Sneaking a Peek
Item and task prototypes have recently been released from PARCC, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers. This is the multi-state consortium which will be guiding the creation of the Common Core Assessments that will replace the current ISAT tests in 2014 - 2015. The online prototypes found on the PARCC website are designed to guide educators on the importance of content of the standards in the future technology-based assessments.

What follows is an excerpt from the PARCC website concerning the released items.

PARCC Item and Task Prototypes
The primary purpose of sharing item and task prototypes is to provide information and to support educators as they transition to the CCSS and the PARCC assessments. The dynamic, online prototypes presented on the PARCC website are designed to shine a light on important elements of the CCSS and to show how critical content in the standards may be manifested on PARCC’s next-generation, technology-based assessments. The PARCC sample items and tasks can and should be viewed as one of the many types of materials educators can use during the transition to the CCSS and PARCC. In addition to educators, students and parents may also find the sample items and tasks to be a useful resource for learning more about the CCSS and how state assessments may appear in the future. The prototypes provided to date represent just a beginning to the complement of items and tasks that will be shared over time to represent the full range of assessment tasks that will be included on actual PARCC assessments beginning in 2014-2015. Additional prototypes and rubrics will be added over the coming months to paint a more complete picture of the PARCC assessment design in each content area and grade level.

To view the sample items, go to: http://www.parcconline.org and click on Item and Task Prototypes. The sample links are about half way down the page.

October 2012

The PARCC sample items and tasks can and should be viewed as one of the many types of materials educators can use during the transition to the CCSS and PARCC.
-parcconline.org

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The Common Core State Standards bring instructional shifts to many classrooms. One of these shifts includes a greater and wider use of non-fiction and authentic texts. While the middle school years exposes students to a plethora of informational text through content classrooms (social science, science, vocational, health, etc.), the question we need to ask ourselves is, “Are students actually reading the text?” The research is clear. **The only way to become a better reader, is to read.** Our students need to be reading more. Assigning text to be read, does not guarantee students will read closely. How can we help students closely read and engage with the text?

Try one of the following strategies:

**Annotating Text**

Annotating is the system a reader uses to add notes and comments to a written text. It serves numerous purposes in helping the reader understand and make meaning out of text. Every reader must come up with a system that is most comfortable for him or her or the teacher can come up with symbols.

- ? I have a question
- ! This is a main idea
- VOC I don’t know this word
- + I agree with this
- - I disagree with the author

**Taking Notes**

Many students have not been taught to take notes. Teaching students to write and organize notes is an important skill.

There are many different ways for students to take notes. One idea to consider is “Shrinking Notes.” Teach students to figure out the central idea. This strategy has students begin taking notes on a 3x5 card. Then students should “shrink” the notes to a smaller sticky note and then “shrink” the notes again to the smallest sticky note. The idea is to get to the most important note.

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**Common Core ELA Standard #1 in 7th Grade**

**English Language Arts**

**RL.7.1**

Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

With… autobiographies, essays, opinion pieces, memoirs, songs, and more.

**Science and Technical Subjects**

**RST.7.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of **science and technical texts**.

With... tables, graphs, charts, health articles, lab reports, welding manuals, “how to” books, and more.

**History and Social Studies**

**RHS.7.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of **primary and secondary sources**.

With.... letters, photographs, maps, charts, tables, graphs, political cartoon, articles and more.

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**Digital Literacy in the Classroom**

Digital literacy is the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers. The concept of literacy goes beyond simply being able to read; it has always meant the ability to read with meaning.

The Common Core State Standards incorporate technology by having students:

- Critically read print and digital media
- Critically consume and synthesize research
- Know uses of technology to fit purpose

Source: [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)

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**Teacher Resources:**

**Read, Write and Think** has lesson plans for digital literacy for teachers grades K-12.

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

**School Tube** is a site that has royalty free music, videos and lesson plans for video production and digital story-telling.

