



PARCC COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY DETERMINATION POLICY (CCRD) AND POLICY-LEVEL PERFORMANCE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS (PLDs)

SUMMARY REPORT OF STATE AND PUBLIC FEEDBACK

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Introduction and Background

This report summarizes feedback PARCC received on the draft College- and Career-Ready Determination Policy (CCRD Policy) and Policy-Level Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs), which were released for state and public feedback from July 12 to October 3, 2012.

The PARCC Governing Board and ACCR discussed the first drafts of the College-Ready Determination Policy and Policy-Level Performance Level Descriptors during the June 2012 Governing Board meeting. In joint session, the Governing Board and ACCR voted to release the draft policies for public comment during the summer of 2012.

In September 2012, the PARCC Governing Board and ACCR reviewed the preliminary public feedback and gave provisional approval to include career readiness in the proposed College-Ready Determination policy and to solicit additional public comment on this revision.

Feedback has been collected from the following three sources:

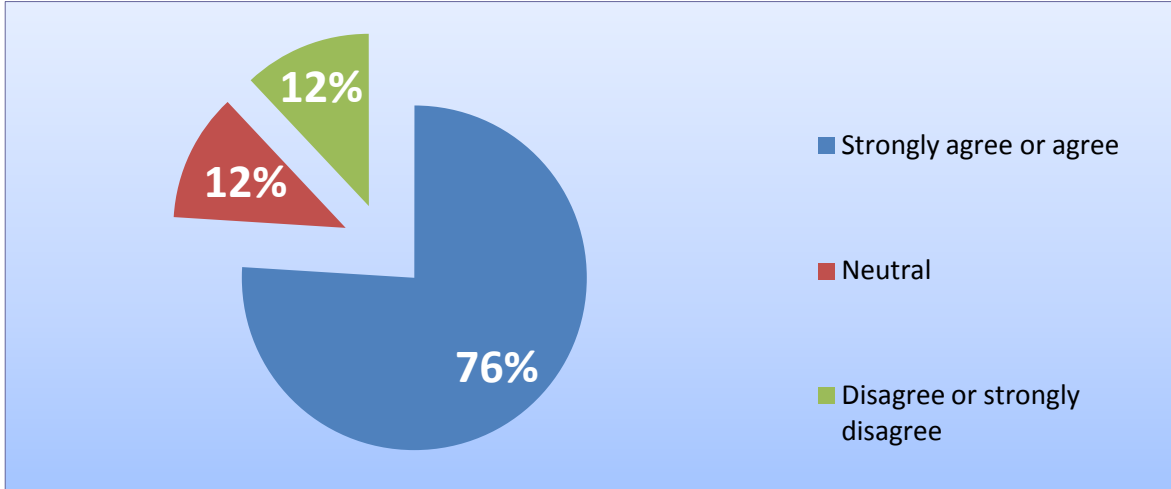
1. Online state-specific and public surveys (labeled “initial” survey in this document), open through September 28, 2012. PARCC received almost **750 individual responses**¹ and analyzed over 1,300 unique comments.
2. State-submitted memoranda detailing feedback and recommendations open through October 4, 2012.
3. An additional online public survey on career readiness language (labeled “career-ready” survey in this document), open through October 3, 2012. PARCC received almost **50 individual responses**, in addition to comments on career readiness received during the initial survey.

¹ States took different approaches to collecting feedback. In some cases, states convened a group of stakeholders together and submitted one response based on that convening, while others asked stakeholders to fill out surveys one by one.

Feedback from Initial Survey and State Memos

Survey Question 1

PARCC is planning to use five performance levels to report student results on the PARCC assessments. These levels are currently named Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4, and Level 5. Level 5 is the highest performance level. To what extent do you agree that five levels is the appropriate number for use on the PARCC assessment?



Total Number of Written Comments	435
K12	192
HE	224
Other	19

Key Takeaways from Written Comments

Level Names

- More than half of the comments for Question 1 related to suggestions for performance level names.
- Beyond name suggestions, the most frequent comment was that **no names should be adopted and PARCC should keep the levels numbered**. A fair amount of respondents drew a parallel to Advanced Placement, stating that they found the numbers for levels better than attaching names to the levels.

Note: PARCC has not chosen names for the performance levels at this time. Feedback suggested that numbering the performance levels (rather than naming them) would help focus stakeholders on the knowledge, skills and practices associated with a particular level rather than on a label. Additionally, the feedback indicated that performance level names could be redundant and that it was best to keep the policy as simple as possible. This decision does not preclude PARCC from adopting performance level names in the future.

Number of Levels

- 70 respondents stated that PARCC should consider a different number of levels (other than five). The majority of these respondents believed that there should be fewer than five levels, although several wanted more levels (common numbers cited were 6 and 10 levels).
- 25 participants expressed concern about the differentiation between levels, including both the utility of differentiating and ability to discriminate performance between levels.

