



NEWS STATEMENT

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PARCC Consortium Awarded Race to the Top Assessment Funds

State Partnership will Create Next Generation Common Assessment System to Prepare All Students for College and Careers

WASHINGTON – September 2, 2010 – The U.S. Department of Education today awarded “Race to the Top” assessment funds to the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC or Partnership) for the development of a K-12 assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics, which will help states dramatically increase the number of students who graduate high school ready for college and careers.

The 11 governing states that will lead the 26-state Partnership in assessment development are: 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.

“This is an unprecedented opportunity for states to work together to use federal funding to develop a state-of-the-art assessment program that meets the needs of students today,” said Massachusetts Education Commissioner Mitchell D. Chester, who will chair the governing board of the new consortium. “By joining forces, our states will be able to learn from one another and develop next generation assessments that monitor student achievement of the knowledge and skills necessary for success after high school.”

The goal of PARCC is to create an assessment system that will ensure students graduate college and career ready from high school. The proposed assessment system will be computer-based and will measure student progress at key times during the school year, rather than on one test at the end, to allow for instructional adjustment and extra support to students who need it. To ensure college and career alignment, higher education systems and institutions in all PARCC states, nearly 200 in total, have signed up to help develop the new high school tests. 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.

“Our world has changed significantly over the last several decades, becoming more complex, more high-tech and more focused on a global marketplace. Our nation is in active competition for jobs with students from around the world,” said Florida Education Commissioner Dr. Eric J. Smith. “If we are to adequately prepare our children for this reality then we need to be measuring their academic progress on a global scale, and comparing those results with other states and nations. This federal award will help Partnership states build an assessment system that improves upon those we currently have, signals high quality instruction in every classroom, and provides our families the ability to accurately track the progress of their students.”

Since 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 the others.

“This funding will allow Partnership states to make an ‘apples to apples’ comparison of student achievement,” Louisiana State Superintendent of Education Paul Pastorek said. “This comparative analysis is crucial to ensuring students are well prepared to thrive in their post-secondary and workplace pursuits. Also, this proposal includes the creation and implementation of not only annual assessments, but formative assessments that will be administered throughout the year. These consistent measures will help us improve teaching and learning by providing teachers, students and their families with regular feedback so they can address identified challenges sooner, before students fall too far behind.”

PARCC selected Achieve to play a key role in coordinating the work of the Partnership, leveraging the organization’s deep experience in developing educational 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.

“We are pleased that the Department selected PARCC for award today,” said Mike Cohen, Achieve’s president. “As a long-time advocate of the college- and career-ready agenda, Achieve is well positioned and ready to work with the PARCC states and all stakeholders to achieve the historic goal of the Partnership’s proposal – an assessment system that will measure, across state lines, student achievement that’s aligned to college and career readiness for all. This work promises to not only change assessments as we know them but, over time, to improve student achievement.”

For a summary of the proposal, go to www.achieve.org/PARCCsummary.

To learn more about Achieve’s college- and career-ready agenda, visit www.achieve.org.

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Created in 1996 by the nation’s governors and corporate leaders, Achieve is an independent, bipartisan, nonprofit education reform organization based in Washington D.C. that helps states raise academic standards and graduation requirements, improve assessments, and strengthen accountability. Achieve is leading the effort

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to make college and career readiness a national priority so that the transition from high school graduation to postsecondary education and careers is seamless. To make college and career readiness a priority, in 2005 Achieve launched the American Diploma Project Network. Starting with 13 original states, the Network has now grown to include 35 states educating nearly 85 percent of all U.S. public school students. Through the ADP Network, governors, state education officials, postsecondary leaders and business executives work together to improve postsecondary preparation by aligning high school standards, assessments, graduation requirements and accountability systems with the demands of college and careers. For more information about the work of Achieve, visit www.achieve.org.