

# *PARCC as Teaching Tool: Teachers Weigh in on PARCC Resources*

## **Massachusetts Teachers Examine PARCC Tools**

Teach Plus hears from teachers that one of the most important things an assessment can do is signal to teachers, families, and students the skills that are important to master. Therefore, the tools that help educators understand and explore a high-quality assessment can be a valuable resource to teachers. While a lot of emphasis has been placed on the test itself, the PARCC Consortium has also committed to offering a suite of teaching resources ranging from sample items and scoring rubrics to formative assessments and sophisticated score reports. In fall, 2015, Teach Plus Massachusetts set out to talk with teachers about the new teaching resources provided by PARCC. **Are PARCC resources useful for improving the quality of teaching in Massachusetts classrooms?**

Teach Plus gathered 120 teachers from Massachusetts public schools to explore the new tools released by PARCC and ask for teachers' feedback on them. Below is a summary of the findings.<sup>1</sup>

### **Who Participated?**

Ninety percent of participants are traditional public school teachers, seven percent are public charter school teachers, and the remainder are other educators. Sixty-two percent teach K-5, 23 percent teach 6-8<sup>th</sup> grades, and 10 percent teach high school. Roughly half of participants (52 percent) have been teaching for 10 or fewer years, and half (48 percent) have been teaching for 11 years or more. Eighty-two percent of teachers teach at schools where at least half students qualify for free-and-reduced-price lunches, while the remainder teach at schools with 49 percent or fewer low-income students.<sup>2</sup>

### **Value of PARCC's Released Items & Instructional Tools**

In October, PARCC released roughly one full test per grade level in each subject area, along with sample student responses (anchor sets) and scoring rubrics, available at [www.parcresources.org](http://www.parcresources.org). PARCC is also preparing to offer educators an interactive online score report that allows teachers to analyze student data to inform their instruction. Teach Plus gave teachers the opportunity to explore the released items and other tools. (See charts on next page.)

**The significant majority of teachers – more than 70 percent in all categories – reported that they were likely to use PARCC tools to support and improve their teaching.**

Question: “Overall, how likely are the following tools to help improve your instruction?”

	Very or Somewhat Likely	Neither Likely nor Unlikely	Somewhat or Very Unlikely	Unsure
Released Test Items	72%	8%	10%	10%
Anchor Sets	75%	7%	9%	10%
Scoring Rubrics	78%	7%	7%	9%

Question: "If the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopts PARCC or an assessment incorporating mostly PARCC questions, how likely are the new tools you explored today, such as released items, anchor sets, and score reports, to help you improve your teaching practices in the following areas?"

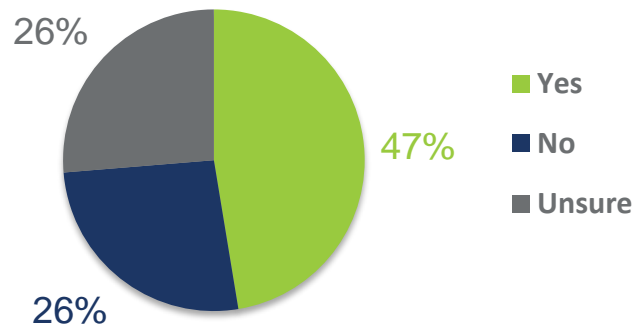
	Very or Somewhat Likely	Neither Likely nor Unlikely	Somewhat or Very Unlikely	Unsure
Supporting high-quality instruction	73%	9%	6%	12%
Understanding necessary instructional shifts	78%	6%	6%	10%
Helping inform your instruction	76%	8%	6%	9%
Helping differentiate instruction for learners at different levels of mastery	73%	9%	7%	11%
Informing your unit planning	71%	13%	6%	10%

## PARCC and Technology Education

There has been a lot of conversation in Massachusetts about whether students and schools are ready to take an online test like PARCC – especially in our highest-need districts. Teach Plus asked teachers about how their schools’ technology access and use have changed as schools began to pilot PARCC. When asked, **“Has your school received new or improved technology in preparation for computer-based assessments like PARCC and others,”** 47 percent of teachers said yes, 26 percent said no, and 26 percent were unsure. When asked about teaching technology, 32 percent of teachers reported, **“I teach my students how to use technology more frequently when preparing for computer-based assessments like PARCC.”**

Teachers reported that they had received Chromebook carts, tablets, laptops, and more, for their classrooms. And they reported adding instruction in typing skills and using professional applications like Google Docs. In addition, they reported using educational applications on their new technology to teach core skills such as math, English, online research, and more.

**Question: "Has your school received new or improved technology in preparation for computer-based assessments like PARCC and others?"**



## Conclusion

As the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education considers the future of testing in Massachusetts, the most important consideration is whether the assessment system helps to inspire and support great teaching that leads to student success. The data above provides an indication that the many tools offered by PARCC can help support high-quality instruction. Any test adopted by Massachusetts should achieve this goal.