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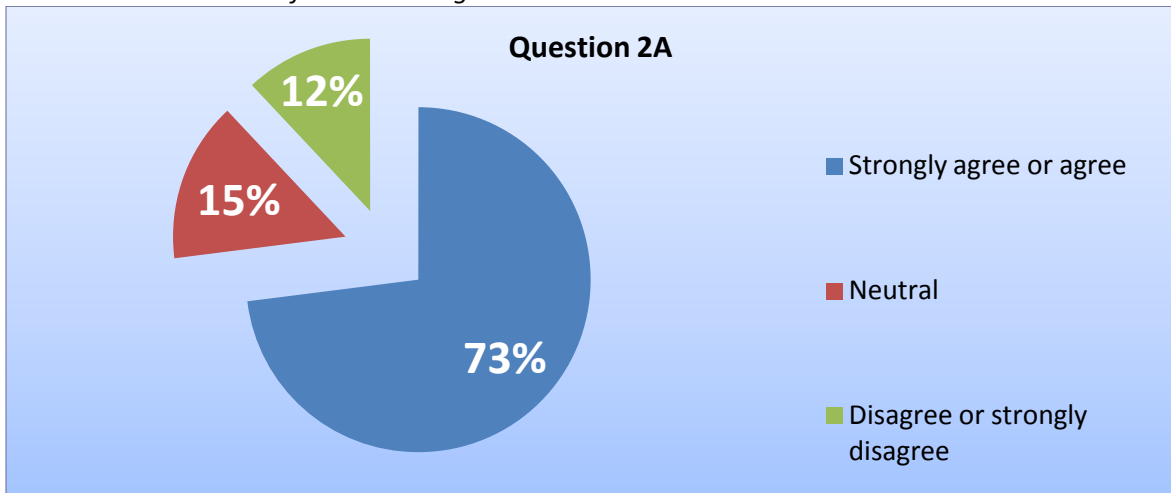
- Finally, several respondents felt that for transition purposes, it would be best to maintain a number of levels consistent with current state assessments. This number was usually four levels.

Note: PARCC state leaders strongly believed in maintaining the proposed number of levels for several reasons: 1) PARCC assessments will include a sufficient number of score points to support the accurate classification of student performance into five levels; 2) Five levels will help provide better information across the full range of student performance, particularly for low-performing and high-performing students; 3) Five levels will help schools better target assistance to students; 4) Five levels will provide states with options for using performance levels with greater precision in various accountability mechanisms and decisions; and 5) Five levels will provide increased opportunities for students, schools and districts to demonstrate growth. A clearer rationale for PARCC's proposal to adopt five performance levels was added to the policy to address concerns.

