February 25, 2014

TO:   Chief School Administrators
      Charter School Lead Persons

FROM:  Dr. Tracey Severns, Chief Academic Officer

SUBJECT:  Resources to Support Preparation for PARCC

On January 22, 2014, PARCC released sample test items on the testing platform students will use when taking the field test later this spring. Previously, items were available only as downloadable printouts. Now, these fully functional sample test questions allow educators and students to experience the new testing format before it becomes fully operational in spring 2015.

The purpose of this memo is to offer suggestions regarding how the new tech-enabled items and other PARCC resources can be used to help educators prepare students for the new assessments.

Sample Items on the Technology Platform

Educators are encouraged to try the items across all grade levels in order to develop a true understanding of the assessment’s range of rigor, item types and functionalities - from a new take on traditional multiple choice style questions aided by technology to longer tasks that ask students to show their understanding. In reading and writing, students will have to show they can read and understand complex passages, write persuasively and present findings based on research. In mathematics, students will have to show their work and demonstrate they understand a concept rather than simply memorizing a formula. They will have to apply mathematics knowledge in real-world problems. To express their understandings, students will have to use computer-based tools such as drag-and-drop, multiple select, text highlighting, and equation builder. By using the online tutorials that demonstrate how students will navigate the test, educators can learn how to use the computer-based tools and features that make the test more accessible for all students, including those with disabilities and English learners.

(http://parcconline.org/computer-based-samples)
Accessibility Features and Accommodations Manual

This document provides guidance for districts and decision-making teams to ensure that PARCC assessments produce valid results for all students. The manual includes an overview of the PARCC Assessment, information regarding the accessibility system and accessibility features for all students, the accommodations for students with disabilities, and accommodations for English language learners. It also provides a five step decision-making process for selecting, administering and evaluating the use of accommodations for PARCC assessments. This is essential information for administrators, IEP, I&RS and 504 team members, teachers (general educators, special educators and ELL/ESL educators), related service providers, parents and students. (http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-assessment-policies)

Assessment Blueprints and Test Specifications

The blueprints are a series of documents that together describe the content and structure of an assessment. These documents define the total number of tasks and/or items for each assessment component, the standards measured, the item types, and the point values for each. The ELA/literacy blueprints provide useful information to better understand the design of the assessments, the selection of passages/texts, the relationship of reading to writing, how to assemble passages/texts with questions to form cogent performance-based tasks, and how to use the ELA/literacy rubrics to guide thinking about classroom rubric use. The Mathematics blueprints demonstrate the coherent nature of the standards and clarify which evidence statements are eligible for the performance-based assessment (PBA) and the end-of-the-year assessment (EOY) (http://www.parconline.org/assessments-blueprints-test-specs)

Evidence Tables and Evidence Statements

These documents describe the knowledge and skills that an assessment item or task elicits from students. The ELA tables contain the Reading, Writing, and Vocabulary Major Claims and the evidences that will be measured on the PARCC summative assessment for each. Teachers of ELA/literacy can use this information to combine standards when designing instructional tasks, to determine alignment of complex text with standards for instructional passage selection, to develop the stem for questions and tasks that are aligned to the standards, to provide instructional scaffolding, and to develop rubrics and scoring tools for classroom use. The Mathematics tables include evidence statements and clarifications that describe the content that will be measured on the Performance-Based Assessments (PBA) and End-of-Year Assessments. This information can be used to sequence curricula so content is taught in time for the PBA, to identify the evidence statements that allow calculator use, and to understand what students are going to have to do for Claim C (reasoning) and Claim D (modeling). (http://parcconline.org/assessment-blueprints-test-specs)

Model Content Frameworks

The model content frameworks provide guidance on key elements of quality instruction that is aligned to standards. They are useful resources for educators and those developing curricula and instructional materials. The Frameworks for Mathematics provide detailed information about selected practice standards, fluencies, connections and content emphases, including examples of key content dependencies (where one concept ought to come before another), key advances from
the previous grade, and opportunities for in-depth work on key concepts. Teachers of Algebra I and Algebra II may find the information regarding which standards will be assessed on the PARCC Algebra I and Algebra II assessments particularly useful. The Frameworks for ELA/Literacy include a narrative summary of the ELA Standards, a model content framework chart that presents a visual overview of the standards in a particular grade level (including crucial reading demands and written emphases for instructional planning), key terms and concepts for the model content framework chart, and progression charts for the writing and the speaking and listening standards. [http://parcconline.org/parc-model-content-frameworks]

**Draft Generic Rubrics**

These rubrics have been developed for the scoring of the three Prose Constructed Response items that will appear on the PARCC summative assessments. The language of these rubrics is aligned to the CCSS, the PARCC writing evidences, and the PARCC content specific performance-level descriptors at the given grade level. There are rubrics for grade 3, grades 4-5, and grades 6-11. Teachers may wish to use the rubrics to score writings produced during classroom instruction, to score final written essays, to help students edit and revise their work, to demonstrate the criteria for excellence for specific writing skills, and to use language from the rubrics to create their own classroom rubrics or other formative assessment tools that are aligned to the standards. ([http://parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/Grade3CondensedRubric.pdf](http://parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/Grade3CondensedRubric.pdf)) ([http://parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/Grade4-5-ELACondensedRubricFORANALYTICANDNARRATIVEWRITING.pdf](http://parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/Grade4-5-ELACondensedRubricFORANALYTICANDNARRATIVEWRITING.pdf)) ([http://parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/Grade6-11-ELACondensedRubricFORANALYTICANDNARRATIVEWRITING.pdf](http://parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/Grade6-11-ELACondensedRubricFORANALYTICANDNARRATIVEWRITING.pdf))

**Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs)**

These documents describe what students at each performance level know and can do relative to the assessed grade-level or course content standards. The PLDs are intended to clarify the skill development of all students by providing clear indicators of levels of mastery that range from Level 1 to Level 5 (Minimal Command, Partial Command, Moderate Command, Strong Command and Distinguished Command). This information can help teachers determine their students’ current level of achievement and plan lessons, interventions, instruction and assessments designed to raise their performance to the next level. ([http://parcconline.org/ela-plds](http://parcconline.org/ela-plds)) ([http://parcconline.org/math-plds](http://parcconline.org/math-plds))

**Task Prototypes**

These prototypes, released in 2012, were early renditions of what PARCC’s standards-aligned items were expected to be. Although they were reviewed by content and assessment experts, they did not undergo the extensive review process and field testing that was used with the newly released sample items. Even so, these items can be used by educators to better understand the content, format and level of rigor associated with PARCC items. In addition, each item has a scoring guide and a rationale that explains how the item is aligned to the standards. ([http://www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes](http://www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes))
In the spring, PARCC plans to release full practice tests so that students not participating in the field test can become familiar with the types of test items and the functionality of the online testing. For more information on PARCC, please visit www.parcconline.org.

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