

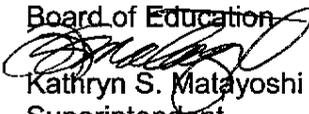


STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

June 18, 2013

TO: The Honorable Donald G. Horner, Chairperson  
Board of Education

FROM:   
Kathryn S. Matayoshi  
Superintendent

SUBJECT: **Discussion/Recommendation for Board Action on Setting Cut Scores and Proficiency Levels for the Hawaii State Alternate Assessment**

1. RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Education (Department) requests the approval from the Board of Education of the cut scores and proficiency levels for the Hawaii State Alternate Assessment.

2. RECOMMENDED EFFECTIVE DATE

Upon approval by the Board of Education.

3. RECOMMENDED COMPLIANCE DATE (if different from the effective date)

Upon approval by the Board of Education.

4. DISCUSSION

a. **Conditions leading to the recommendation**

Under provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), Hawaii administers the Hawaii State Alternate Assessment (HSA-Alt) for students with significant cognitive disabilities who participate in a school curriculum that includes academic instruction as well as functional life skills.

The HSA-Alt consists of a series of performance tasks that allow students to respond in a variety of ways, such as pointing and eye gazing to the correct response; selecting objects or pictures or picture symbols that represent the correct answer; or reading letters, words, or sentences to complete a task. The tasks are linked to the state academic content standards through the Hawaii State Alternate Assessment Extended Standards.

Students in grades 3–8 and 10 are administered the Hawaii State Alternate Assessment in Reading and the Hawaii State Alternate Assessment Mathematics, and students in grades 4, 8, and 10 take the Hawaii State Alternate Assessment in Science.

**b. Previous action of the Board on the same or similar matter**

The Board of Education previously approved the Department's recommended proficiency level cut scores in 2002 for grades 3, 5, 8, and 10. In September 2005, the Board approved the proficiency level cut scores for grades 4, 6, and 7. These cut scores were for a Hawaii State Assessment based on Hawaii Content and Performance Standards II.

In April 2007, the Board of Education approved the cut scores and proficiency levels for the new Hawaii State Assessment based on the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards III.

In March 2008, the Board of Education approved the Hawaii State Science Assessment cut scores and setting performance standards for levels I, II, and III for students in grades 5, 7, and 11.

In September 2010, the Board of Education approved the Online Hawaii State Reading and Mathematics Assessment cut scores and performance levels for grades 3 – 8 and 10, and the Online Hawaii State Science Assessment cut scores and proficiency levels for grades 4, 8, and 10.

**c. Other policies affected**

No other Board policies are affected.

**d. Arguments in support of the recommendation**

In 2012 and 2013, Hawaii developed a new alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The tasks and items are aligned with the:

- Common Core State Standards and the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards III in Reading and Mathematics; and
- Hawaii Content and Performance Standards III in Science.

The transition from the old portfolio-based test to a new performance-based test required that new performance standards be developed.

The Department is recommending three performance standards (cut scores) to differentiate four performance levels:

<b>Performance Standards</b>	<b>Performance Levels</b>
	Well-Below Proficiency
Approaches Proficiency	Approaches Proficiency
Meets Proficiency	Meets Proficiency
Exceeds Proficiency	Exceeds Proficiency

Standard setting is a systematic process by which trained participants use their knowledge of academic content standards, test items, and student performance to recommend the level of proficiency on the test necessary to achieve each performance standard.

The Department used the *item descriptor matching method* of standard setting (see Cizek & Bunch, 2007; Ferrara, Perie, & Johnson, 2003).

In the standard setting workshop for HSA-Alt, panelists reviewed the response demands of each item (i.e., content area knowledge and skills required to respond to items) and match those demands to the knowledge and skill descriptions in the Performance Level Descriptors. Panelists determined (a) which Performance Level Descriptors most closely matches the response demands of each item, or (b) indicated that the item is in the threshold region between two adjacent performance levels.

Panelists matched items to a Performance Level Descriptor only when they felt that the match was clear; otherwise, they indicated that the item was in the threshold region between adjacent levels. Each panelist identified a cut score in each threshold.

Developing a clear and meaningful description of each performance level was central to both establishing reliable performance standards and effectively communicating assessment results to parents, educators, and other stakeholders. The American Institute for Research (AIR) test development and score reporting staff collaborated to draft PLDs, which was then submitted to the Department for review and subsequent approval. All PLDs were reviewed for sensitivity and fairness and were professionally edited.

Standard-setting panelists were initially provided with the Hawaii Content Standard extensions and PLDs. Panelists reviewed these documents to become familiar with the Content Standard extensions and what students are specifically expected to know and be able to do at each level of performance.

The proposed cut scores were moderated to ensure their vertical articulation across grade bands. A key feature of the standard-setting workshop was to balance rigorous, defensible procedures and managing costs.

**e. Arguments against the recommendation**

Other methods of determining cut scores and proficiency levels are available. Individuals may suggest the adoption of alternate methods instead of the method recommended by AIR.

**f. Findings and conclusion of the Board committee**

Not applicable.

**g. Other agencies or departments of the State of Hawaii involved in the action**

None.

**h. Possible reaction of the public, professional organizations, unions, DOE staff and/or others to the recommendations.**

The reaction from various stakeholders may be mixed, as some individuals may believe that the cut scores are too high for this population of students.

**i. Educational implications**

The primary reason to teach academic content to students who also require instruction in functional and life skills is to promote equal opportunity to receive the same educational opportunities that all students receive. Educators are finding that once this opportunity is provided, many students gain useful skills that benefit them now and in the

future. Students may not master all of the grade-level content, but they may master some content for their grade level. The HSA-Alt provides a way for them to demonstrate this mastery. There are also laws that require all students to participate in academic instruction and assessment. Both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 1997 and IDEA 2004) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), require that states provide an alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities that is linked to grade-level academic content standards. The state Education Accountability Act of 1988 (EAA) specifies that all students must be included in state accountability systems.

**j. Personnel implications**

Not applicable.

**k. Facilities implications**

Not applicable.

**l. Financial implications**

Not applicable.

**5. OTHER SUPPLEMENTARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

None.

KSM:CT:kb

c: Systems Accountability Office