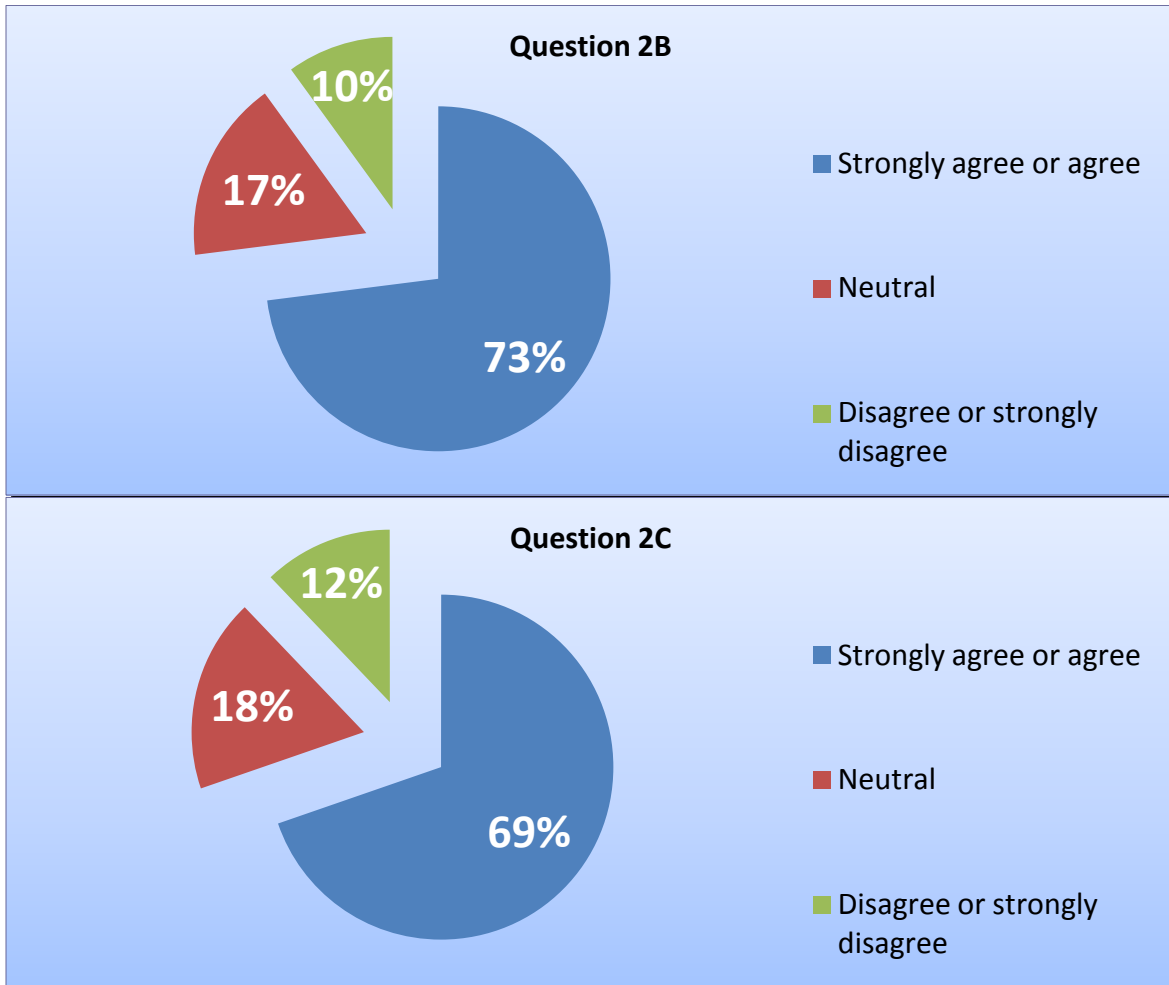
Survey Question 2

Each PARCC performance level descriptor includes two components: (1) a policy claim, which describes the educational implications for students at a particular performance level; and (2) general content claims, which describe the academic knowledge and skills students performing at a given performance level are able to demonstrate, regardless of grade level.

- (A) To what extent do you agree that the language of the policy claims at all grade levels clearly describes a student's academic preparedness and ability to pursue further study at each performance level?
- (B) To what extent do you agree that the language of the policy claims at the high school level clearly describes the academic implications of earning a College-Ready Determination?
- (C) To what extent do you agree that the language of the content claims at all grade levels clearly describes a student's command of the knowledge and skills assessed?



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Total Number of Written Comments	209
K12	91
HE	109
Other	9

Key Takeaways from Written Comments

Concerns about Clarity of Language

- 117 respondents indicated terms used to describe the claims were too ambiguous, especially between the levels. In these comments, many respondents said the language was difficult to distinguish differences between performance levels. The following are some examples that were commonly cited as most difficult to differentiate:
 - Policy Claims
 - “superior” v. “solid” v. “partial” v. “limited” v. “very limited” – especially “superior” and the level of differentiation between “partial” v. “limited”
 - Content Claims

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- “solve some” v. “solve problems” v. “solve most”
- “extensive” v. “full”
- “highly effective” v. “effective”
- “almost always can express” v. “can express”

*Note: Language describing student command of the standards at each of the five performance levels (e.g., superior, solid, partial, limited, very limited) was revised to provide greater distinction between the levels. The descriptors are now **distinguished, strong, moderate, partial, and minimal**. Language was also revised in the general content claims to provide greater clarity.*

- Some respondents expressed that the language may not be accessible to parents and students.

Note: The current policy needed to be sufficiently precise in order to inform item development and standard setting. To help make the policy more accessible, PARCC has created resources, including a set of Frequently Asked Questions, that will help a broad range of stakeholders more fully understand the policy and its implications. Further clarity will be gained through the development of the grade- and subject-specific PLDs, which are currently being developed by PARCC state content experts and postsecondary faculty. The PARCC Governing Board and Advisory Committee on College Readiness will review them and vote to release them for public comment in spring 2013.

Concerns and Specific Suggested Changes for Policy Claims

- Several respondents expressed that they did not agree with the terms “policy claims.” Other suggestions for this term included “educational implications,” “progression claims,” or “statements” instead.

Note: The term “educational implications” was added to the description of the policy-level PLDs.

- Several respondents asked for more specificity around the term “academic support.” One respondent suggested changing the term to “interventions and academic support.”

Note: This is a recommendation that PARCC will consider for future PARCC and/or state communications efforts with districts.

Concerns and Specific Suggested Changes for Content Claims

- Several respondents were concerned that the language might be too subjective and preferred using percentages for policy and/content claims, especially in mathematics.

Note: The policy-level PLDs are intended to provide more qualitative information about what the typical student at each performance level knows and can do and to provide guidance to educators, parents, and students about what scoring at a particular level means. Subject- and grade-specific PLDs are being developed by PARCC state content experts and postsecondary faculty. The PARCC Governing Board and Advisory Committee on College Readiness will review them and vote to release them for public comment in spring 2013. They will provide further clarity on specific content claims.

- Several respondents commented that the content claims (especially ELA/Literacy) need to have the same grammatical structure.

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Note: The policy was edited and revised to provide as much clarity and consistency as possible. However, not all suggested changes were made to maintain the integrity of the alignment of the claims to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

- Several respondents requested more of an emphasis on critical reading and analysis skills in the ELA content claims.

