**State Superintendent Janet Barresi to Release RFP to Develop State Assessments in Math and English**

Superintendent Barresi has notified PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers) that the state of Oklahoma will not be participating in the spring 2015 administration of the PARCC Assessment. Oklahoma will be issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to develop our own state assessments in English language arts and math for grades 3 through 8. We will work with our current testing vendor to align high school end-of-instruction exams to reflect the significant instructional shifts and the new rigorous state standards in English, math and social studies.

*“After conferring with Governor Fallin, legislative leadership and listening to teachers, counselors, parents and district superintendents, I believe this is the best decision for Oklahoma’s children. We need a high-quality assessment that provides Oklahoma educators with information about how our children are progressing.”*

*“Developing our own tests will save money and time as well as reduce the risk that technology problems will impede the process.*

*“These high-quality tests will be aligned to the new Oklahoma Academic Standards in math and English language arts. They will be developed for Oklahoma children, reviewed by Oklahoma teachers and be right for Oklahoma.”*

*State Superintendent Janet Barresi*

**Time on Task**

Under the state plan, assessments will require that students test about half of the time as the PARCC exams and will be administered over one testing window as opposed to the proposed two windows supported by PARCC.

**Technology**

Developing an Oklahoma test will take into consideration the technology challenges our state school districts face.

The 2014-2015 Oklahoma assessments will require computerized exams developed only for grades 6 through 12 as it has been in the past. Paper and pencil exams will be available throughout the term of the contract as opposed to only one year for the PARCC exams.

The Office of Instructional Technology conducted a speed test in April to determine our technology readiness. The study revealed 85 percent of the districts were not ready for online learning opportunities. The state does not currently have the technological infrastructure to handle the amount of time on task for students nor the enhanced test items as required by PARCC.

*“We are working to identify ways for school districts to increase their bandwidth for faster communication and upgrade their technology infrastructures to improve digital learning opportunities for our children. Today’s students are already entering a digital society after high school graduation and they need to be prepared for that. However, we must not allow current technological limitations to impede accurate assessment of educational progress or cause unnecessary stress for teachers and students.”*

*State Superintendent Janet Barresi*

**Cost**

The State Department of Education estimates that upwards of $2 million a year in savings will be realized by developing our own assessments. The PARCC cost estimates for the exams will be released at a later date. Those cost estimates will not include formative assessments for teachers or multiple retakes of high school end-of-instructions exams. The Oklahoma assessments will include at least two formative assessments teachers may use on a voluntary basis each year and opportunities for students to retake the EOIs.

**Frequently Asked Questions:**

**Will the Oklahoma State Department of Education still participate in PARCC?**

We are grateful to the Oklahoma Educator Leader Cadre that has worked so hard to help prepare educators for the new standards and assessments and we will continue to work with them to support the development of the new Oklahoma assessments. Their work was significant and will continue to contribute critical guidance as we work to prepare Oklahoma assessments. Indeed, many of the policy decisions developed in PARCC will be important guidance for us moving forward. Continued membership in PARCC is still under review.

**Did the most recent experience with testing influence the decision?**

The issues this past spring underscored the need for our districts to improve their district technology infrastructure. It was also an indication that we are not ready to move to a completely computerized assessment process.

**How will the Oklahoma tests differ from the tests PARCC is developing?**

The 2014-2015 Oklahoma assessments:

* Will be aligned to the new math and English language arts Oklahoma Academic Standards that include the Common Core
* Will be reviewed by Oklahoma teachers
* Will require about half of the time on task as the PARCC assessments and will be administered over one testing window.
* Will be developed for students in grades 3 through 12 but only computerized for grades 6 through 12 as has been in the past
* Will offer paper and pencil tests throughout the duration of the contract as opposed to PARCC only allowing paper and pencil for one year
* Will be high-quality and display the same rigor as well as the same type of test items as the PARCC exams are expected to have
* Will have performance based items as well as some multiple choice, although fewer multiple choice items than in the past

The new Oklahoma tests still will have rigor, but they will be designed with Oklahoma values in mind for our students. The test questions also will be reviewed by Oklahoma teachers.

**What is Oklahoma doing to prepare technologically for these new tests?**

These new tests will require students to fill in the blanks, drag and drop items and manipulate objects on the screen. This requires a higher level of technology. Many districts still need more bandwidth for faster communication and improved infrastructure, and the Oklahoma State Department of Education is working to find funding and viable options to increase technological capacity.

**When will the RFP be released?**

It is anticipated to be sometime in the next two weeks.

**What will be the length of the contract?**

One year with four one-year options to renew.