



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

October 29, 2018

Dear DC LEA and school leaders,

Recently, I have heard questions from some of you about the future of the PARCC assessment. I'm writing today to share some additional context and background, including important steps that state leaders have collectively taken to ensure that PARCC will be accessible to students and educators across the country. PARCC will continue to be our state assessment for math and English language arts (ELA). It is the high quality assessment we need to support teaching and learning in our schools, and ensures the stability and continuity we need as educators to continue to improve outcomes for students.

High Quality Measurement of College or Career Readiness: As you know, DC first moved to the PARCC assessment in the 2014-15 school year. PARCC is different from prior state assessment systems like DC CAS in a number of ways: it is built in partnership with higher education faculty members, it goes beyond traditional multiple choice questions to measure critical thinking skills and higher-order thinking, and it brings states together to share the challenging work of building the highest possible quality of assessment. PARCC was built for a particular purpose: to ensure that we were accurately measuring whether students were being prepared at every grade level to leave high school ready to succeed in college or careers. Since 2015, a number of independent reports and well-respected organizations have independently validated the quality of the PARCC assessment (see [here](#) for more information).

Steady Progress Over Time: Since 2015, DC has seen continued, steady progress on this rigorous measure. The percentage of students who are on track for college and career readiness has increased by 8.5 points in ELA and 7.3 points in math since 2015. And importantly, this progress is widespread: we see these gains across nearly all major groups of students each year, and we also continue to see steady decreases in the percentage of students scoring at the lowest two performance levels. We have also continued to improve our process for administering the assessment: since the first year of PARCC, we have decreased the amount of testing time significantly (by about 90 minutes in each grade), moved from two administration windows to one window, and returned results earlier each year. We also continue to work to make meaningful data available to parents and to educators and leaders—not only the overall performance level and scale score, but also reading and writing subscales, and domain level information at the student, school, LEA, and state level, and released items from prior years. Our assessment team has conducted workshops for educators and leaders on how to interpret and use these results and resources to improve instruction, and is available for ongoing support.

Ensuring Sustainability: When PARCC was first created, the only option for states was to administer the full assessment through a single test administration vendor and identical conditions. Over time, state leaders recognized that this one-size-fits-all approach did not meet the needs of states that operate in very different educational and political contexts. As a result, the leaders of the states participating in PARCC, including me, took important steps over the last several years to ensure the ongoing quality and sustainability of the PARCC assessment by creating multiple ways for states to participate at different

levels, and developing an operating approach that makes this possible. There are currently nine states and jurisdictions that continue to use PARCC content in multiple ways, and DC continues to benefit from the shared responsibility, thought partnership, and economies of scale from working with other states on this assessment. All states that utilize PARCC content in whole or in part continue to support DC by: (1) collaboratively developing a high-quality assessment that is stronger and more cost-effective than what we could access on our own and (2) maintaining rigorous data for use in our growth measures. We continue to remain engaged with the direction and development of the PARCC assessment to ensure there is ongoing research and evidence to maintain data quality and validity.

For all of these reasons, I firmly believe that PARCC is the right assessment for DC students and our education system as a whole, and it will continue to be our state assessment for math and English language arts (ELA). Providing effective state assessments to measure and support improvement in teaching and learning is one of our most important responsibilities as DC's state education agency, and one that I continue to take very seriously. At OSSE, we will continue to work in partnership with all of you to ensure stability in and access to the highest possible quality assessments, on behalf of DC students and educators.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me or OSSE's assessment team at OSSE.Assessment@dc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hanseul Kang', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Hanseul Kang
State Superintendent of Education