Note: PARCC will address this during the development of grade- and subject- specific PLDs.

- Several respondents questioned why some of the standards for mathematical practices were included in the mathematics content claims, but not all.

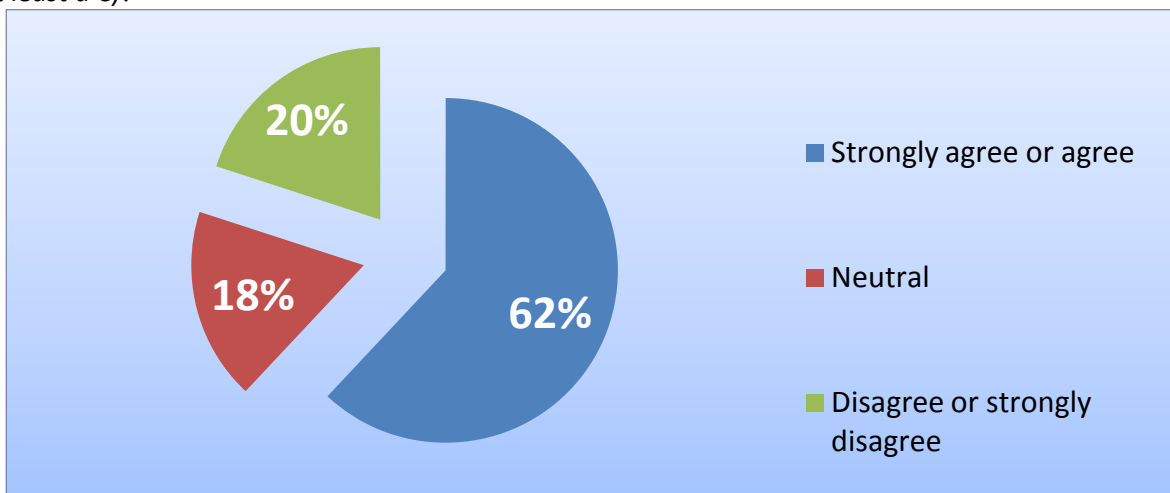
Note: The claims are based on the PARCC sub-claims for mathematics (as defined in the PARCC Model Content Frameworks). The mathematics practices are taken into account in all of the sub-claims at one level or another. They will be more specifically addressed in the grade- and subject-specific PLDs, which PARCC is currently developing.

- Some respondents expressed that they would like to see the content claims broken into various grade levels.

Note: This will occur through the development of grade- and subject-specific PLDs.

Survey Question 3

In order to inform the standard-setting process that will be used to identify the threshold scores students will need to achieve on the PARCC high school assessments to earn a College-Ready Determination, and to conduct future studies to validate the efficacy of those Determinations, the draft policy states that at least 75% of students performing at Level 4 will earn college credit by attaining at least a grade of C or its equivalent in introductory courses in English and mathematics. To what extent do you agree with these criteria (i.e., 75% will earn at least a C)?



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Total Number of Written Comments	168
K12	75
HE	83
Other	10

Key Takeaways from Written Comments

Clarify the Validation Statement

- 38 respondents had questions about the clarity of the validation statement. Most of these surrounded clarifying the terms of the statement to facilitate accurate validation studies.
- Specifically, respondents would like the statement to clarify the following:
 - The 75% likelihood of earning a C applies to students who enroll in college;
 - The specific entry level courses that will be used to validate the claim; and
 - Whether the statement applies to entry level courses at 2-year or 4-year postsecondary institution or will be validated for both.
- 48 respondents expressed general confusion over the purpose and meaning of the validation statement. The majority of these respondents interpreted the statement as a prediction rather than a benchmark to be used for future validation studies. Others misinterpreted the meaning.

Note: The language in the validation statement was clarified to help reduce confusion. It now focuses on the probability/likelihood of success in entry-level, credit-bearing courses.

