

**To: Members of the State Board of
Education & Early Development**

January 17, 2024

From: Dr. Deena Bishop, Commissioner

Agenda Item: 3A

◆ ISSUE

The board is being asked to approve proposed amendments to 4 AAC 06.739 (b), achievement levels for English Language Arts and Mathematics; 4 AAC 06.822 (b), accountability sub scores. The amendments update the cut scores used to determine proficiency by grade, and the sub scores used to determine the accountability growth indicator. The percentage of students meeting the different levels of achievement will inform the accountability system, as the results will be used in determining the Academic Achievement indicator and the Growth indicator.

◆ BACKGROUND

- The Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR) is the new summative assessment for grades 3 – 9 in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, which was administered operationally for the first time in the Spring 2022. In June 2022, the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) conducted a standard setting review based on student performance against the standards. Standard setting study results inform the proficiency levels that determine student achievement on the assessment.
- Districts administered the AK STAR summative assessments from March 27 through April 28, 2023.
- On May 23– 25, 2023, DEED conducted a validation study for AK STAR. The purpose of the validation study was to evaluate whether the assessment cut scores approved in summer 2022 remain appropriate for 2023 and future test administrations. Cut scores are those scale scores that sit at the borders of two achievement levels and allow us to define proficient and non-proficient performance.
- As part of the validation study, Alaska stakeholders participated in meetings to revisit the established cut scores and review student performance from the 2022 and 2023 administrations of AK STAR. This process allowed DEED to ensure the cut scores are an accurate reflection of student performance in Alaska.
- DEED reviewed the cut scores to ensure alignment to DEED policies and determined that a policy review was warranted to further review the process, outcomes, and policy considerations related to establishing the AK STAR achievement level scores.
- The Policy Review Committee included representatives from the standard setting and validation study educator panels, district leaders, policymakers, and representatives from higher education, the business community, and a parent organization. The Committee convened on two dates, August 1 and August 28, to consider information beyond the content-based judgments, including a broader range of factors such as whether expectations are coherent and consistent with other meaningful state and national performance measures.

- The AK STAR validation study was completed by May 25; Policy Review Meetings were held on August 1 and August 28. Revised cut scores were provided to DEED on August 29.
- The recommended changes to the cut scores reflect the work of the Policy Review Committee and update the cut scores used to determine proficiency by grade 4 AAC 06.739 (b), achievement levels for English Language Arts and Mathematics.
- Student achievement on the assessment will inform two accountability measures. The Academic Achievement indicator is the proportion of students that are proficient or advanced on the state summative assessment. The Growth indicator is the proportion of the students that increase on the sublevels of the achievement level descriptors as described in 4 AAC 06.822.
- A public comment period was held from December 8, 2023, through January 8, 2024.
- The proposed regulations and public comment received through December 26, 2023, can be found behind this cover memo. Additional public comment received will be provided after the public comment period concludes.
- Dr. Elizabeth Greninger, Assessments Administrator; Kelly Manning, Deputy Director, Division of Innovation and Education Excellence; and Carol Boatman, Director of the Alyeska Reading Institute, will be present to brief the board.

◆ **OPTIONS**

This is a work session item. Action will take place under Agenda Item 6A.