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Governor

March 8, 2013

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, Directors of State-Supported Schools, District Test Coordinators, Charter School Test Coordinators, State-Supported Schools Test Coordinators

**FROM:** Pete Goldschmidt, Ph.D., Assistant Secretary, Assessment and Accountability

**RE:** PARCC Update

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New Mexico's current Reading, Writing and Mathematics components of the Standards Based Assessment (SBA) has served the state well, going beyond multiple-choice questions as found in many other states and including open-ended tasks and performance-based measures. The SBA bridge assessments over the next two years will enable us to transition from our current assessments to the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers (PARCC) assessments which will be delivered in 2014–15, with the aim of measuring the full extent to which students are demonstrating mastery of the New Mexico Common Core State Standards (NMCCSS).

In 2011, New Mexico joined PARCC as a governing state and committed to building a K–12 assessment system that

- Provides a college- and career-ready determination that two- and four-year colleges and universities in PARCC states can use to place students into entry-level, credit-bearing courses;
- Creates high-quality assessments that measure critical thinking skills and the full range of the NMCSS;
- Makes better use of technology in assessments;
- Allows for rapid return of results—before the end of the school year; and,
- Advances accountability at all levels.

To that end, New Mexico remains fully committed to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) in our role as a governing state, and will continue to work with PARCC to develop a system of next generation assessments. Therefore, I am pleased to share with you the following updates regarding the PARCC assessments as detailed below.

### **The PARCC Assessment Design**

As mentioned in my memo to you in January 2013, the PARCC assessments will be administered in two components as follows:

1. A performance-based assessment component (PBA) to be administered after approximately 75% of the school year
2. An end-of-year assessment (EOY) component to be administered after approximately 90% of the school year

The ELA/literacy PBAs at each grade level will include a research simulation, a literary analysis and a narrative task. For each task, students will be asked to read one or more texts, answer several short comprehension and vocabulary questions, and write an essay that requires them to draw evidence from the text(s). The EOYs at each grade level will include 4–5 texts, with a number of short-answer comprehension and vocabulary questions.

The mathematics PBAs at each grade level will include both short- and extended-response questions focused on conceptual knowledge and skills, and the mathematical practices of reasoning and modeling. The mathematics EOYs will be comprised primarily of short-answer questions focused on conceptual knowledge, skills, and understandings.

More information about the PARCC blueprint, including the number, types, and values of the items that will appear in each component will be forthcoming this spring. PARCC items and task prototypes are currently available at their link: <http://www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes>.

### **Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs)**

In late 2012, PARCC adopted a framework for reporting student achievement on the PARCC assessments using five performance levels. (New Mexico currently uses four levels: Beginning Step, Proficient, Nearing Proficiency, and Advanced.) Although no formal names for the levels have been adopted, the PLDs will describe the level of command that a student demonstrates of the knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the Common Core State Standards assessed at their grade level, as follows:

Level 5	Distinguished Command
Level 4	Strong Command
Level 3	Moderate Command

Level 2	Partial Command
Level 1	Minimal Command

### **College- and Career-Ready (CCR) Determinations**

Additionally, PARCC has now adopted PLD Level 4 as the threshold score for earning the determination of college- and career-readiness in collaboration with its higher education partners who are members of the Advisory Committee on College Readiness (ACCR). A student who is determined to be College- and Career-Ready through performance on the PARCC high school assessments is one who has demonstrated the academic knowledge, skills, and practices in ELA/literacy or mathematics necessary to enter directly into and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing courses in those content areas in programs leading to a credential or degree which may be aligned to the student's career aspirations, from two- and four-year public institutions of higher education.

It must be noted that the academic knowledge, skills, and practices defined by the PARCC CCR Determinations are an essential part of students' readiness for colleges and careers, but do not encompass the full range of knowledge, skills, and practices needed for success in postsecondary programs and careers. For example, skills and techniques such as persistence, motivation, and time management are critical elements of college and career readiness, along with other employability and technical skills and career awareness.

More information about the PLDs and the CCR Determinations can be found at these links:

[http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCCCCRDPolicyandPLDs\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCCCCRDPolicyandPLDs_FINAL.pdf)

[http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/FAQforCCRDandPLD\\_Updated11-1-12.pdf](http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/FAQforCCRDandPLD_Updated11-1-12.pdf)

### **Guidance on the Number of Devices for Computer-Based Administration**

The minimum student to device ratio for PARCC testing in New Mexico will be 5:1. This ratio indicates that a single device should be able to facilitate five students taking the PARCC assessments, given the anticipated PARCC assessment window. However, student to device ratios for instruction should be locally determined. Additional information on PARCC technology and instructions for accessing the PARCC *Technology Readiness Tool (TRT)* can be found in the *New Mexico Educational Technology Guidance* at: <http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/NMPARCCDocs/NMPARCCTechnologyGuidelines.pdf>.

### **Guidance on Anticipated PARCC Testing Window**

PARCC assessments will be administered in a total of nine sessions. At each grade level, the PBA component will require five sessions—three for ELA/literacy and two for mathematics. The EOY component at each grade level will require four sessions—two sessions for ELA/literacy and two sessions for mathematics. On average, the PARCC summative assessments (PBA and EOY combined) will take approximately nine hours to complete per student, which is the current average testing time per student on the SBA.

PARCC will utilize two testing windows (one for PBA and one for EOY) that will allow schools sufficient time to complete all sessions and make-up exams using a five to one student to device ratio.

### **The PARCC Technology Readiness Tool (TRT)**

Last October, the Public Education Department (PED) asked districts to use the *Technology Readiness Tool* (TRT) to enter data regarding device counts and PARCC compatible devices. The TRT will provide local education agencies a current status of local technology capabilities compared to the technology requirements required for computer-based assessments. Districts are encouraged to ensure data in the Tool is current. In the weeks to come, the PED will provide information on more refined functions on the TRT and will be asking districts to ensure TRT data is up to date.

### **PARCC Accommodations**

PARCC also anticipates releasing a Draft Accommodations Policies for students with disabilities and a Draft Policy for English Language Learners in the months to come. New Mexico educators have and will continue to have the opportunity to provide public feedback on these draft policies. The most recent activity regarding *PARCC Accommodations, Accessibility and Fairness Policies* can be found at <http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-accessibility-accommodations-and-fairness>.

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cc: Hanna Skandera, Secretary-Designate of Education  
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