Disagree with Validation Criteria

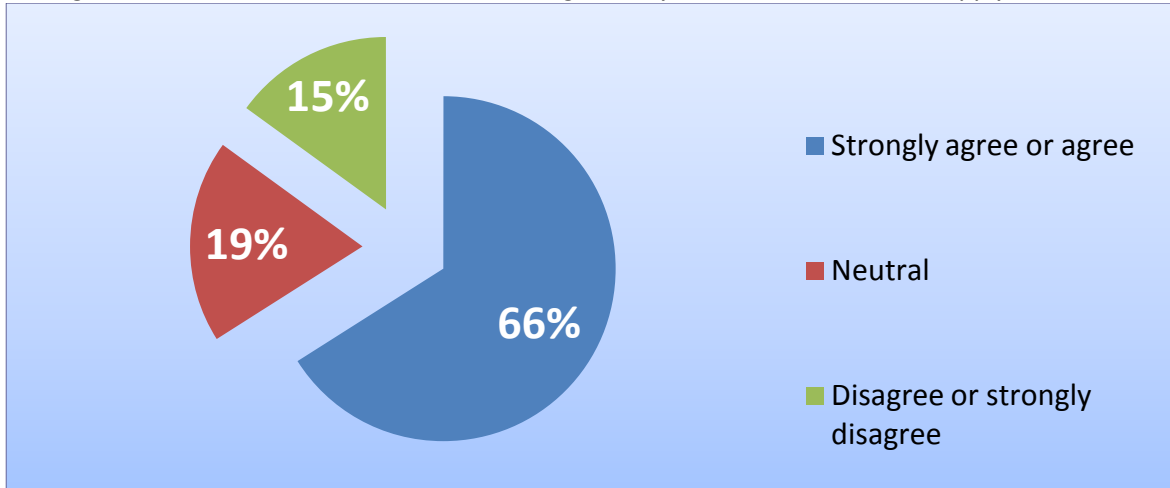
- Of respondents who appeared to understand PARCC’s intended purpose, 26 did not agree with using a “C” and 35 did not agree with using “75%” as benchmarks for validation. Of this group of respondents, most suggested that the standards were either too low or appeared arbitrary. Some participants specifically asked for clarity as to the rationale for choosing 75%. The most common alternate suggestion was to raise the standard to a “B” and/or 80% or above. Some participants did express concern that course grades vary across institutions of higher education or that grades are subjective.
- Several respondents suggested validation statements for the other performance levels.

Note: The 0.75 probability was chosen because it is a reasonably high standard but not so high that using it would create a College- and Career-Ready score that is unattainable. It is also similar to the criteria used by ACT, thus there is some research/evidence on a similar criterion. Lastly, a 0.75 probability recognizes that academic preparation is an essential factor for success in entry-level, credit-bearing courses, but other factors beyond academic preparation – such as students’ persistence, finances, health, and other factors – also contribute to their ultimate success in these courses.

The Performance Levels Descriptors (PLDs) are intend to provide more qualitative information about what the typical student at each performance level knows and can do and to provide guidance to educators, parents, and students about what scoring at a particular level means. Subject- and grade-specific PLDs are being developed by PARCC state content experts and postsecondary faculty. The PARCC Governing Board and Advisory Committee on College Readiness will review them and vote to release them for public comment in spring 2013. They will provide further clarity on specific content claims.

Survey Question 4

To what extent do you agree that College Algebra or Introductory Statistics are the appropriate entry-level, credit-bearing courses to which the mathematics College-Ready Determination should apply?



Total Number of Written Comments	141
K12	56
HE	77
Other	8

Key Takeaways from Written Comments

Course Definition Too Narrow

- 55 respondents suggested that the definition of entry-level college credit bearing math courses to be broadened to include other courses commonly offered during the first year of college at postsecondary institutions.
- Specifically, additional course suggestions included Quantitative Literacy, Quantitative Analysis, Liberal Arts Mathematics, Finite Math, and Calculus.
- 7 respondents suggested the addition of a technical math course.

Note: It may be premature to expand the list of entry-level mathematics courses until additional research can be completed. However, the CTE community strongly recommended the inclusion of language around technical mathematics courses. Revisions that make that change were shared for feedback with the CTE community before inclusion in the final policy: “Students who earn a College- and Career-Ready Determination in Mathematics will have demonstrated the academic knowledge, skills, and practices necessary to enter into and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing courses in College Algebra, Introductory Statistics and **technical subjects requiring an equivalent level of mathematics.**”

Course Definition Too Broad

- 20 respondents suggested removing statistics from the list.

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Note: Because the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were back-mapped from the expectations of rigorous college algebra and introductory statistics courses, PARCC remains committed to validating for these courses.

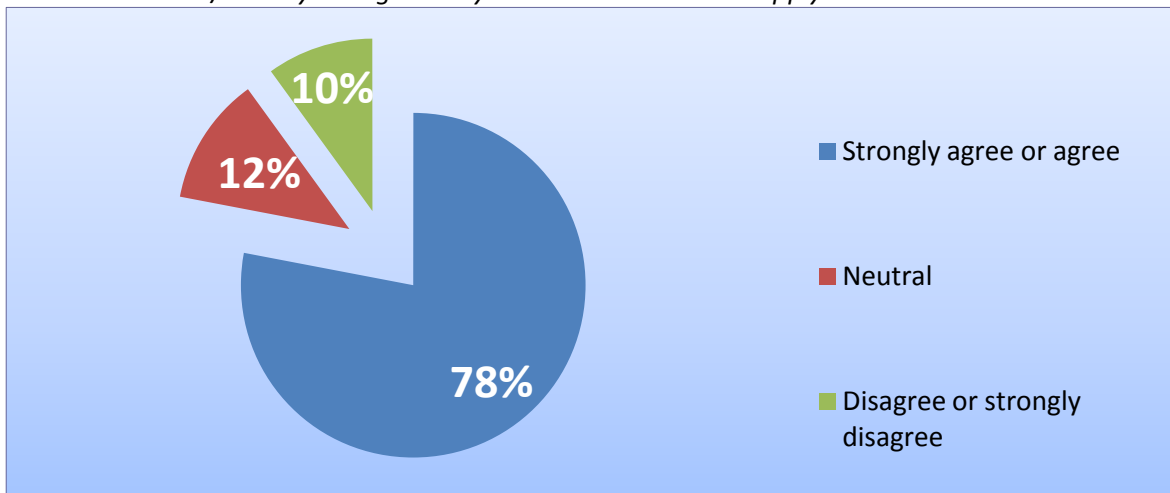
Define College-Ready as Prepared for Specific Math Content Rather than Courses

