

The pathway to success

Understanding the new Illinois learning standards and assessments

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why do we need new standards and assessments, and why are they important?

High academic standards and assessments are important because they help ensure all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in college and the workforce. They help set clear and consistent expectations for students, parents and school districts; build students' knowledge and skills; and help set high goals for all students. Illinois adopted its first set of learning goals in 1985 and revised them in 1996. The new standards and assessments are the next step in the journey of student success. Similar to the car industry making adjustments as they learn more about driver safety, Illinois is implementing new standards and assessments because we have learned more about how to help students be successful.

Is PARCC replacing the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE)?

Yes. During the 2014-15 school year, students in third through eighth grade and high school students will take the PARCC assessment in English language arts and math. PARCC is aligned to the new learning standards and can be given online, so as to facilitate administration and return of results and to reduce cost of administration. These assessments were developed to help bridge student performance from elementary school to high school. PARCC also can be used for instruction, unlike past assessments.

Does Illinois still have local decision-making authority?

Yes. The new standards establish what students need to learn, but do not tell teachers how to teach. Implementation decisions will remain local. Teachers and school leaders will determine how the standards are to be taught and will establish the curriculum, just as they currently do, allowing for continued flexibility and creativity.

** For more information, go to www.pia.org/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2909.*

**THE PATHWAY MIGHT CHANGE,
BUT THE DESTINATION REMAINS
THE SAME**

→ No matter what changes are made to the learning standards and assessments, the goal remains the same – making sure students are prepared to be successful in college and the workforce.

**SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS =
SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES**

→ Illinois has always embraced high standards. We know how important high standards are to helping students become competitive in the workforce, which in turn helps communities through increasing property values.

**MOVING FROM AN ACHIEVEMENT
MODEL TO A GROWTH MODEL**

→ The new standards and assessments will allow school districts to gain comprehensive data that will show the growth of each student. This will provide a "photo album" of each student's success, rather than a "snapshot" that was provided by the previous standards and assessments.

See sample questions
from the new
assessment at
[www.parcconline.org/
samples/item-task-
prototypes](http://www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes).