



NEWS STATEMENT

CONTACT: Sandy Boyd, Achieve, (202) 419-1542 or sboyd@achieve.org

PARCC Submits Application for Race to the Top Assessment Funds

Partnership Seeks to Move Beyond the Status Quo to Create a Common Assessment System Across States Anchored in College and Career Readiness for All Students

WASHINGTON – June 23, 2010 – Twenty-six states have joined together to create the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC or Partnership). On behalf of the Partnership, Florida today submitted an application to the U.S. Department of Education as part of the “Race to the Top” grant competition. Through the competition, the Department intends to allot \$350 million to consortia of states for the development of common assessments aligned to common standards for what students should learn at each grade level.

Together, the 26 PARCC states educate over 60% percent of the K-12 students in the United States. The 11 governing states that will lead the assessment development effort for the Partnership include: Arizona, the District of Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island and Tennessee. Florida will serve as PARCC’s fiscal agent.

The goal of PARCC is to create an assessment system that will help states dramatically increase the number of students who graduate high school ready for college and careers and provide students, parents, teachers and policymakers with the tools they need to help students – from grade three through high school – stay on track and graduate prepared.

"As strong as Massachusetts' current assessment program is, we do not currently provide our students with a clear enough signal about their readiness for college and career," said Mitchell D. Chester, Massachusetts Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. "This federal grant provides a unique opportunity to develop and pilot new assessment formats at a time when additional state funding is limited. I look forward to working with other states to develop challenging assessments to ensure that our students will graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills they will need to be successful in the 21st century."

The proposed assessment system will be computer based and students will take parts of the assessment at key times during the school year, closer to when they learn the material, rather than waiting for one big test at the end of the year. Teachers and principals will be able to see how students are progressing towards achieving the standards at key points in the school year, allowing them to adjust instructional practices or give extra support to students who need it.

Because the assessments will be developed by states in partnership with one another, they will provide a common metric for measuring the performance of their students; for the first time, meeting standards in one state will mean the same thing as in others.

“It is vital we come together as a nation to ensure every one of our students is taught the core skills they need to compete successfully on an international scale,” said Florida Education Commissioner Dr. Eric J. Smith. “The common assessment system that this partnership is proposing will allow us to take the next critical step toward achieving this goal and give us the information we need to ensure our future workforce is ahead of the curve. Florida is proud to be a leader in this collaborative effort, and we stand ready to leverage our considerable experience to build a prosperous future for all of our children.”

In order to ensure the assessment system is anchored in what it takes to be successful in college and careers, higher education systems and institutions in all PARCC states will participate in the development of the new high school tests. Over 200 higher education institutions, including some of the largest in the country, have agreed to participate. The goal will be for those institutions, and the nearly 1,000 campuses they represent, to honor the results of the new assessments as an indicator of students’ readiness to take first-year credit-bearing courses.

“PARCC's emphasis on anchoring the K-12 assessment system in college and career readiness is exactly the right prescription for ensuring more students graduate from high school ready to take their next steps,” said Charlie Reed, Chancellor of the California State University System. “I’m excited about the opportunity to work with my colleagues in other states to build on California’s experience with the Early Assessment Program and develop a new, shared set of college-ready assessments that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards and send a clear signal of what it takes to be ready for college from coast to coast.”

PARCC has selected Achieve to play a key role in coordinating the work of the Partnership, leveraging the organization’s deep experience in developing education standards, including helping develop the Common Core State Standards, and its experience leading multi-state assessment development efforts anchored in college- and career-ready goals.

Other leaders from Partnership states across the country have also spoken out about their participation in PARCC:

- **Tennessee Governor, Phil Bredesen:** "Tennessee's participation in this partnership will allow us to create a common assessment and performance standards anchored in college and career readiness. If our partnership's application is successful, the funds provided by the Race to the Top Assessment Program will help us reach our fundamental goal of increasing the rate at which students graduate from high school prepared for success in college and the workplace."
- **Rhode Island Governor, Donald L. Carcieri:** "I am proud that Rhode Island has joined the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers and will serve as one of eleven governing states leading the effort to develop common assessments that will measure student achievement on college- and career-ready standards. Several years ago we joined a number of other New England states in embracing the common-standard concept with the establishment of the New England Common Assessment Program, and I believe that this experience will benefit the process of creating new common testing tools. These new common assessments will be designed to help us provide more useful information to our educators as they assess student progress throughout the school year, so they can provide academic supports to fill gaps in student learning and ultimately move more students nationwide toward college and career readiness."
- **New York State Education Commissioner, David M. Steiner:** "We are working together to develop a system that will utilize performance-based assessments, evaluate what students are learning throughout the academic year, and build end-of-year summative assessments to provide the measures of student growth that states need to support valid accountability systems."
- **Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, Nancy S. Grasmick:** "Maryland has been consistently involved with reform programs that we believe will move our students forward. The PARCC consortium is committed to designing assessments that will ensure our graduates are prepared for success after high school. There is no more important goal facing public education at this time."
- **Louisiana State Superintendent of Education, Paul Pastorek:** "Our ultimate goal is to ensure our students graduate prepared to thrive in their post-secondary and workplace pursuits. To do so we must objectively measure and improve outcomes, and this joint effort will assist states by collectively aligning our K-12 assessments with the national Common Core Standards as well as college- and career-ready benchmarks. Also, key to our efforts to improve teaching and learning is that this proposal includes the creation and implementation of not only annual assessments, but formative assessments that will be administered periodically throughout the year. These consistent measures will more fully support the continuous progress of our

students by providing teachers, students and their families with regular feedback so they can address identified challenges sooner, before students fall too far behind.”

- **Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Tony Bennett:** “This common assessment will ensure Indiana’s students are mastering the new Common Core Standards as educators prepare them to meet the new college and career readiness standards. We are honored to be among those states taking the lead to develop this assessment, and we look forward to collaborating with K-12 and higher education leaders across the country to create the best, most accurate tool to measure student and teacher performance.”
- **DC State Superintendent, Kerri L. Briggs:** “DC is excited to join this partnership as a member of the governing board working with our institutions of higher education to craft an assessment that accurately measures college and career readiness. Most importantly, a common assessment will set clear expectations for the District of Columbia’s students as they compete and study with students from across the country in postsecondary education.”
- **Rhode Island Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Deborah A. Gist:** “Through the PARCC consortium, we will develop a high-quality and rigorous assessment system that incorporates technology and innovative items. We will be able to provide educators, students and families with timely and actionable information regarding student performance and with information about whether each student is on track to reach college and career readiness. The PARCC assessment will be a major step forward as we work to ensure that our students are ready for success in college, careers and life.”
- **Arizona Chief State School Officer, Superintendent, Tom Horne:** “We are committed to our involvement in the PARCC Consortium. This effort, to create a strong system of assessments, will support AZ’s vision of equal access to a rigorous curriculum for all students, measured during the academic year, and then again at the end of the year by quality summative assessments. Building strong learners who are both college and career ready is critical not only to the K-12 community that we serve, but to the university system and workforce as well. We look forward to this partnership and the opportunity to share teacher resources, as well as strong assessments with partner states.”
- **Chairman of the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education, Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq.:** “One of the goals of our Strategic Plan for transforming education in Rhode Island is to implement high-quality state assessments aligned to internationally-benchmarked standards. The PARCC assessments, which are to be aligned with the Common Core State Standards and with standards for college readiness, will move us closer to this important goal. We look forward to participating as a governing state in this new partnership.”

- **Chancellor of the State University System of Florida, Frank T. Brogan:** “Helping students be well prepared for college-level work is essential to their success. A stronger, cohesive assessment system will prove invaluable – it will allow students, their families and the educators who support them to get a clearer picture of what skills need to be strengthened in order to move on to the next level.”
- **Chancellor of The Florida College System, Dr. Will Holcombe:** “The Florida College System supports and welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with our K-12 colleagues in Florida and our partner states on the proposed common secondary assessments. Aligned expectations and good cross-sector communication are the vital link in assuring that students in the educational pipeline are well prepared for post-secondary success.”
- **Rhode Island Acting Commissioner of Higher Education, Ray M. Di Pasquale:** “The development of this common assessment is extremely significant for all students and educators at the both K-12 and postsecondary levels. The adoption of these assessments means that students are more likely to be equitably prepared as they prepare for postsecondary education. As a result, postsecondary institutions should begin to see stronger student performance in our classrooms across all levels of students.”

To see the proposal and related materials, go to the Florida Department of Education <http://www.fldoe.org/parcc>

For a summary of the proposal and more information about Achieve’s college and career ready-agenda, visit www.achieve.org/PARCCsummary.

###