

FairTest

National Center for Fair & Open Testing

New York Performance Standards Consortium

Performance-based assessment works well for all students, but its success with the most vulnerable students is what makes the outcomes of the [New York Performance Standards Consortium](#) so impressive. Central to the Consortium's success are its "proven practitioner developed, student-focused performance assessments." These are created by teachers and rooted in inquiry-based curricula and teaching. Students learn to investigate topics in depth and to explore their own interests within each subject.

[Redefining Assessment: Data Report on the New York Performance Standards Consortium](#) shows that Consortium schools significantly outperform those in other New York City public schools while serving a similar population. In particular, more students from all demographic groups graduate and enroll in college.

The Consortium includes 38 public, non-charter high schools. Thirty-six are in New York City. These follow the same admissions process as other NYC high schools that do not require entrance exams. The student population largely mirrors the City's student body, with nearly identical shares of black and low-income youth and students with disabilities, and higher percentages of Latinos and English language learners (ELL). Students enter Consortium high schools with slightly lower ELA and math average scores than citywide averages.

Consortium schools significantly outperform other New York City public schools. The Consortium's dropout rate is significantly lower than that of regular NYC public schools. Four- and six-year graduation rates for all categories of students are higher than for the rest of NYC. Graduation rates are roughly 50% greater for ELLs and students with disabilities. Eighteen months after high school graduation, the college enrollment rate is 83%. That's 24 points higher than the City's. These rates compare favorably with [national data](#) on persistence into the second year of college. The college enrollment rate for "minority males" is more than double the national average.

To "demonstrate college and career readiness and to qualify for graduation," all Consortium schools require students to complete four Performance-Based Assessment Tasks (PBATs): an analytic literature essay, a social studies research paper, a student-designed science experiment, and higher-level mathematics problems that have real-world applications. They include both written and oral components. In the oral component, students respond to questions from a panel of teachers and outside experts, similar to a graduate school thesis defense.

The Consortium has permission from the state Department of Education to administer only one of the state graduation tests, English Language Arts. The PBATs, generally completed in 11th and 12th grades, replace the Regents exams in other subjects and for school accountability. Each school also maintains collections of work that chronicle a student's growth.

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The Assessments

The *Data Report* explains that the PBATs “emerge from class readings and discussion. In some classes, the tasks are crafted by the teacher and in other instances by the student.” For example, in social studies, each student must write and orally defend a research-based analytic paper on questions that have grown out of a history, government, or economics class. The report includes samples of the wide range of interests addressed by the students in the four PBATs.

As Urban Academy history teacher Avram Barlowe explains, the PBATs require students to learn perseverance, how to assess and apply evidence, and explain their thinking in these assessments in written and oral forms. They “demand that students learn, through practice, how to read, write, calculate, observe and research in a critical manner.” A DVD series, [*Teacher to Teacher*](#), shows how teachers and students build their courses to attain these ends.

The college persistence data show that the extensive reading, writing and long-term planning required for the performance assessments prepare students well for higher education. Consortium head Ann Cook points out that this evidence is far more valuable than test scores.

A student, Alyson, said, “Being educated at a Consortium school had a profound effect on my life. Every student is entitled to an educational community as enriching and inspiring as mine.”

All the PBATs and oral defenses completed for the common graduation requirement are evaluated using Consortium-wide scoring guides (“rubrics”). (The report includes rubrics.) These well-developed assessment standards, written and revised as needed by Consortium teachers, allow accurate evaluations of student work across schools. Samples of the work are blindly re-scored to evaluate both reliability of scoring and the challenge level of teacher assignments. Samples of student work (“exemplars”) that have gone through a series of studies help both scorers and students to think about high-quality work.

The Consortium is also collaborating with elementary and middle-school teachers to design new assessments. These enable close observation and documentation of student growth and support inquiry-focused education. The City’s Education Department has approved the Consortium’s assessment as one of the options for schools to use when assessing Pre-K children.

Resources and References

- The Consortium website is at <http://performanceassessment.org>
- NY Performance Standards Consortium. 2017. *Redefining Assessment: Data Report on the New York Performance Standards Consortium*.
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1rhDg-gsYCiLxqpUud0j_hmfNu6qcHwHH
- Teacher to Teacher, a series of videos and books on the Consortium.
<http://www.teacherscollegepress.com/teachertoteacher.html>
- College persistence, national data, <https://nscresearchcenter.org/snapshotreport-persistence/retention22/>

[A print formatted PDF of this fact sheet is available here:](#)

<http://www.fairtest.org/sites/default/files/NYPerformanceStandardsConsortiumFactsheet.pdf>

(Updated March, 2018)