



July 6, 2012

PARCC  
c/o Achieve, Inc.  
1400 16th Street, NW, Suite 510  
Washington DC, 20036

Dear PARCC Steering Committee,

In response to your letter dated July 2, 2012, ACT appreciates the opportunity to address your request for information and assurances relating to ACT's development of new assessment products, public comments, and future efforts related to college and career readiness.

ACT agrees with you that states have provided unprecedented leadership in education reform over the past several years, especially with the development of the Common Core State Standards. We at ACT applaud your efforts and have been proud to have served side by side with CCSSO and NGA in their efforts on behalf of the states. ACT was honored to have worked with the College Board and Achieve in the development of the standards. We brought our best research and insights—accumulated over a period of decades—to the collective effort and did so freely, to ensure that the standards were of the highest quality and utility. We continue to champion the effort and express our unambiguous commitment to the Common Core because it aligns to our organization's long held mission and because the movement is the right one for America's future.

To address your specific questions,

1. *Is ACT developing or supporting any assessment products that purport to be alternatives to the PARCC assessments under development?*

**ACT is making a significant expansion of our College and Career Readiness assessment system that is the result of several years of planning and development including conversations with states related to their expanding needs to measure students' readiness for college and career. The system is the natural evolution of our quest to ensure college and career readiness for all students coupled with a range of advancements and innovations that we have developed to help maximize the applied use of assessment in the K-12 context. ACT's solution is backed by our demonstrated track record of success and more than 50-year commitment to college and career readiness.**

**The system was not created as a result of, nor designed to directly compete against, the U.S. Department of Education's Assessment Consortia. Rather, the future direction of our**

assessment system stems from our desire to meet the rapidly changing needs of our education stakeholders. In keeping with our mission, we are building an assessment system that will provide the tools states, districts, and schools have requested in order to ensure students succeed in college and career.

2. *If ACT is developing such an assessment, what steps will you take, and what commitments will you make, to assure that your firm will put forth the strongest possible effort to help PARCC create high quality assessments at the lowest possible cost?*

**ACT has a long history of serving states and their college and career readiness needs through simultaneous assessment projects with multiple states and districts all while integrating numerous assessment and research personnel into our solution development processes. We pride ourselves on meeting, and exceeding, the commitments made to our customers. ACT has in place all the necessary business practices to ensure the organization can meet our obligations to Pearson and the PARCC consortium.**

3. *How can we be confident your firm will devote its top personnel talent to exclusively developing PARCC assessments, even if doing so could adversely impact your other business interests?*

**The ACT staff who were assigned to the PARCC item development contract were prepared to honor and execute the scope of work identified with the prime contractor, Pearson, Inc., and the PARCC consortium. As with many of our projects, we have established processes that would stem any perceived conflict of interest. Given the spirit of your letter however, after consultation with Pearson, ACT will voluntarily withdraw our organization from the PARCC item development work in order to avoid any perceived conflict of interest or action detrimental to PARCC or its member states.**

4. *How can we be confident that public funds you obtain and intellectual property that you produce through your contract with PARCC will not be used to develop assessments that are intended to advance the interests of your firm rather than those of PARCC?*

**The subcontract ACT was negotiating with Pearson covered only the labor of staff involved in reviewing items developed by Pearson. ACT's work did not include the creation of new items or other work that would have been directly related to ACT's assessment solutions. Given ACT's work with a multitude of clients, we utilize strict business processes to protect our client's intellectual property, and can assure the consortium that funds provided to ACT would have subsidized only work directly related to the PARCC effort. However, given our decision to withdraw from the work to avoid any perceived conflicts, this issue is no longer relevant.**

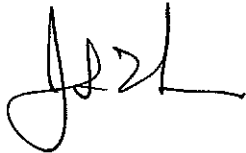
Our efforts have always been – and will continue to be – about ensuring that students are best prepared for life after high school. Our success does not, and should not, depend on “the failure of PARCC, SBAC, or both” as you indicate in your letter; instead, providing high quality assessments and having multiple assessment options from which to choose affords states the greatest opportunity to best meet the needs of their students.

Finally, we would also like to address a reoccurring theme of your letter. You suggest that some in the testing industry have been publically critical of the efforts of PARCC. We want to state unequivocally that, to our knowledge, no ACT staff have engaged in activities or made comments "critical of PARCC" or the assessments you are developing. To act in such a manner would run counter to the values, standards of conduct, and culture that we have worked so hard to develop at ACT.

To ensure there is no misunderstanding of ACT's future efforts, we are requesting a face to face meeting with the members of the PARCC Steering Committee to address this issue and any other concerns that you may have.

We look forward to meeting with you soon to discuss these issues and stand ready to work with you and other members of your consortium to ensure our efforts are not misunderstood or perceived to be counter to your efforts. ACT remains committed to America's students as we have for the past 53 years and will continue to support efforts to ensure they are prepared and ready to meet the challenges of college and career.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JL Erickson". The signature is stylized with a large initial "J" and "L" and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jon L. Erickson  
President, ACT Education Division