The Facts about How the Recommended AMP Achievement Level Scores Were Determined

Toward preparing students to be college, career and culturally ready graduates.

On the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) assessment, students score on a scale divided into four achievement categories: Level 1, 2, 3 and 4, from low to high. Level 3 and 4 represent meeting the standards. Level 1 and 2 represent partially meeting the standards. The standards the AMP assessment is measuring are the Alaska English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards adopted in 2012. These standards reflect the higher expectations necessary for our students to be prepared for work or further training after high school.

To set the range of scores for each achievement level, participants in the score-setting process recommended the minimum scores for Level 2, 3, and 4, thus separating the scale scores into four levels. Scores lower than the minimum score for Level 2 are in Level 1. Each test in each grade will receive its own achievement level scores.

In the early stages of developing AMP, a group of Alaska educators defined what students should know and be able to do at each of the four achievement levels, in each assessed grade (grades 3-10), and for the two tested subjects (English and math.) This is similar to what classroom teachers do when they decide what level of achievement will earn an A, B, C or D grade.

This summer, 128 select Alaska educators gathered to determine the range of scores within each achievement level using a process called "bookmarking." Facilitators from the Achievement and Assessment Institute led the process; staff from EED observed and served as resources.

For each subject – English and math – participants included eight or nine educators from each of grades three to eight, 12 high school educators, two college faculty members, and two representatives of career and technical education.

Grade-level groups were combined and re-combined when determining cut scores. For example, educators from grades 3, 4, and 5 worked together on grade 4. The educators represented the diversity of the schools and districts in Alaska. Location, school size, and ethnicity as well as teachers of special education and English learners were represented at each table group.

First, the educators took each test. They thought about what knowledge and skills were reflected in each question. The educators then described what knowledge and skills a student would need to barely make it into an achievement level. The educators were looking for borderline achievement because minimum scores for achievement levels are set at those borders.

Educators reviewed each test question again, in order of difficulty, from easiest to hardest,

as determined by the number of students who answered each question correctly. The educators discussed what made each question more difficult than the one before it.

With one test question on each sheet of paper, and with the sheets in order from easiest to hardest, each educator individually placed a bookmark after the question he or she judged that two out of three borderline students should be able to answer correctly to be in Level 3. The educators repeated this process for Level 2 and Level 4. They discussed their decisions in small groups.

When there were differences in bookmarks, educators referred to the standards and the descriptions of achievement levels to inform their discussion. Following the discussion, each educator could move any of his or her bookmarks. Consensus or agreement was not required. Educators then discussed the bookmarks in a large group.

After two rounds of placing bookmarks and discussion, the educators were told what percent of students from the spring 2015 tests would fall into each achievement level, in each test, based on the educators' midpoint bookmark.

The educators also were given information about the performance of Alaskans on national tests. The educators discussed their bookmark decisions in a large group. Similar to previous rounds, each educator could move his or her bookmarks following the discussion.

A group of educators reviewed all of the proposed minimum scores to be sure that no grade's test was harder or easier than the other grades' tests.

After all of this, and after a review by department staff, the department submitted its recommended minimum scores to the State Board of Education & Early Development.

On August 24 at noon, the State Board will consider sending out for public comment the recommended minimum scores. You may submit comments at https://education.alaska.gov/regs/

The State Board will make the final decision in a public meeting October 9 after considering written public comment and taking oral comment at the meeting, which starts at noon.

The State Board meetings can be heard at http://www.alaskalegislature.tv/

For more information please visit the EED website https://education.alaska.gov/akassessments/

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