*FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS*

BY EDUCATORS…..FOR EDUCATORS….WHILE GETTING READY FOR THE PARCC ASSESSMENTS

1. How will states be compared nationally when different assessments will be administered (given PARCC and SMARTER organizations)?

   SMARTER Balanced and PARCC are communicating & collaborating. Everything is built around the Common Core standards. We are talking about arriving at a common definition of what proficient is across the two consortia…..what it means to be college and career ready and what it means to be proficient. The terms (like proficient) may be different but the definition would be the same. There is talk about cross pollinating assessments in order to build common scales to cross walk and determine what a score would be on the other assessment. There is talk about embedding items from one on the other to help build the statistical language. If a student transfers in from a SMARTER Balanced state, the discussion is to have a concordance table to look up the score for interpretation of what it would be in PARCC.

2. What types of supports will be available for SWDs and ELs? What kinds of accommodations will be given for Sp Ed, EL, etc. (large print, paper copies, read alouds)?

   There are embedded supports using universal design principles--which means that by their very design they are accessible by the largest number of students without any accommodations needed. However, there will be accommodations built in, e.g., making text larger, being able to underline or highlight, or text to speech. There will be a number of accommodations similar to those in place now. The largest discussion is on the reading of the reading passages—there will be thoughtful decisions and it will be targeted on those who cannot access.

   Review PARCC Committee work:
   http://www.parcconline.org/accessibility-accommodations-fairness-twg

   Calculator policy:
   http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCCApprovedCalculatorPolicy-July%202012.pdf

3. How is this information being pushed out to varied stakeholder groups and will there be a training schedule?  We must start now.

   The GA ELC created a long list of who needed to be apprised and engaged.  RESAs are playing a large role, DOE is crafting a communication plan for multiple audiences (working with PTA), PARCC is linked to the GADOE website, and sessions are being held in state meetings of various associations/groups.

   One comment was a need to share information in advance with parents and not wait until their children who may be making As perform poorly on the new assessment.  Suggestion was a combined PR piece.   On wikispaces, the ELC is posting the various power points for educator edit and use.  It's important to share with Boards, leaders, teachers, parents, students, etc.  Share information in various stakeholder meetings…whether SACS, GAPSS, preparation for monitoring, or other.  Recommended that each district post to their websites…what parents need to know.  National PTO/PTA has good documents in English and Spanish about CC.

   Comment from Doug Sovde:  Focus group survey data shows that parents trust teachers more than anyone else about information on what is happening in schools with a very close second being administrators.  Therefore, those two groups need to be up to speed and should be a conduit for sharing information.  There is a pamphlet being designed to send home to parents describing PARCC and the standards.  Use every chance you get to spread the message and when folks become tired of it, that's when you really need to go into high gear and ramp it up.

   To get an idea of what your PARCC scores might look like, look at your state's scores on NAEP—they will be similar.

4. Where do we find resources and examples of PARCC items? Are there practice sites for items?

   Go to the PARCC website –http://www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes.

   Look at NAEP released items for those that may be similar—don't just stay within the grade bands—go where the content is.  Example:  if NAEP has a great high school item that is appropriate for elementary or middle, use it.  Knowledge is not discrete and it is not banded by grade.

5. What kind of support will be provided for students who cannot read text that is on their grade level?

   There will be a range of passages on the test like there is now.  If students cannot read on grade level and are not proficient we need to know that---(results should reflect strengths & weaknesses).

6. When you say 15 dollars per student for PARCC, whom would Georgia be paying?  How do we ensure there are funds for the assessments in 2014-2015?

    PARCC is closer to the $20 dollar range.  We are moving forward knowing that there will be an assessment.  It is a legislative priority for GACIS and we call on all members to contact legislators to support funding for the administration.  In your communities, it is a sell on economic development.  Businesses want a qualified workforce.  This measure provides a more accurate picture.

    Doug Sovde:  External third party companies are making claims about PARCC, usually major publishing groups, often unsubstantiated or untrue.  If you do not hear something from your DOE or from PARCC go fact check.

7. How can districts volunteer to participate in PARCC field testing? When will field testing take place?

    Contact Melissa Fincher via phone or email.  There will be item tryouts this year and actual field testing in 2013-14.

