spring.**

Students in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 will be given the new assessments. These tests, aligned to the new standards, mark a major step forward for education in Maryland.

#2

**The new PARCC tests are designed to be given online, but paper and pencil versions are available.**

Many classrooms will be administering the PARCC tests on computers or tablet devices, but due to technology constraints felt in some classrooms there will be paper and pencil versions of the test available at least through 2017.

#3

**The PARCC assessments represent a complete reset of Maryland's state testing system.**

Scores will not be comparable with the old MSA tests in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. The new tests look at different content and use an entirely new grading system. Data for the 2014-15 administration will represent a new baseline for students and schools.

#4

**The PARCC assessments are a better measure of student learning.**

These are not the typical multiple choice bubble tests that have been prevalent for decades. The new PARCC assessments will measure problem solving skills that students need to be successful in college and careers. The PARCC tests will also provide timely information about what individual students are learning and whether or not they need extra help.



#5

**The science MSA will continue to be administered.**

The computer-based MSA science exam is still given to students in grades 5 and 8 in March or April, as it has been administered for the past decade.

#7

**Scores on the first full administration of the PARCC assessments will be available by the end of 2015.**

Information on student achievement in mathematics and English language arts/literacy will be available for students, parents, and educators; and will include specific information about progress toward college and career readiness.

#9

**The PARCC tests in Algebra and English 10 replace the Maryland High School Assessments (HSAs) in Algebra/Data Analysis and English 10.**

Students will not be required to pass the Algebra and English 10 PARCC assessments in order to receive a Maryland High School diploma until 2016-17. They must still take and pass the Biology and Government HSAs to graduate, and must complete and pass all their coursework.

*For additional information and resources, please visit:*

PARCC Website:

[www.parcconline.org](http://www.parcconline.org)

PARCC Practice Tests:

<http://parcconline.org/practice-tests>

Maryland State Department of Education:

[www.marylandpublicschools.org](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org)

Maryland school, district, and state scores:

[www.mdreportcard.org](http://www.mdreportcard.org)

#6

**Federal law requires that all Maryland students take an annual statewide assessment, or the State risks losing millions of dollars in funding.**

Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), all students in grades 3-8 must be tested every year in reading and mathematics. Annual testing is important to help ensure that all students are making progress.

#8

**Parents of students with disabilities will be contacted by their child's IEP or 504 team to discuss allowable PARCC accessibility features and accommodations.**

Accessibility features and accommodations will continue to be tailored for individual student needs. There are some accommodations in current IEP or 504 plans that:

- Are no longer allowable for the PARCC assessments,
- Are included for all students as an accessibility feature, or
- Have specific guidelines that IEP or 504 teams must consider when selecting the accommodation, such as text-to-speech, calculator, scribe, or word prediction.

#10

**If you have additional questions about testing, ask your child's teacher or principal.**

These educators and administrators will have the most accurate information about what is happening in your child's classroom and school. They can also share ideas on what you can do at home to help your child succeed.

