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Smarter Balanced and PARCC Issue Guidance for New Instructional Technology Purchases

Specifications Provide Assurance that New Devices will be Compatible with Next-Generation Assessments

OLYMPIA, Wash. – April 25, 2012 – The [Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium](http://www.smarterbalanced.org) (Smarter Balanced) and the [Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers](http://www.parcconline.org) (PARCC) today issued guidance designed to inform schools and districts as they make annual instructional technology purchases. The guidelines include hardware and operating system specifications covering the vast majority of commercially available computers and tablets.

Specifications common to both consortia are described below. The full guidelines are available online:

- Smarter Balanced New Hardware Purchasing Guidelines: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/>
- Technology Guidance for PARCC Assessments: <http://www.parcconline.org/technology>

| Hardware | Operating System | Networking | Device Type |
|---|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 GHz or faster processor • 1 GB RAM or greater memory • 9.5 inch (10 inch class) or larger screen size • 1024 x 768 or better screen resolution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windows 7 • Mac 10.7 • Linux (Ubuntu 11.10, Fedora 16) • Chrome OS • Apple iOS • Android 4.0 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wired or wireless Internet connection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desktops, laptops, netbooks, thin client, and tablets that meet the hardware, operating system, and networking specifications |

"Schools and districts make decisions each year about what types of hardware and software to purchase for instructional use, and they want to know that any devices acquired over the next two years will be compatible with the new assessments," said Tony Alpert, chief operating officer of Smarter Balanced. "We are confident that new computers and tablets meeting these specifications

will be Smarter Balanced-ready in 2014-15."

The specifications issued today are meant to inform current and future purchasing decisions. As part of their plans to support instruction, districts and schools may select computer systems that meet or exceed these guidelines and be confident that those systems will work with the assessments in the 2014-15 school year. Support for operating systems not specified, predating those specified, or with processor capacities lower than recommended, will be described in future updates to these guidelines.

The specifications do not constitute the full list of technical requirements that will be necessary to administer Smarter Balanced and PARCC assessments 2014-2015. The member states in both consortia will collaborate to use the technology readiness surveys and assessment design processes currently underway to shape the full and final list of requirements including guidance on bandwidth, test system security, and alternate input devices.

"Technology is key to PARCC states' ability to develop and administer K-12, computer-based assessments that will deliver useful information quickly to determine whether students are on a pathway to college and career readiness," said Wes Bruce, Indiana's Chief Assessment Officer and Chair of the PARCC Technology Operational Working Group. "The specifications released today will help all states match their technology purchases with their needs for instructional use as well as support the types of innovative tasks and items that will be used to make up the PARCC assessment."

Smarter Balanced and PARCC are developing next-generation assessments aligned to the [Common Core State Standards](#). With assistance from the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA), the consortia have developed a Technology Readiness Tool to support states as they transition to next-generation assessments. Baseline data is currently being collected and will be updated twice annually through 2014 to provide detailed information on technology and infrastructure readiness.

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About Smarter Balanced

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium brings together states to create a common, innovative assessment system for mathematics and English language arts that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards and helps prepare students for college and careers. The Consortium involves educators, researchers, policymakers and community groups in a transparent and consensus-driven process to help all students thrive in a knowledge-driven global economy. The Consortium's projects are funded through a four-year, \$175 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, comprising 99 percent of activity resources, with the remaining support provided through generous contributions of charitable foundations. Membership is open to any interested U.S. state. For more information, please visit www.smarterbalanced.org.

About PARCC

PARCC is an alliance of states working together to develop common assessments serving nearly 25 million students. PARCC's work is funded through a four-year, \$185 million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Partners include about 750 higher education institutions and systems representing hundreds of campuses across the country that will help develop the high school component of the new assessment and then put it to good use as an indicator of student readiness. PARCC is led by its member states and managed by Achieve, a nonprofit group with a 15-year track record of working with states to improve student achievement by aligning K-12 education policies with the expectations of employers

and the postsecondary community. PARCC's ultimate goal is to make sure all students graduate from high school college- and career-ready. For more information, visit www.parcconline.org.

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