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Research Studies Evaluating PARCC Assessments

There have been multiple reviews over the last year evaluating the different summative assessment options for grades 3-11. Summaries of the following studies show that PARCC is high quality, comparable to NAEP, accessible, predictive of college readiness, and endorsed by the country's top educators.

High Quality Assessment Criteria

In February 2016, [The Thomas B. Fordham Institute](#) (grades 5 and 8) and the [Human Resources Research Organization](#) (HumRRO, high school) evaluated how well four standardized tests, including PARCC, match the criteria for high quality assessments developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers. The studies found:

- PARCC is especially strong in the content and depth of the ELA and math assessments in grades 5 and 8.
- PARCC was rated higher than both ACT Aspire and the Massachusetts MCAS, the latter of which was previously considered the leading assessment in the country.
- PARCC is more accessible to students with disabilities and English learners than previous state tests.

Comparability to NAEP

Released in February 2016, AIR's [National Benchmarks for State Achievement Standards Study](#) compares state achievement standards in ELA and math to NAEP reading and math at grades 4 and 8. It examines three multi-state tests (PARCC, Smarter Balanced, and ACT Aspire) and all non-consortium states that administered state-specific tests in spring 2015. The report found:

- PARCC is the only assessment to have college-ready achievement standards comparable in difficulty to the NAEP Proficient level (PARCC mathematics grades 4 and 8).
- In ELA, PARCC is comparable to the high end of NAEP Basic – higher than the other two tests that were benchmarked.

Accessibility and Accommodation Features

In February 2016, the Center for American Progress (CAP) released a report on the progress made in accessibility features and accommodations for students with disabilities and English language learners. In the report, [Better Tests, Fewer Barriers: Advances in Accessibility through PARCC and Smarter Balanced](#), CAP found that the new exams are a tremendous step forward, providing better access for those who need additional supports, and suggest next steps for the future of assessments.

"...PARCC emphasize[s] the most important content ...and... measure[s] a wide range of real-world skills like critical thinking, problem solving, and analysis."
-HumRRO

"PARCC college-ready standards ... are comparable in difficulty to the NAEP Basic level for ELA and comparable to the NAEP Proficient level for mathematics."
-AIR

"...a major step forward in accessibility and accommodation features for students with disabilities and English language learners."
-CAP

In particular, they recommend that:

- States continue to implement PARCC exams and assessment items to ensure that all students have access to high-quality assessments.
- States and districts should provide more guidance and information to schools, families, and other stakeholders on test accessibility and accommodations.
- State and local leaders, assessment developers, and others must work together to continue to make progress on next-generation assessments for all students.

Predicts College Readiness

In October 2015, multiple reviews were published examining how PARCC compared to the Massachusetts state test. [The Massachusetts Executive Office of Education released a comparison](#), while the authors of the [Mathematica Policy Research issued a report](#) on how well MCAS and PARCC predict student performance in college. The conclusions were aligned:

- PARCC is better at signaling college readiness.
- PARCC assesses the skills that matter.
- MCAS is no longer sufficient to meet the needs of students.

Endorsed by the Nation's Top Teachers

In November 2015, [the National Network of State Teachers of the Year \(NNSTOY\) issued a report](#) about how the PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessments compare to previous state tests. [Teach Plus](#) had 1,000 teachers examine PARCC, as well, and issued similar conclusions, stating that:

- PARCC is superior to previous state tests in multiple ways.
- PARCC is particularly strong at assessing complex skills and aligning closely with high-quality instruction.
- English Language Arts (ELA) is particularly aligned to key instructional shifts.

“PARCC’s performance standard of college readiness is better... at identifying students who do not need remediation and can earn “B” grades in college.”

-Massachusetts Executive Office of Education

“What we found is clear: There was consensus across participating teachers that the new consortia assessments ... illustrate where we should be headed in summative assessment...”

-NNSTOY