

# The PARCC Difference Elementary School



**PARCC tests reflect what students must know each year as they build toward the knowledge and skills needed for college and careers.**

By letting students know they are on track long before they graduate, PARCC opens the door to college and careers and gives them a ticket to entry directly into credit-bearing courses. This can save students and families money and help ensure that they have access to college.

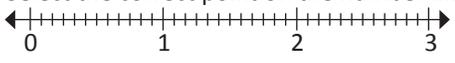
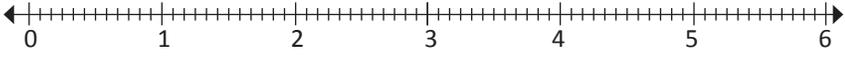
**In English language arts/literacy**, students at every grade (3–11) must read one or more texts (and sometimes watch a video), write about what they read and/or viewed, and provide evidence drawn from the reading — skills that are critically important for students in college and in the workplace. In the past, students have typically been asked to write only once in each grade span in elementary, middle, and high school. PARCC measures writing at every grade because it is key to college and career readiness. **In elementary school**, students develop critical skills in using context clues to determine the meaning of unknown academic words and build the vocabulary needed for both reading complex texts and developing their own ideas in writing.

**In mathematics**, students must reason mathematically, make sense of quantities and their relationships to solve real-world problems, and show their understanding. Many previous assessments focused mostly on rote procedure only. **In elementary school**, students develop procedural skills, conceptual understanding, and modeling and application skills with a particular focus on number sense, place value, fractions, and properties of operations.

## English Language Arts/Literacy, Grade 5

 OLD TEST ITEM	 PARCC TEST ITEM
<p>Which two words are synonyms for heap?</p> <p>A. pile B. row C. corner D. mound E. pattern</p>	<p><b>PART A</b> What is the meaning of the word <b>dictate</b> as it is used in paragraph 23*?</p> <p>a. Hint b. Fix c. Understand d. Decide</p> <p><b>PART B</b> Which phrase helps the reader understand the meaning of dictate?</p> <p>a. "...recreate the tree house..." b. "...determine the shape..." c. "...is less expensive to build..." d. "...has all the time in the world..."</p> <p><i>*Students will have a reading passage in front of them with numbered paragraphs to which they can refer.</i></p>
WHAT'S DIFFERENT?	
<p>Students must identify the meaning of words without context.</p>	<p>At first, this may look like the multiple choice questions of the past. But note that in Part A students have the advantage of the reading passage to gather meaning and, in Part B, students are asked to find words in the reading passage that back up their choice in Part A. PARCC focuses attention on vocabulary, particularly <i>academic language</i>, which is emphasized in the standards.</p>

### Mathematics, Grade 4

OLD TEST ITEM	PARCC TEST ITEM
<p>Justine is using the stickers below to decorate a picture frame.</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What fraction of Justine's stickers are hearts? Which of the number in your fraction represents the whole set of stickers?</li> <li>2. Draw and label a number line and mark an X on the number line to show the location of the fraction of Justine's stickers that are ladybugs.</li> </ol> <p>BE SURE TO LABEL YOUR RESPONSES 1 AND 2.</p>	<p>Ava and Mia are comparing the fractions <math>\frac{3}{2}</math> and <math>\frac{5}{6}</math>.</p> <p><b>PART A:</b> Ava created this number line to graph <math>\frac{3}{2}</math>.</p> <p>Select the correct point on the number line to represent <math>\frac{3}{2}</math>.</p>  <p>Mia created this number line to graph <math>\frac{5}{6}</math>.</p> <p>Select the correct point on the number line to represent <math>\frac{5}{6}</math>.</p>  <p><b>PART B:</b> Is <math>\frac{3}{2}</math> greater than or less than <math>\frac{5}{6}</math>? Explain how you know.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; width: 100%;"></div> <p><b>PART C:</b> Write a fraction that is between <math>\frac{3}{2}</math> and <math>\frac{5}{6}</math>. <input type="text"/></p> <p>Explain how you know your fraction is between <math>\frac{3}{2}</math> and <math>\frac{5}{6}</math>.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>
<h4>WHAT'S DIFFERENT?</h4>	
<p>Notice the focus on procedure (counting, in this case). You can also see that students do not engage with the material.</p>	<p>The PARCC item is in several parts. Part A asks students to show they know that a fraction is a number, rather than just a ratio (like heart stickers to total number of stickers in the old test item). This puts the focus on understanding the concept. Students interact with the problem by placing fractions on the number line, an example of using technology to enhance the question.</p> <p>In Part B, students are asked to make sense of the fractions as numbers by comparing them — taking a step beyond just putting them on the number line.</p> <p>In Part C, students apply their understanding by creating a fraction that is between <math>\frac{3}{2}</math> and <math>\frac{5}{6}</math>. You can see that the tasks build upon one another and ask students to do more than just procedures. Students are asked to demonstrate understanding and apply and explain their knowledge.</p>

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