8. When will more sample questions come out? Can we use Smarter Balance questions in the meantime?

    You can use PARCC released, Smarter Balanced, NAEP and other.  No ETA on new PARCC released items.

9. Will all PARCC assessments be online?

    Yes.  May there be paper/pencil versions…yes.   Recommendation:  if you have not done CRCT or EOCTs online, start now (even if with just a few classes).

10. What are the technology requirements for PARCC?

    Currently:  http://www.parcconline.org/technology.   Bandwidth requirements are yet to be determined because the assessment items have not been developed (as of October 2012).

    Also, see the two pdfs posted on the PARCC technology web page.

11. How we will assure we have the right technology in place to support the assessments?

    Information will continue to be shared with systems as the process moves further along.

12. How can we fund the technology required for assessments?  Is the state going to help?

ESPLOST is one mechanism.

13. How and when will the tests be administered?  How much time do tests take?
The summative assessment components are the PBA (performance-based assessment) to be administered 75% of the way through the school year and EOY (end of year) at 90%. See slides 9-11 at Doug Sovde's power point: http://www.gael.org/app/webroot/media/useruploads/files/the_partnership_for_assessment_of_readiness_for_college_and_careers.pdf

Caution:  there should not be rush to try to teach everything prior to the PBA. Prioritizing or emphasizing some content may be a good strategy.  This is about quality and depth not quantity and breadth.  There are 2 optional assessments:  diagnostic & mid-year (the mid-year is comprised of performance-based items and tasks with an emphasis on hard-to-measure standards).

There are issues around testing time which the PARCC governing Board is currently discussing (as of late Sept/early Oct 2012).

14. How will CRCT transition to PARCC?

DOE Assessment Division was not funded to redevelop CRCTs.  There will be no constructed response…the test is still multiple choice format.  The Spring 2013 CRCT will include more robust/rigorous items…more DOK 2s and 3s.   Don't confuse DOK with difficulty (common misconception).  An item may still appear easy but have more cognitive complexity.

15. What is in the future for short answer questions on state assessments or state practice items?

RT3 dollars are being invested in formative assessments for state-wide use. Those look radically different.

16. Will PARCC add items to assess k-2?
PARCC is developing formative assessments for K-2.

17. Will PARCC assessments replace EOCTs?

Georgia will continue to administer state assessments until PARCC is implemented in 2014-15.  We may continue with state assessments in science and social studies.

18. What are the best resources to use when preparing for the new assessment?

Use the standards, the model frameworks, prototypes and best practices in standards-based instruction.  Check out www.achievethecore.com, look at NAEP released items, use Lexiles.  Approximately 800 items to be loaded into OAS in October 2012, the majority of which are performance-based and which are written at DOK 3 or 4.

There are also assessment literacy/formative instruction online learning modules being developed which are free.  Of the nine, two are for administrators/leaders and seven are for teachers.  Anticipated release date is January 2013.

19. What technological skills should our students be most familiar with---such as underlining, highlighting text, etc.?

Basic keyboarding is important and click and drag.  There will be practice items to become acclimated to the setup (much like there is for the EOCT).  Students seem fairly proficient with what may be required.  Adults less so.

20. When will we get the specifics of how the scoring will take place?  What score is an adequate/good/meets score? Will artificial intelligence be used in scoring?

There is discussion on the use of artificial intelligence with a human read behind to make certain that the artificial intelligence is calibrated.   There is a rumor that teachers will score—that is not likely to happen, however, if it were teachers would not score their own and they would translate across states.  The purpose of CC is to have a common expectation (fidelity in scoring and training would help take out subjectivity).  It is cheaper to use artificial intelligence….more research in ELA than math.  These are next generation assessments and we need to capitalize on the technology that's in place that has been validated and make decisions thoughtfully.

Performance descriptors are in development right now to explain what each level would look like.

21. What about the level of academic language in the assessments?

    The language has always been there—perhaps more implicit than explicit so we need to bring it to the forefront and emphasize it.

22. What are we doing about training prospective teachers in these processes at higher ed?

    Higher ed is at the table and engaged in the conversation. Reach out to nearby colleges to let them know what you are looking for.