



Technology Guidelines for PARCC Assessments Version 1.0 – Released April 2012

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How should districts and schools use the Technology Guidelines?

The member states of the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) are pleased to provide these technology guidelines to inform schools and districts as they make technology purchases to best meet the instructional needs of their students. The information in the Guidelines is intended to answer questions about whether new instructional hardware that schools may purchase to implement the Common Core States Standards, will also meet PARCC's 2014-15 requirements for the online test.

As test components are developed, piloted, and field tested, we will regularly update these guidelines to reflect current knowledge about what states will need to administer PARCC's online assessment components, including recommendations for bandwidth, test security, and accessory input devices. A timeline for PARCC technology decisions is included as part of the Guidelines.

The most current versions of the Guidelines and this FAQ document, as well as supporting resources and other information, are available at <http://www.parcconline.org/technology>.

Will tablets and netbooks be compatible with PARCC online assessments in the 2014-2015 school year?

Tablets (iPad, Windows, and Android) and netbooks (Windows, Mac, Chrome, Linux) will be allowable for use with the PARCC online assessment in 2014-2015, provided the specific device models meet the hardware and other requirements described in the Technology Guidelines, including the identified security considerations. Tablet usage for online assessment administration may also require the use of an external keyboard, or other input devices to be determined by research studies during piloting and field testing. Further requirements will be released with Version 3.0 (Fall 2013) of the Guidelines.

PARCC's ongoing conversations with manufacturers of these newest types of devices indicate that they understand the operational and security requirements of high stakes testing and are committed to having solutions in place for the launch of the PARCC assessments. PARCC will not validate individual products, but is exploring the feasibility of helping states access manufacturers' information about the compatibility of their systems to PARCC technology requirements.

Can PARCC identify which specific brands and models of computers will be eligible for use with the assessments in the 2014-2015 school year?

No. Given the large number of devices and models currently in the marketplace and the volume of new devices and operating system upgrades that will be released by manufacturers between now and 2014-2015, PARCC cannot validate individual products. However, PARCC is exploring the feasibility of helping states access manufacturers' information about the compatibility of their systems to PARCC technology requirements.

Will external, physical keyboards be needed for students taking the assessment on a tablet? Are there other accessory devices that will be required for students to interact with innovative assessment items?

Determinations about allowable, unallowable, and/or required input devices—such as the use of a keyboard, mouse, or stylus— will be made available no later than Version 3.0 (Fall 2013) and will be informed by PARCC's item design and field testing phases. In addition, information about the technology accommodations that will be necessary for students with disabilities to equitably participate in online assessments will be a focus for research studies during piloting and field testing. The results of these studies will inform accommodations guidelines in Version 3.0 (Fall 2013).

Do these Technology Guidelines represent the final list of requirements for PARCC assessments in the 2014-2015 school year?

The Technology Guidelines Version 1.0 do not yet constitute the full list of technical requirements that will be necessary to administer PARCC online assessments in the 2014-2015 school year. PARCC will use the technology readiness surveys and assessment design processes currently underway, as well as the results of future field trials to shape the full and final list of requirements, including guidance on bandwidth, test system security, and alternate input devices. A timeline for technology decisions is provided in the Guidelines at <http://www.parcconline.org/technology>.

What about computers running operating systems not included on the list of Minimum Hardware Specifications in the Technology Guidelines?

As part of plans to support instruction, districts and schools may select computer systems that meet or exceed these minimum hardware guidelines and be confident that those systems will work on the assessment in 2014-15. Support for operating systems not specified, predating those specified, or with processor capacities lower than recommended, will be described in Version 2.0 (Fall 2012).

Will schools and districts need to buy special computers just for assessment?

No. PARCC is building an assessment system to support high-quality instruction and expanded learning opportunities that prepare students for college and careers. Therefore, PARCC encourages technology purchasing decisions that address the instructional needs of teachers and students foremost. Toward that end, Technology Guidelines for online assessments are being informed by the actual technology infrastructure and educational technology practices that schools are using as they implement Common Core State Standards within their states. Schools may need to add to or adjust their technology capacity for administering online assessments, but the PARCC technology requirements for 2014-2015 will not be unique to assessment purposes alone.

What about schools and districts who don't have adequate technology capacity by the 2014-2015 school year? Will there be a paper and pencil version of the assessment?

A paper and pencil version of the 2014-2015 assessment will be made available for students who require certain accommodations that preclude online test-taking. The PARCC Governing Board is considering how to provide paper and pencil format assessments as an option for states that need it to address technology capacity gaps or other factors.

Are there tools to help schools and districts evaluate their technology capacity in preparation for the online assessment?

Yes. PARCC has partnered with the Smarter Balanced Consortium and the State Educational Technology Directors Association to operate the Technology Readiness Tool. Each PARCC state has identified one or more State Readiness Coordinator to work with schools and districts to implement the tool. For more information, visit <http://techreadiness.org>. Additional resources will be regularly updated at <http://www.parcconline.org/technology>.

Will the hardware specifications for PARCC online assessments change?

As part of their plans to support instruction, district and schools may select computer systems that meet or exceed the Minimum Hardware Specifications detailed in Technology Guidelines Version 1.0 and be confident that those systems will work on the assessment in 2014-15. Additions to these specifications are anticipated for future versions of the Guidelines. Specifications for bandwidth, security, input device requirements, and other factors will be released in future versions of the Guidelines. A timeline for technology decisions is included in the Guidelines at <http://www.parcconline.org/technology>.

What level of bandwidth or wireless coverage will be needed to administer the assessments in the 2014-2015 school year?

Computers used for online assessment will need to have the ability to connect to the Internet. Internet connectivity and wireless networking capacity requirements will be defined in Version 2.0 (Fall 2012) based on emerging designs for test items and the assessment delivery platform, and informed by the actual capacity data from the Technology Readiness Tool inventory.

Will the assessment be compatible with thin client network configurations?

Yes, provided that system configurations meet the hardware and other requirements described in the Technology Guidelines. As of Version 1.0 of the Technology Guidelines the PARCC technical architecture is still under development; however we are including compatibility with thin client configurations among the requirements for system design.

Will PARCC issue guidance about the eligibility of students’ personally owned devices for assessment administration?

PARCC’s Technology Guidelines will be applicable to all devices used for the PARCC online assessment, whether those devices are owned and provided by districts or are part of a school’s “bring your own device” policy that may allow students to use personally owned computers for in-school learning and assessment. Implementation of student-owned devices at the school or district level is a local policy decision for which PARCC will not be issuing procedures. However, PARCC does support cross-state sharing of best practices around student-owned devices. One resource for discussing shared practices is the Assess4Ed online community (<http://assess4ed.net>) operated by the State Educational Technology Directors Association (<http://setda.org>).

Do these guidelines also apply to the Smarter Balanced Consortium states?

The Minimum Hardware Specifications detailed in the Technology Guidelines have been developed in collaboration with Smarter Balanced and are common to both consortia. We anticipate that additional guidelines for bandwidth, security, and other parameters will also be released as common specifications. However, each consortium will have timelines and implementation details that are unique to their assessment system. The Smarter Balanced guidelines document is available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology>.

Document Revision History

Date	Revision
4/25/12	Document released