



Illinois State Board of Education

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James T. Meeks
Chairman

Tony Smith, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Education

February 9, 2018

Dear Superintendent:

Illinois is in a time of opportunity and innovation across all of our accountability assessments. At the State Board meeting on February 14, 2018, we will introduce and discuss a competitive procurement of Illinois Assessments of Readiness. Understandably there are questions about what assessments will look like in the 2018-19 school year and beyond. We will build on the strong foundation we have now that is the base of our new accountability system approved in our Every Student Succeeds Act Plan.

The active and ongoing partnership of educators and practitioners has made Illinois a national leader in assessments. Our commitment to excellence and equity drives our assessment design. The results of assessments aligned to Illinois Learning Standards help us identify where students need more or different supports to meet our common, high expectations.

As I've shared in writing, and in person with many of you, Illinois will continue to use and build on the core features of PARCC that make it the highest quality accountability assessment available in the United States, in particular, the complex writing tasks that require strategic reasoning and extended investigation to solve problems. You all know the days when rote memorization and recall could prepare students for college and career are long gone. PARCC is presently the only large-scale assessment to "fully meet" all federal accountability requirements, setting the standard for item quality, removal of bias in testing, and meeting universal design. This initial work will serve as our foundation for continuous improvement.

Our collective vision for the future is a suite of aligned Illinois Assessments of Readiness that serve educators, students, and families with a more useful understanding of where students are in their learning journey today and how ready they are for what's in front of them tomorrow.

We will make improvements in ways that maintain comparability across years and continue to meet federal assessment guidelines. We will continue to use, at minimum, an anchor set of PARCC items. Even as our assessments evolve over time, the standards and expectations that they measure remain constant.

Our specific objectives included in our competitive procurement of Illinois Assessments of Readiness include:

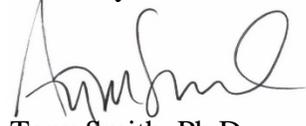
- **Returning results more quickly**, providing educators with meaningful time to adjust instruction;
- **Building assessments from the ground up in more languages** to increase accessibility and allow all students to demonstrate their true level of mastery;
- **Measuring growth in high school**, so educators can better see what's working;
- **Utilizing test items developed by Illinois educators** to more closely align with instruction in Illinois classrooms;
- **Reporting results on a common scale** across all assessments, so educators can be in deeper dialogue with each other and with families and students;
- **Reaching full online assessment** to support equity of access to rigorous instruction and return results faster; and
- **Transitioning to a computer-adaptive format**, meaning the test items get more or less advanced depending on the student's performance as they progress through, so we know not just whether a student meets the standards for their grade level but the upper and lower bounds of their mastery.

The timeline and specific details for all changes depend on the bids and proposals put forth by vendors. There will be no changes to the formats of any assessments for the spring 2018 administration.

We are proud of the foundation we have built together. The PARCC recognition highlights the deep capacity Illinois has to lead the country in creating accountability assessments that also meet the needs of diverse students, educators, and families. Your continued leadership and contributions to create the Illinois Assessments of Readiness that ensure comparability across districts are essential for the long-term economic and civic well-being in Illinois. I appreciate your engagement, support, and patience as we move thoughtfully forward in this collaboration.

Please contact ISBE's Division of Assessment and Accountability at (866) 317-6034 with any questions.

Sincerely,



Tony Smith, Ph.D.

State Superintendent of Education