- Due to the variability of rigor and content in entry level college credit bearing math courses across institutions of higher education, some respondents suggested defining the course content in which a student is qualified to engage rather than designating specific courses by name.
- Some respondents suggested additional surveys and/or research to determine entry-level courses.

Note: PARCC will consider this as the consortium plans long-term research.

Survey Question 5

To what extent do you agree that College English Composition or Literature and introductory courses that require college-level reading, such as the social sciences and history, are the appropriate entry-level, credit-bearing courses to which the ELA/literacy College-Ready Determination should apply?



Total Number of Written Comments	99
K12	36
HE	58
Other	5

Key Takeaways from Written Comments

Course Definition Too Broad or Too Vague

- 28 respondents disagreed with the definition because they felt it was too broad or too vague of a definition.
- 15 individuals indicated they did not agree with the inclusion of social sciences and history.
- Several respondents commented that they believe the definition should be limited to reading comprehension and composition alone, and not include literature.
- Several respondents thought the definition should more directly include language to indicate whether the definition refers specifically to “freshman” credit-bearing courses.

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- Several respondents stated that PARCC should consider adding clarity to this statement by identifying learning outcomes.

Note: The courses referenced in the CCRD in ELA/literacy courses were changed from “College English Composition and Literature, and introductory courses requiring college-level reading in a range of disciplines, such as history and the social sciences” to “College English Composition, Literature, and technical courses requiring college-level reading and writing.” These are the highest priority courses against which PARCC plans to validate the CCRD in the near term, as these are the courses for which English placement tests are most frequently used to determine placement. In contrast, many colleges and universities do not use English placement tests to place students into courses outside English literature and composition. In the long term, PARCC may validate the CCRD for other courses.

Course Definition Too Narrow

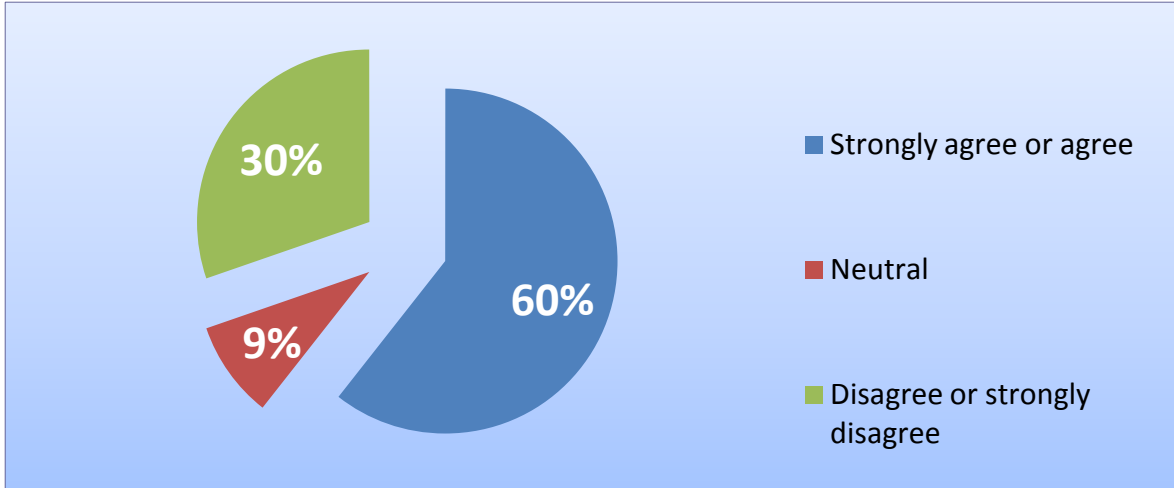
- 7 respondents commented that the definition was too narrow.
 - Specifically, several individuals questioned why more technical courses and/or content were not included.
 - Additionally, several respondents felt that the definition should be changed from “OR” to “AND.”