[http://www.schooltube.com/videos](http://www.schooltube.com/videos)
Focus on Standard for Mathematical Practice 1

The first Practice Standard, **Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them**, requires students to start a problem by looking for entry points and explaining to themselves the meaning of the problems. Students need to make conjectures, plan a pathway (rather than jumping in), monitor their progress and change course when necessary. When students finish a problem they need to check using a different method or representation (consider equations, verbal descriptions, tables, graphs or diagrams) and then ask themselves, **Does this answer make sense?**

**Proficient students should also understand the approaches of others and be able to identify correspondences between different approaches.**

**How do I encourage MP1?**

- Ask what information they need and how to start.
- Provide ample wait time throughout a problem allowing students to go down a variety of paths.
- Have students reflect on how a problem relates to previous work.
- Ask students to construct their own solution pathway rather than following a provided one.
- Employ problems involving ideas that are currently at the forefront of the student's developing mathematical knowledge.
- Provide students the answer to a problem and ask them to create a strategy that would lead to that answer.

Focus on Standard for Mathematical Practice 2

The second Practice Standard, **Reason abstractly and quantitatively**, requires students to make sense of quantities and relationships in problem situations. Mathematically proficient students should decontextualize and contextualize.

**Decontextualizing** is taking necessary information from a given situation, representing it symbolically and treating these symbols as if they have a life of their own.

**Contextualizing** is pausing during the manipulation process to probe into the meaning of the symbols. Students should be able to create a coherent representation, consider units, and attend to the meaning of quantities.

**How do I encourage MP2?**

- Have students justify their answer using a different representation.
- Have students label their answers.
- Have students write a real-life example.
- Have students explain their thinking.

- Provide students with contextual problems in which they can gain insight by relating the mathematical expressions to a given context.

It is time to recognize that standards are not just promises to our children, but promises we intend to keep.

- CCSSM, p. 5

Key Content Changes for 7th Grade

Reasoning with rates and ratios from 6th grade develops students’ ability to recognize, represent and analyze proportional relationships. They use their understanding to solve a wide variety of problems. Students graph proportional relationships and note differences from other relationships. They use unit rate to understand steepness of a line (slope). Students are fluent in rational number arithmetic operations by the end of 7th grade in preparation for the real number system in 8th grade. They explore equivalent expressions through a deep understanding of the properties of arithmetic. Students solve real-life mathematical problems using numerical and algebraic expressions and equations. Before Common Core, probability was addressed in many grade levels. Now it is introduced in 7th grade. Students explore chance processes and probability models.

**New ideas for seventh grade:**

- Simple inequalities
- Vertical and adjacent angles
- Sampling and variability
This month, let’s take a closer look at just one, but a very significant, Conditions for Learning indicator: “The environment of the school (physical, social, emotional, and behavioral) is safe, welcoming, and conducive to learning.”

Note that the learning environment, or school climate, includes so much more than physical surroundings! Research proves that the nature of interactions among people hugely impacts student and family engagement and therefore, student achievement. As a classroom teacher, you are the most important professional impacting your students’ school experience. Teachers often create positive environments intuitively, but we know that making our efforts intentional significantly improves outcomes.

How do you foster support, respect, and high expectations in your classroom? Now is the time to set and model behavioral norms, by applying the “three Cs”:

**Collaboratively develop.** Invite your students to add thoughtful input when determining their class norms.  

**Clearly communicate.** Norms require learning, as do academics. Teach and model with dignity and clarity.

**Consistently reinforce.** Acknowledge appropriate actions, correct inappropriate responses with dignity.

Learn more about school climate by clicking “CL7” at www.isbe.net/learningsupports/html/conditions.htm.

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**Helpful Resources**

- [http://www.parcconline.org/](http://www.parcconline.org/) features the most up to date information on the progress of the assessments and the prototype items for CCSS.
- [http://illustrativemathematics.org/](http://illustrativemathematics.org/) provides K-12 illustrations of the range and type of work students experience in Common Core and publishes tools to support implementation.
- [www.isbe.net/learningsupports](http://www.isbe.net/learningsupports) includes Conditions for Learning indicators and an A-Z list of topics related to specific issues that create barriers to student learning.