## Endnotes

1. Teachers were provided the option of filling out a paper survey or an online survey. Responses from attendees who indicated on their survey that they either do not currently teach or teach in a private school were not counted.
2. Question: “Which of the following best describes your employment status?” (n=117) Responses: “I am currently a teacher in a K-12 traditional public school” (90 percent), “I am currently a teacher in a public charter school” (7 percent), “Other” (3 percent). Question: “What grade level do you currently teach?” (n=117) Responses: “K-5” (62 percent), “6-8” (23 percent), “9-12” 10 percent), “Other” (4 percent). Question: “How many years of full-time teaching experience will you have completed by August 2016?” (n=116) Responses: “0-5 years” (27 percent), “6-10 years” (25 percent), “11-19 years” (31 percent), “20+ years” (17 percent). Question: “About what percentage of

students at your school are eligible for free or reduced lunches (or would be, if the data were collected)? Your best guess is fine.” (n= 117) Responses: “1% to 25%” (5 percent), “26% to 49%” (6 percent), “50% to 74%” (16 percent), “75% to 99%” (50 percent), “100%” (15 percent), “Unsure” (7 percent).

3. Question: “If the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopts PARCC or an assessment incorporating mostly PARCC questions, how likely are the new tools you explored today, such as released items, anchor sets, rubrics, and score reports, to help you improve your teaching practices in supporting high-quality instruction?” (n=112) Responses: “Very likely” (40 percent), “Somewhat likely” (33 percent), “Neither likely nor unlikely” (9 percent), “Somewhat unlikely” (3 percent), “Very unlikely” (4 percent), “Unsure” (12 percent). Question: “If the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopts PARCC or an assessment incorporating mostly PARCC questions, how likely are the new tools you explored today, such as released items, anchor sets, rubrics, and score reports, to help you improve your teaching practices in understanding necessary instructional shifts?” (n=111) Responses: “Very likely” (43 percent), “Somewhat likely” (34 percent), “Neither likely nor unlikely” (6 percent), “Somewhat unlikely” (4 percent), “Very unlikely” (3 percent), “Unsure” (10 percent). Question: “If the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopts PARCC or an assessment incorporating mostly PARCC questions, how likely are the new tools you explored today, such as released items, anchor sets, rubrics, and score reports, to help you inform your instruction?” (n=110) Responses: “Very likely” (46 percent), “Somewhat likely” (31 percent), “Neither likely nor unlikely” (8 percent), “Somewhat unlikely” (3 percent), “Very unlikely” (4 percent), “Unsure” (9 percent). Question: “If the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopts PARCC or an assessment incorporating mostly PARCC questions, how likely are the new tools you explored today, such as released items, anchor sets, rubrics, and score reports, to help you differentiate instruction for learners at different levels of mastery?” (n=111) Responses: “Very likely” (41 percent), “Somewhat likely” (32 percent), “Neither likely nor unlikely” (9 percent), “Somewhat unlikely” (3 percent), “Very unlikely” (5 percent), “Unsure” (11 percent). Question: “If the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopts PARCC or an assessment incorporating mostly PARCC questions, how likely are the new tools you explored today, such as released items, anchor sets, rubrics, and score reports, to help you inform your unit planning?” (n=111) Responses: “Very likely” (33 percent), “Somewhat likely” (38 percent), “Neither likely nor unlikely” (13 percent), “Somewhat unlikely” (4 percent), “Very unlikely” (3 percent), “Unsure” (10 percent). In the charts, some percentages do not add up to 100 percent because of rounding to the nearest percentage point.

4. Question: “Overall, how likely are released test items to help improve your instruction?” (n=116) Responses: “Very likely” (42 percent), “Somewhat likely” (30 percent), “Neither likely nor unlikely” (8 percent), “Somewhat unlikely” (8 percent), “Very unlikely” (8 percent), “Unsure” (10 percent). Question: “Overall, how likely are anchor sets to help improve your instruction?” (n=115) Responses: “Very likely” (38 percent), “Somewhat likely” (37 percent), “Neither likely nor unlikely” (7 percent), “Somewhat unlikely” (3 percent), “Very unlikely” (6 percent), “Unsure” (10 percent). Question: “Overall, how likely are scoring rubrics to help improve your instruction?” (n=117) Responses: “Very likely” (46 percent), “Somewhat likely” (32 percent), “Neither likely nor unlikely” (7 percent), “Somewhat unlikely” (3 percent), “Very unlikely” (4 percent), “Unsure” (9 percent).

5. Question: “Has your school received new or improved technology in preparation for computer-based assessments like PARCC and others?” (n=114) Responses: “Yes” (47.4 percent), “No” (26.3 percent), “Unsure” (26.3 percent).

6. Question: “Which statement about the use of technology in the classroom comes closest to your experience?” (n=106) “I teach my students how to use technology more frequently when preparing for computer-based assessments like PARCC” (32.1 percent), “I teach my students how to use technology about the same amount as before” (36.8 percent), “I teach my students how to use technology less frequently when preparing my students for computer-based assessments like PARCC” (24.5 percent).