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MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents

FROM: Pam Stewart

DATE: November 14, 2014

SUBJECT: **Florida Standards Assessments Standard Setting Panels**

Contact Information:
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DPS: 2014-184

This year marks the beginning of the transition to the Florida Standards Assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics. While we have constructed the new assessments that will be administered for the first time this spring, the final step in this transition is to set the Achievement Level cut scores for each grade and subject. The purposes of this memorandum are to describe the standard setting process and to seek your nominations for the Florida Standards Assessments standard setting panels.

Consistent with our current reporting system, as well as section 1008.22, Florida Statutes, Florida must identify new cut scores, or standards, that will define the new Achievement Levels for each of the new English Language Arts and Mathematics assessments. (Note: Cut scores are also referred to as standards because they serve as the minimum “standard” a student must reach to be classified in each Achievement Level.) These cut scores must result in Achievement Levels that satisfy the following requirements.

- Achievement Levels shall range from 1 through 5, with Level 1 being the lowest, Level 5 being the highest and Level 3 indicating satisfactory performance.
- A score shall be designated below which a student’s performance is deemed inadequate. The State Board of Education shall, by rule, designate a passing score for each assessment.

In addition to these requirements, there are also specific requirements included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) legislation that must be met. ESEA requires new Achievement Levels to:

- Include descriptions of the content-based competencies associated with each level, commonly referred to as “performance-level” or “achievement-level” descriptions;
- Be established through a process that involves both expert judgments and consideration of assessment results; and
- Be aligned with the state’s academic content standards in that they capture the full range and depth of knowledge and skills defined in the state’s challenging, coherent and rigorous academic content standards.

The key steps of standard setting are provided below.

1. Develop a policy definition describing the meaning of each Achievement Level. These policy definitions give a general statement of policy goals.
2. Develop Achievement Level Descriptions (ALDs). This is the translation of the policy definitions into more detailed descriptions of the knowledge and skills that a student needs to meet the requirements of the intended policy. These descriptions are specific to the subject matter.
3. Convene a standard setting panel composed of educators (Educator Panel) to propose cut scores for the Achievement Levels. This is a panel of subject matter experts tasked with converting the policy definitions and ALDs to the points on the reporting score scale that will serve as the cut scores. The panel needs to be large enough to yield stable estimates of the points on the scale, members need to be knowledgeable about the content of the tests and the ALDs, and need to have experience with the examinee population.
4. Convene a standard setting panel composed of business and policy leaders (Reactor Panel) to review the proposed cut scores. This panel of business and policy leaders reviews the recommendations of the Educator Panel and the impact if the cut scores had been applied to the students who took the assessment the previous spring and proposes cut scores based on this impact.
5. Solicit public input. Rule development workshops are conducted statewide to gather public input.
6. Recommend a proposed rule and solicit legislative input. The Commissioner of Education reviews public input and recommends cut scores. The Commissioner's recommendation is reviewed by the Florida legislature.
7. Obtain State Board of Education approval of cut scores. Public input, the recommended cut scores and legislative input are shared with the State Board of Education for consideration in their final decision.

Policy definitions have already been established for each Achievement Level, and a panel of Florida educators will draft the ALDs that will be used for standard setting. The next step in the process is to convene a standard setting panel to estimate the points on the reporting score scale that correspond to policy definitions and the ALDs. The process for this panel usually contains a number of elements, which are described below.

1. Exposure to the tests. Panelists are asked to take the tests in order to get a concrete sense of what the student experience is like.
2. Training. The standard setting process is usually not a familiar activity for the members of the panels. Therefore, training is given with the goal of making the panelists competent in the required tasks.
3. Judgment process. Panelists are asked to make judgments about how well examinees should perform on the items on the test. The results of the judgment process are used to estimate the points on the reporting score scale.
4. Estimation of performance standard. A statistical or psychometric method is used to convert the ratings from the members of the panels to points on the reporting score scale.

5. Cycles in the standard setting process. Making the judgments that are used for estimating points on the reporting score scale is a challenging activity. Therefore, standard setting panelists are given multiple opportunities to make the judgments, with summary feedback data for the panel provided between opportunities. The purpose of the feedback is to help members of the panels understand their task and to give an opportunity for a consensus to emerge for the location of the cut score, or standard. This feedback often includes student impact data.
6. Endorsement of the performance level. Standard setting requires panelists to indicate their level of support for the final result of the process. This is usually some indication of whether results are consistent with their judgments.
7. Evaluation of the process. Members of the panels are asked if they understood the process, if they felt unduly influenced by the team facilitating the panels, whether the feedback they received was of use to them, and if they had enough time to perform the tasks.

As illustrated in the standard setting steps, school districts, the department, the State Board of Education and the Florida legislature all have important roles to fulfill in the process. It is critical that the standard setting Educator Panel consists of individuals who are able to make expert judgments about content-based expectations. **To ensure that this occurs, the department is relying on each superintendent to carefully consider and then nominate individuals who would best be suited to this effort.** The department has eighteen separate committees to fill. Please consider nominating several individuals from across your district for each subject area, including both school and district staff and representatives with ESE or ESOL certifications. While every district may not be represented on each committee, the department will ensure that the panel as a whole reflects the diversity of Florida’s student population. As you consider potential nominees, please be advised of the following timeline that will guide the process.

Month/Year	Task
November 2014 – January 2015	Request nominations for standard setting panels
March 2015	Finalize standard setting panel membership
April 2015	Send standard setting invitations to panelists
Spring 2015	Draft Achievement Level Descriptions for the Florida Standards Assessments
April – May 2015	Administer baseline assessments
August 2015	Conduct standard setting meetings, including “reactor” meetings with business leaders, educational administrators and other citizens
September 2015	Conduct rule development workshops and seek input from the Florida legislature
Winter 2015	State Board of Education rule adoption – new Achievement Level cut scores for the Florida Standards Assessments

It is critical that the individuals nominated be available to serve on an Educator Panel that will likely convene in August 2015. **Nominating individuals to serve as part of this process is also a commitment that the district will support the nominee’s participation, regardless of any other school- or district-level responsibilities that may conflict.**

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The nomination form is attached for your use in nominating individuals for the Florida Standards Assessments Standard Setting Panels. Please note that each nomination must be supported with your signature prior to submission. Each nominee selected should expect to attend one week-long meeting. All nominations must be submitted by January 31, 2015, to the department's Bureau of K-12 Student Assessment, as follows:

Victoria Ash, Chief
Bureau of K-12 Student Assessment
325 W. Gaines Street, Suite 414
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400
Fax 850-245-0771

Please feel free to contact Ms. Ash if you have any questions about standard setting in general, or about the nomination process. She may be reached at Victoria.Ash@fldoe.org or 850-245-0513.

PS/va

Attachment

cc: School District Assessment Coordinators
School District Accountability Coordinators