

## Q & A: Standardized Testing in CPS

**How can I find out what tests my child is taking?** State law requires each public school to report to the IL State Board of Ed and to parents what standardized tests are being administered, when, and what the results will be used for. If your school has not yet sent this information home or posted it online, ask your principal to provide it. CPS administers upwards of 20 standardized tests; some students may be taking standardized tests every month or even biweekly. Some testing is required by federal or state law, but much is at the discretion of districts and schools.

**What's IAR and what happened to PARCC?** The contract for PARCC was for four years starting in 2015. The consortium of states using PARCC has shrunk to MD, NM, NJ and DC, and all but DC now plan to drop the test. Some other states use some PARCC questions on their test. Illinois is using PARCC questions from one vendor, New Meridian, and has a separate contract to administer and score the test. The state awarded that contract to the testing company DRC, but Pearson protested that award, and this year's temporary contract went to Pearson. The IAR is slightly shorter than last year's PARCC, but it will essentially be the same kind of questions and format as PARCC. And the state plans to compare PARCC and IAR scores. By 2021 IAR is supposed to be an adaptive test (like the NWEA MAP) and have results returned in days or weeks instead of in months.

**Why is CPS administering IAR in elementary school?** Federal law requires states to test all students in 3rd-8th grade once a year in reading and math. States can choose which test to administer; IL previously used ISAT, then PARCC, and now they'll give the test they are calling IAR. The state pays for IAR.

**Why does CPS administer SAT and PSAT in high school?** The federal government also requires a math and reading test for juniors. After many years of administering ACT, and then briefly PARCC, IL now requires schools to administer the SAT to all 11th graders to comply with the federal requirement for annual testing in high school. IL is now also requiring districts to administer PSAT in 9th and 10th grade to use for state school accountability ratings.

**Why is CPS still administering NWEA MAP in elementary school?** There is no state or federal requirement for CPS to administer NWEA MAP. When the state switched to PARCC back in 2015, CPS decided to use MAP as an interim high-stakes test for elementary schools, i.e. to rate schools, evaluate teachers and promote students in 3rd, 6th and 8th grades. CPS said that 2016-2017 would be the last year for MAP in elementary schools, but, in fact, they have continued to use MAP for high-stakes purposes.

**Can my child refuse IAR this year?** Yes, all students may refuse to participate in IAR. IAR scores from Spring 2019 will **not** be used for any high-stakes decisions for any CPS students (promotion, graduation or selective enrollment admissions.) Private schools do not use the IAR, and the IAR lacks national percentiles used in the selective admissions formula. We recommend notifying the school ahead of time that your child will be refusing IAR and requesting info on what the school is planning for students who refuse to test. Even though their scores won't count for school ratings, students new to the US will also be required to test no matter their English fluency.

**Will low participation on IAR hurt our school or district?** Refusal affects your school's state rating in two ways. Schools that do not have at least 95% participation will not be able to receive the top rating ("Exemplary") from the state, and after three years in a row under <95%, schools may be assigned a Tier 3 rating ("Underperforming") Also, students who refuse are counted as not having met expectations. Crucially though, *a low rating is not tied to punitive policies but to additional funding for things like improving curriculum or climate.* Note that after years of mass opt outs across the country, the federal government has still never penalized any state or district for low participation rates.

**Are IAR scores a reliable and/or useful measure of what my child is learning?** All answers on IAR tests will be scored by computers, including essays and extended responses. Computers rely on superficial features and statistical patterns to score answers and cannot meaningfully evaluate high-level thinking skills. Score reports provide canned descriptions of a child's performance level. Teachers can only see a tiny portion of the actual test questions and not their students' answers. Standardized tests are primarily a measure of the wealth of the population a school community draws from.

**Will CPS ever adopt IAR as a high-stakes district test?** State law requires CPS to "monitor the performance" of its schools, but the Board of Ed has great leeway to decide how to do that and what criteria to include. PARCC scores were set so that the majority of students are labeled as not meeting expectations, and we expect IAR to be scored similarly. For English-language learners and students with disabilities, it is likely <1 in 10 students will be labeled as proficient. If high-stakes decisions like school closings, teacher ratings and student promotion were to be based on IAR, these policies would become even more damaging to the students being served at the most under-resourced schools.

