

Achieving Common Core Assessment Success: Why Digital Literacy Matters

Common Core State Standards are fundamentally changing the way students learn in the classroom, and upcoming assessments like PARCC and Smarter Balanced are changing how student knowledge and skills are assessed. Today's students need to know how to use technology to acquire knowledge, analyze and evaluate information, explore, draw conclusions, and test theories. They need to learn how to think critically and creatively, navigate an increasingly digital world safely, and learn by doing.



The goal of the Common Core State Standards is, in part, to promote these same skills throughout content area instruction. By strengthening students' digital literacy skills and providing opportunities for meaningful, real-world application of technology, teachers are also enabling students to develop the skills they need to successfully master the Common Core State Standards, and to use technology to demonstrate their learning on PARCC and Smarter Balanced.

2012 NAEP Writing Scores: The Proof is in the Numbers

The most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in writing required that students use technology tools in both the prompt and answer for each question. NAEP is a precursor to PARCC and Smarter Balanced, which features similar, real-world problems. However, it still requires fewer technology skills than will the new assessments. The bad news: Only 27 percent of 8th graders scored at or above proficient levels on NAEP.

What issues and concerns do the latest NAEP writing scores raise? For one, we can no longer assume that students in higher grade levels (like the 8th graders who took NAEP) have the technical competency to perform well on the new assessments. PARCC and Smarter Balanced

will require digital literacy skills beginning in 3rd grade — how do we prepare the younger grade levels for this? What we do know is that students who used computers more often to write and edit performed better on the test. Student use of technology — in school and in general — supports learning across core curricular areas, like writing, in this case. With Common Core and the new tests quickly becoming the reality, educators need a comprehensive digital literacy strategy beginning in kindergarten.

The bottom line is simple. Preparing for success must begin early, because without critical digital literacy and 21st century skills, students will not succeed on the new assessments.

73

Percentage of U.S. 8th graders who were not proficient on first online NAEP assessment

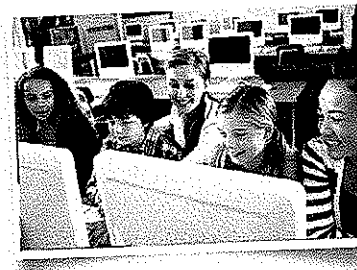
3rd

Grade when students will start taking online assessments beginning in 2015

PARCC and Smarter Balanced: What the Changes Mean for Your Students

How are the new assessments different from the old tests? Beginning in the spring of 2015, PARCC and Smarter Balanced will be computer-based. The assessments will require students to not only use technology to access the questions, but also to answer them.

- Technology skills are required to take computer-based, online assessments.
- Students need technology skills to complete certain tasks on the assessments.
 - All written responses must be typed
 - Answers can be presented through digital methods
 - Sources for research must be Web-based
- Technology helps students learn concepts in new ways that they'll be tested on in the assessments.



How will students use technology on the new assessments?

Here are the kinds of 21st century skills your students will need to master in order to successfully demonstrate their learning on PARCC and Smarter Balanced.

Students will be expected to know the following:

- **Fundamental computer skills**
Introductory computer vocabulary, computer hardware devices, mouse basics, using the computer desktop, windows and menus of common software programs, and basic web browsing skills in order to take the test online.
- **Keyboarding and word processing**
Keyboarding and word processing basics, how to format text, use proofing tools, and edit and revise text in order to express answers in written form.
- **Creating and analyzing charts and graphs**
Create and format spreadsheets and graphs, collect data, and express data visually.
- **Communicating and presenting information using digital tools**
Evaluate information for presentation, organize and compose slides, utilize design and effects, and include external hyperlinks in slides in order to create cohesive visual aids for presentation.
- **Conducting online research and evaluation**
Conduct keyword searches on major search engines, identify ethical sources of information, and examine and evaluate information for validity in order to find and use online information in their test answers.

To see exactly how Common Core assessment questions require all of these skills, visit the following websites for examples:

PARCC

<http://www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes>

Smarter Balanced

<http://sampleitems.smarterbalanced.org>