



State Solidarity Erodes On Common-Core Tests

TN Note: The so-called Common Core Education Standards developed by private- and non-governmental-organizations continue to lose support for implementation, as parents and educators both see that education for America's children is not being served.

Only 21 states still plan to use shared tests designed for the common core, a continued erosion of the unity that emerged six years ago, when 45 states embraced the standards and pledged to measure student learning with common assessments.

The high school testing landscape is even more fragmented, as states increasingly choose the SAT or ACT college-entrance exam instead of common-core tests.

An *Education Week* survey of states' testing plans in English/language arts and math—the two subjects covered by the common core—found that states have continued in 2015-16 to drift away from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC, and

Smarter Balanced tests. (The full results from that survey will be released soon.)

Those assessment systems were crafted by two groups of states to reflect the Common Core State Standards, which were the product of an initiative launched by the nation's governors and chief state school officers. The U.S. Department of Education awarded \$360 million in grants in 2010 to the two consortia to create the tests.

Here's how states' assessment plans break down in 2015-16, illustrating three key shifts:

Consortium strength continues to wane.

- Twenty states and the District of Columbia are giving PARCC or Smarter Balanced tests. Six states and the District of Columbia will administer PARCC; 14 will use Smarter Balanced.
- Twenty-seven states are using tests they created or bought off the shelf.
- Three states are blending consortium questions with home-grown questions, or offering districts a choice of which test to give. Most Massachusetts districts can choose, for a second year, whether to give PARCC or the state's legacy test, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, or MCAS (although 10th grade students still must pass the MCAS to graduate). Tests given in Michigan this year will combine Smarter Balanced and state-designed questions; Louisiana's tests will blend PARCC and state-designed questions.

Last year, consortium tests were more dominant, though the two groups had declined from their peak membership. *Education Week's* survey of states' 2014-15 testing plans showed 28 states and the District of Columbia using PARCC or Smarter Balanced, and 22 states using other tests or offering districts a choice of which test to use.

Consortium participation is particularly weak in high school.

- Nine states will use consortium tests, or questions, only in grades 9 and lower, and chose some other assessment—in many

cases, the ACT or the SAT—to measure high school achievement as required by federal law. Colorado, for instance, will measure achievement in grades 3-9 with PARCC, and in grade 10 with the PSAT. It will also administer the ACT to all juniors to gauge their readiness for college.

- Fifteen states will use PARCC or Smarter Balanced in the full range of grades required for federal accountability.

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