

Setting Performance Levels for the PARCC Assessment

What is Performance Level Setting?



This fall, the parents and teachers of every student who participated in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test will receive a **score report**. The score report presents an overview of a student’s subject-level performance in English language arts/literacy and mathematics, as well as an overall score. The overall score will determine a student’s **performance level**. There are five performance levels, with the top two indicating a strong grasp of grade level standards and readiness for the next step in a student’s educational development.

This summer, educators and content area experts will gather to determine what score a student must earn on the assessment in order to achieve a particular performance level. This process is called **performance level setting**. Performance levels will help students, parents, teachers and policymakers understand how students are performing against the content standards for college and career readiness.

How Does the Performance Level Setting Process Work?

- Early on, PARCC states adopted detailed “descriptors” for each performance level ([view the levels here](#)). Performance Level Descriptors describe the knowledge and skills students can typically show at each grade level.
- Throughout July and August, over 240 teachers, postsecondary educators, and content area experts will meet in small groups to review the 21 grade-level PARCC tests in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. Panelists will determine what range of scores best matches each performance level.
- Panelists will use the Performance Level Descriptors, actual test results and empirical studies to recommend the “cut scores” – the scores that mark the threshold of performance from one level to the next. When reviewing each question, panelists will ask themselves, “Should a student performing at a certain level be expected to answer this particular question wholly, partially, or not at all?” Each group will go through at least three rounds of review per assessment.
- In order to have the performance level cut scores align from grade to grade, panels will review and recommend cut scores for the high school assessments first, in late July 2015. Panels will then recommend scores for grades 3-8, starting with middle school and working their way down to grade 3.

Who is Responsible for Performance Level Setting?

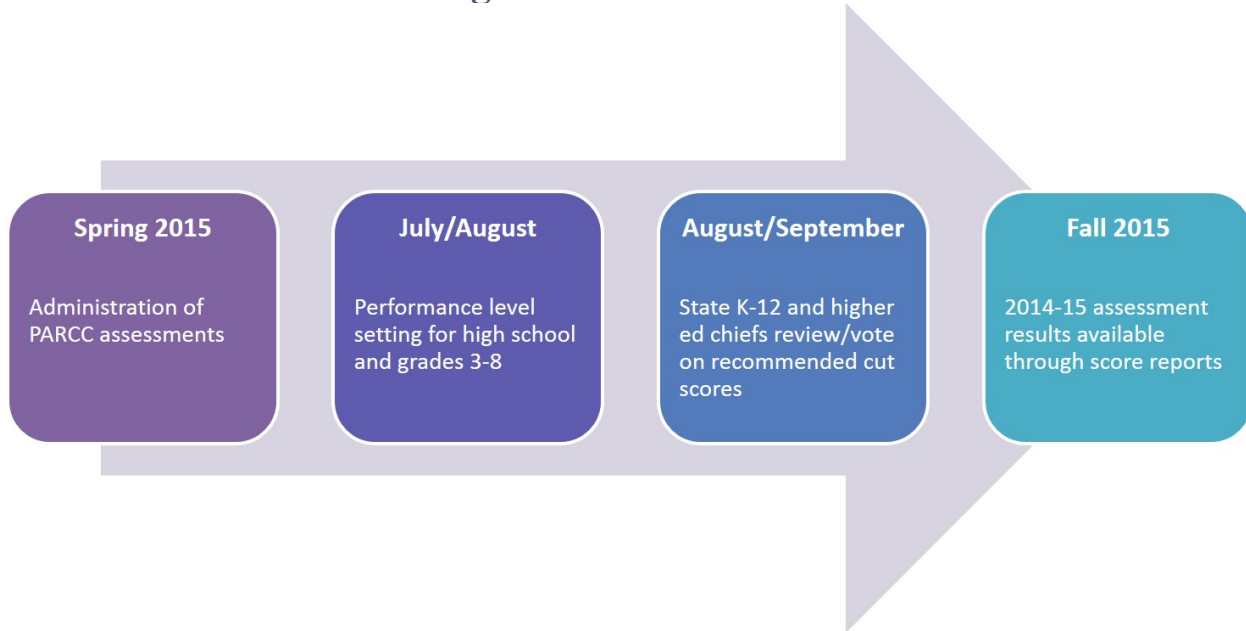
States nominated a variety of stakeholders to participate in 12 in-person panels representing each grade level and subject area. Those participating in the process include:

- K-12 educators
- Educators who serve students with disabilities
- Educators who teach English language learners
- Postsecondary faculty
- State education experts

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- The determinations of these groups will then be reviewed and voted on by the education chiefs for K-12 (and for higher education, for the high school cut scores) in each of the PARCC states.
- This process ensures that the score thresholds set for each performance level are reviewed and approved by a wide variety of stakeholders and experts and reflect the consensus of their best judgments.

Performance Level Setting Timeline



When Will Score Reports be Available to Parents?

Parents will receive their students' score reports for this year's assessments in the fall. Each student's score report will indicate his/her performance level. In future years, parents will receive score reports close to the end of the school year in which testing took place. (Performance level setting in the first year is based on results from the first test administration – hence the delay in first year results.)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS / LITERACY PERFORMANCE