*Note: The CTE community strongly recommended the inclusion of language around technical writing courses. Revisions that make that change were shared for feedback with the CTE community before inclusion in the final policy: “Students who earn a College- and Career-Ready Determination in ELA/literacy will have demonstrated the academic knowledge, skills, and practices necessary to enter directly into and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing courses in College English Composition, Literature, and **technical courses requiring college-level reading and writing.**”*

Feedback from Career-Ready Survey

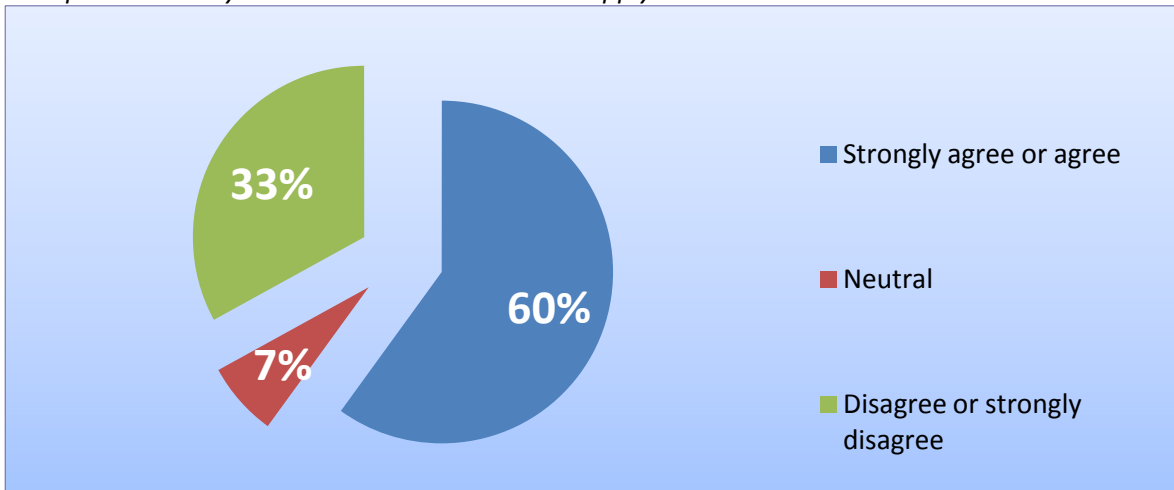
Career-Ready Survey Question 1

The draft College- and Career-Ready Determination describes the characteristics of postsecondary “programs” (those that lead to a credential or degree) in which students earning the determination are academically prepared to enter into and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing courses. To what extent do you agree that the College- and Career-Ready Determination targets the appropriate characteristics of postsecondary “programs” to which it will apply?



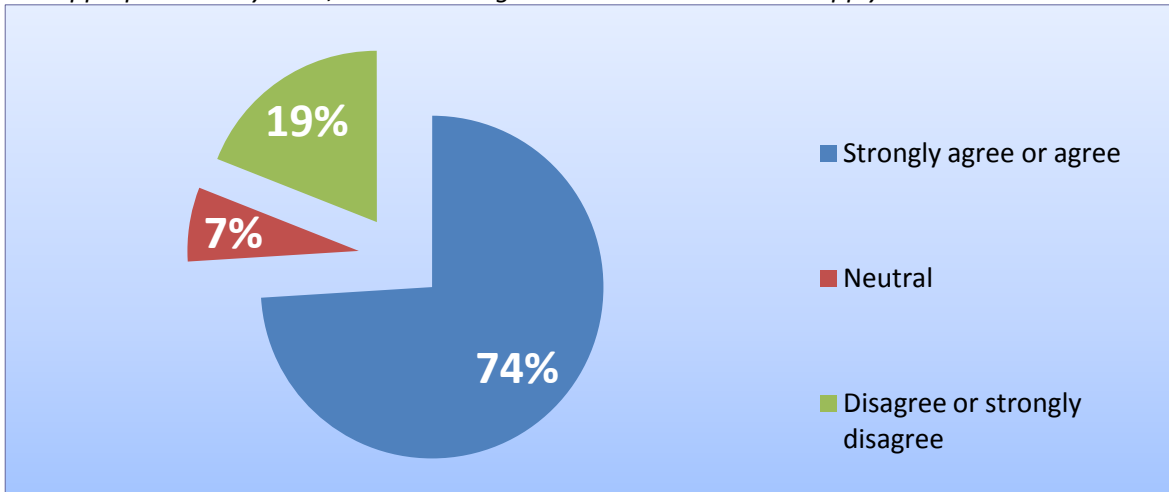
Question 2

The draft College- and Career-Ready Determination describes the characteristics of postsecondary “institutions” in which students earning the determination are academically prepared to enter into and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing courses. These institutions are described as 2- and 4-year public postsecondary institutions, inclusive of any public postsecondary institution awarding degrees and/or credentials that are aligned with entry into middle- and high-skills jobs (i.e. programs that are typically at least one year in length), including public technical colleges. To what extent do you agree that the College- and Career-Ready Determination targets the appropriate postsecondary “institutions” to which it will apply?



