

Illinois Teachers Participate in PARCC Performance Level Setting

Illinois teachers participated in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) performance level setting in Denver, Colorado. Performance level setting is a systematic process that results in recommended threshold scores (i.e., cut scores) for the five performance levels that will be used to report the results of the PARCC assessment.

Illinois solicited nominations and selected approximately 20 educators and higher education faculty to participate in each performance level setting for high school, grades 7-8, and grades 3-6. Educators were selected because of their content area expertise and familiarity with the Illinois Learning Standards. In some cases, experience in the development of other large-scale assessment programs or experience with diverse student populations was also considered.

The threshold scores that result from this work are recommendations that will be shared with the PARCC Governing Board for consideration and adoption. The PARCC Governing Board is composed of the Chief State Officers from the PARCC Governing States. Dr. Tony Smith, Illinois State Superintendent of Education, is a member of the PARCC Governing Board.

During the performance level setting process educators make recommendations as to what students at each performance level would be able to demonstrate in terms of their knowledge, skills, and abilities, and do this by evaluating test questions on the PARCC assessments, judging how many points a student would likely earn.

For each assessment item, educators engaged in three rounds of judgements. During each round, educators considered how many points borderline Level 2, Level 3, Level 4, and Level 5 students would likely earn, and discussed their judgements as they worked toward a common understanding for each item. After the three rounds of judgements, item estimates for each educator were summed, and the median was taken across educators, resulting in the threshold scores for each performance level.

“It’s exhausting work,” said Marti Shirley, a high school math teacher from Mattoon, “But it’s invigorating and important work as well.”

PARCC is one component of a balanced assessment system that will provide meaningful and comparable assessment information across schools, districts, and states.

More information on creating balanced assessment systems is available on the ISBE Balanced Assessment webpage at <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/htmls/balanced-asmt.htm>