



PARCC Releases Draft Accommodations Manual For Public Comment

WASHINGTON, D.C. - April 18, 2013 - The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) today released for public comment a draft of the full accommodations manual for the assessments currently being developed by the 22-state consortium.

The draft *PARCC Accommodations Manual* is a comprehensive policy document that will support local educators in the selection, administration and evaluation of accommodations for the assessment of students with disabilities and English learners on the PARCC End-of-Year, Performance-Based and optional Mid-Year assessment components. The release of the manual is an important step in meeting PARCC's commitment to accessibility for all students, especially students with disabilities (SWD) and English learners (EL).

Trinell Bowman, who chairs the PARCC Accessibility, Accommodations, and Fairness Operational Working Group, emphasized that these proposed accommodations represent two years of work by PARCC states to ensure that all students have equitable access to the PARCC assessments.

"The draft manual represents significant work to drive towards consensus among PARCC states. The states are to be commended for taking this important step," said Bowman, Program Manager with the Maryland State Department of Education. In addition to accommodations for students with disabilities and English learners, the manual also describes embedded supports and accessibility features that will be available to all students.

The majority of the proposed accommodations policies are currently in use across PARCC states. What is different from many current state accommodations manuals is that the draft *PARCC Accommodations Manual* includes not only proposed participation and accommodations policies for SWD and ELs, but also information about tools that will be provided through PARCC's computer-based assessment delivery system for all students to optimize their performance on the assessments. By assessing students on computers, PARCC states will now have the opportunity to provide all students with tools they frequently use in the classroom and daily life that were once provided only as accommodations for SWD and ELs (e.g. highlighters and enlarged font).

"It is exciting that some features that are considered accommodations by many states today will now shift to embedded supports or accessibility features that are available to all students. This shift in policy represents PARCC's continued commitment to Universal Design principles for assessment," said Dan Wiener, Administrator of Inclusive Assessment at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Chair of the PARCC Accessibility, Accommodations, and Fairness Technical Working Group, comprised of national experts.

In addition to state assessment and content experts, PARCC collaborated on the development of the manual with nationally recognized experts who serve on the PARCC Accessibility, Accommodations, and Fairness Technical Working Group and with the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO).

"A strong and intensive effort has been made to ensure that the draft *PARCC Accommodations Manual* is based on quality research, input from the states, feedback from technical experts, and public comment on earlier draft policies. The National Center on Educational Outcomes is pleased to support PARCC's work by synthesizing feedback from the public to PARCC," said Martha Thurlow, Director of NCEO and a member of PARCC Accessibility, Accommodations, and Fairness Technical Working Group. "The public comment period is vital to make sure that parents and educators can weigh in to make sure we get it right for all students."

PARCC also reached out to experts in drafting the EL section of the manual. WestEd Senior Research Associate Dr. Lynn Shafer Willner, an experienced technical writer of state EL accommodation guidelines, drafted the initial EL policy with input from several PARCC state experts.

Charlene Rivera, Research Professor and Executive Director of the George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education and a member of PARCC Accessibility, Accommodations, and Fairness Technical Working Group said, "This policy manual recommends accessibility features that address ELs' level of English language proficiency and acknowledges other background features of ELs. Creation of the manual is a critical first step for ensuring that ELs have equitable access to the content of PARCC assessments."

The public review period allows for feedback from a wide group of stakeholders, including K-12 educators, parents, curriculum and assessment experts and interest groups. From April 18 through May 13, 2013, the draft *PARCC Accommodations Manual* and a feedback survey will be posted on the PARCC website for the public to provide feedback, along with a set of Frequently Asked Questions (<http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-draft-accommodations-manual>).

Feedback will be reviewed by PARCC state leads, working group members and other national experts and revisions will be made accordingly.

On January 16, 2013, PARCC released two draft accommodations policies for public comment - the reading access accommodation and the calculator use accommodation. The public comment period for those two policies closed on February 4, 2013. On February 8, 2013, PARCC released the draft accommodations policy for

writing access. The public comment period for that policy closed on February 20, 2013. PARCC received over 3,500 individual surveys and over 20 pieces of written feedback from advocacy organizations and stakeholder groups, all of which helped to inform the development of the full draft manual.

The release of the full draft manual includes these policies that PARCC previously released for early comment and feedback, as well as additional proposed policies released now for public comment for the first time. The public is invited to comment on the entire draft manual.

For more information or to view the policies, visit <http://www.parcconline.org>.

Follow the consortium on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/PARCCPlace>.

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PARCC is an alliance of states working together to develop common assessments serving nearly 24 million students. PARCC's work is funded through a four-year, \$185 million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Partners include over 700 higher education institutions and systems representing hundreds of campuses across the country that will help develop the high school component of the new assessment - and then put it to good use as an indicator of student readiness. PARCC is led by its member states and managed by Achieve, a non-profit group with a 17-year track record of working with states to improve student achievement by aligning K-12 education policies with the expectations of employers and the postsecondary community. PARCC's ultimate goal is to make sure all students graduate from high school college- and career-ready. For more information, visit www.parcconline.org.