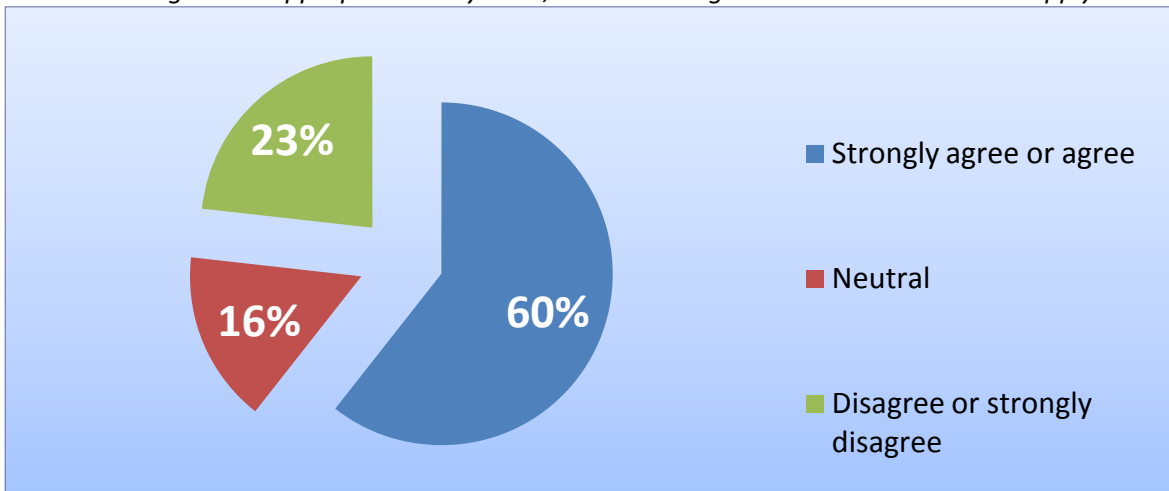
Question 3

The draft College- and Career-Ready Determination in “ELA/literacy” describes the characteristics of entry-level, credit-bearing “courses” in which students earning the determination are academically prepared to enter into and succeed. These courses include College English Composition and Literature, and introductory courses requiring college-level reading in a range of disciplines, such as history, the social sciences, and technical subjects. To what extent do you agree that the College- and Career-Ready Determination in “ELA/literacy” targets the appropriate entry-level, credit-bearing “courses” to which it will apply?



Question 4

The draft College- and Career-Ready Determination in “mathematics” describes the characteristics of entry-level, credit-bearing “courses” in which students earning the determination are academically prepared to enter into and succeed. These courses include College Algebra, Introductory Statistics and technical subjects requiring an equivalent level of mathematics. To what extent do you agree that the College- and Career-Ready Determination in “mathematics” targets the appropriate entry-level, credit bearing “courses” to which it will apply?



General Themes and Key Takeaways from Written Comments

- Of those who disagreed with the first two questions, a number of respondents felt that the definition was too limiting for “career-ready” and that it was still too focused on college-ready. Specifically, some

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respondents felt the term “credit-bearing” was too limiting, since some postsecondary training may not be “credit-bearing,” such as apprentice-type programs or military training.

Note: At this time, PARCC does not believe that there is adequate and readily available data across all PARCC states to measure a validation claim for apprenticeship and other training programs that lead to middle and high skills jobs. However, this does not preclude any of these programs from using PARCC assessment results as entry-level criteria. The policy was updated to include a statement regarding the option for such programs to validate the PARCC assessments for use in their entry-level criteria.

- Some respondents included comments about the desire to include career skills beyond academic knowledge and skills.

Note: More robust language was added to the policy to emphasize that the academic knowledge, skills, and practices outlined in the PARCC CCR Determinations in ELA/literacy and mathematics are an essential part of students’ readiness for college and careers, but do not include non-academic factors students need for success in postsecondary programs and careers.

- For the ELA/literacy CCR Determination, the most frequent comments noted the lack of speaking and listening skills and a desire to include more technical writing.

Note: Technical writing was added to the final ELA/literacy CCR Determination. PARCC will address speaking and listening skills in the optional speaking and listening assessment component.

- The feedback regarding the Mathematics CCR Determination was much more varied. Some wanted to broaden the definition to include more courses such as “Business Math.” Some expressed concern that college algebra may not be the best pathway for students on a career trajectory.

*Note: The CTE community has strongly recommended the inclusion of language around technical mathematics courses. Revisions that make that change were shared for feedback with the CTE community before inclusion in the final policy: “Students who earn a College- and Career-Ready Determination in Mathematics will have demonstrated the academic knowledge, skills, and practices necessary to enter into and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing courses in College Algebra, Introductory Statistics and **technical subjects requiring an equivalent level of mathematics.**” It may be premature to expand the list of entry-level mathematics courses more broadly than that until additional research can be completed.*

Although the PARCC CCRD in mathematics applies to these courses given their prevalent role as entry-level, first-year courses, this does not preclude institutions of higher education from using the data or CCRDs produced by the PARCC assessments for placement of students into other entry-level, credit-bearing mathematics courses such as Quantitative Literacy/Mathematics for Liberal Arts.