

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents

FROM: Pam Stewart

DATE: December 13, 2013

Contact Information:

Victoria Ash
850-245-0513
Victoria.Ash@fldoe.org
DPS: 2013-173

SUBJECT: Civics End-of-Course Assessment Standard-Setting Committee

Florida is continuing the process of implementing Florida End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments, which measure student achievement of the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS). There are several key steps that must occur prior to finalizing this implementation. The purposes of this memorandum are to describe one of the critical steps, the standard-setting process, and to seek your nominations for the Civics EOC Assessment Standard-Setting Committee that will convene in July 2014.

Consistent with our current reporting system, as well as section 1008.22, Florida Statutes, Florida will need to identify new cut scores, or standards, that will define the new Achievement Levels for the Civics EOC Assessment. (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 score a student’s performance is deemed inadequate. The State Board of Education shall, by rule, designate a passing score for each EOC 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.

Standards have been set for FCAT 2.0 Reading, FCAT 2.0 Mathematics and the Algebra 1 EOC Assessment (in 2011); for FCAT 2.0 Science and the Biology 1 and Geometry EOC Assessments (in 2012); and they are in process for the U.S. History EOC Assessment (in 2013). Achievement Levels for the Civics EOC Assessment will be established in 2014.

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 they 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 committee of Florida educators drafted the Civics EOC Assessment ALDs that will be reviewed by the public and then 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 that 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, such as estimating probabilities.
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. This is the only point at which formal statistics or psychometrics enters into the process.
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 committee 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.

Generally, standards of performance are set by a policy board rather than the group of persons on standard-setting panels. The board takes into consideration the panels' recommendations. Therefore, when all of the work of the standard-setting process is complete, the results are presented to the board that called for the standards in order to determine if the results are consistent with their expectations; in some cases, the board may make adjustments to the results from the panels based on other information. Florida's standards will be approved by the State Board of Education.

As is 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.** While every district may not be represented on the final panel, the department will ensure that the panel 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
August 2013	Draft Achievement Level Definitions and Descriptions for Civics EOC Assessment
December 2013 – January 2014	Request Nominations for Civics EOC Assessment Standard-Setting Committee
March 2014	Finalize Civics EOC Assessment Standard-Setting Committee Membership
April – May 2014	Administer Civics EOC Baseline Assessment
July/August 2014	Conduct Civics EOC Assessment Standard-Setting Meetings, including “Reactor” Meetings with Business Leaders, Educational Administrators and Other Citizens
August 2014	Conduct Rule-Development Workshops and Seek Input from the Florida Legislature
October/November 2014	State Board of Education Rule Adoption – New Achievement Levels for Civics EOC Assessment

School District Superintendents
December 13, 2013
Page Four

It is critical that the individuals nominated be available to serve on an Educator Panel that will likely convene in July 2014. 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.

The nomination form is attached for your use in nominating individuals for the Civics EOC Assessment Standard-Setting Committee. 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, 2014**, 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