



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

TO: P-12 Education Committee

FROM: Ken Wagner 

SUBJECT: Performance Level Labels and Performance Level Definitions for Elementary/Middle-Level and Secondary-Level Assessments

DATE: February 10, 2014

AUTHORIZATION(S): 
SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

Does the Board wish to direct staff to adjust performance level labels and definitions for the Common Core Regents Examinations? Does the Board wish to direct staff to align performance level labels and definitions for the Common Core Regents Examinations and the Common Core Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and math assessments to help educators, students, and their families understand student performance and progress as they advance across the grade levels?

Reason(s) for Consideration

Detailed performance level descriptors for New York State assessments are developed with extensive input from the educators, including New York's Content Advisory Panels. These provide detailed descriptions of what students should know and be able to do at each of the articulated performance levels. Performance levels and performance level descriptors are needed so that educator panelists can recommend performance standards (or cut scores) during the standard setting process. The standard setting process for the Common Core Grades 3-8 ELA and math tests occurred in July 2013 prior to the August 2013 release of the test results. The standard setting process for the Common Core Regents Exams in ELA and Algebra I will occur in June 2014 prior to the release of the conversion chart for local scoring purposes.

Performance level labels and definitions for the Common Core Regents Examinations must reflect and support graduation requirements and the range of diploma types offered by the Department. In addition, Department staff believes it

would help educators, students, and their families understand student performance and progress as they advance across the grade levels if the Department articulates how the two sets of performance level labels and definitions would align.

Proposed Handling

This issue will come before the P-12 Education Committee for discussion at its February 2014 meeting.

Procedural History

The Board of Regents adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts & Literacy and Mathematics at its July 2010 meeting and incorporated New York-specific additions, creating the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), at its January 2011 meeting. In spring 2013, student progress on the Common Core was measured on New York State assessments for all students in grades 3-8. In July 2013, the Board of Regents adopted requirements for transitioning students to the new Regents Exams in English Language Arts (Common Core) and in Mathematics (Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II) beginning no later than the 2013-14 school year. Currently, the first group of students who must pass a Common Core Regents Exam for graduation purposes is expected to graduate in June 2017, seven years after the Board first adopted the standards in 2010.

At its November 2013 meeting, the Board of Regents adopted on an emergency basis amendments to §100.18(b) of the Commissioner's regulations to update the names of the grades 3-8 and high school performance level descriptors, consistent with the presentations to the Board at the March 11, 2013 and July 22, 2013 Regents meetings. Those changes were as follows:

- Level 1: Change from "below standards" to "well below proficient"
- Level 2: Change from "meets basic standards" to "below proficient"
- Level 3: Change from "meets proficiency standards" to "proficient"
- Level 4: Change from "exceeds in standards" to "excels in standards"

The amendment was adopted as an emergency rule at the November 2013 Regents meeting, effective November 19, 2013 and will expire on February 16, 2014. Accordingly, the regulation is being presented to the Board at the February 2014 meeting both for permanent adoption and for a second emergency adoption to ensure that the emergency rule adopted in November will remain continuously in effect until the effective date of its adoption as a permanent rule. If adopted at the February meeting, the permanent rule will take effect on February 26, 2014 and the emergency rule will take effect on February 17, 2014.

Background Information

Below is a schematic of the proposed alignment¹ between Grades 3-8 ELA and math assessments and Common Core Regents Examinations performance level labels and definitions. While the schematic includes reference to an aspirational Level 5 for Common Core Regents Exams, current regulations contain only performance levels 1 through 4 for both grades 3-8 and high school. Should the Regents so direct, further regulatory amendments would be required to institute a fifth performance level for Common Core Regents Exams.

Grades 3-8 ELA/math	Proposal for High School Common Core Regents Exams ²
Level 1 – Well Below Proficient	Level 1 – Does not demonstrate the Knowledge and Skills for Level 2
	Level 2 – Not Proficient on Common Core Course-Level Expectations (Analogous to Current Score of 55)
Level 2 – Below Proficient "Below Proficient - On Track for Regents Exam Passing for Graduation and Credit"	Level 3 – Graduation Proficiency (Partially Meets Course-Level Expectations) (Analogous to Current Score 65 ³)
Level 3 – Proficient "Proficient - On Track for Regents Exam Aspirational Performance"	Level 4 – Aspirational Performance Measure (Meets Common Core Course-Level Expectations) (Analogous to Current Score of 75/80)
Level 4 – Excels in Standards	Level 5 – Exceeds Common Core Course-Level Expectations

¹ Although the Department is not at this time proposing a statistical or empirical link between the Grade 3-8 and Common Core Regents Exam performance standards, the possibility of doing so can be investigated once a sufficient number of years of operational data are collected for each testing program and the Department acquires a sufficient sample of post-secondary performance data for New York graduates with Common Core Regents Exam scores.

² Current regulations contain only performance levels 1 through 4 for both grades 3-8 and high school. Should the Regents so direct, further regulatory amendments would be required to institute a fifth performance level for Common Core Regents Exams. In addition, while the chart reflects the performance level descriptors that exist in regulation for Grades 3-8 ELA and math, the performance level descriptors listed for High School Common Core Regents Exams are proposed.

³ As discussed with the Board in November (see <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2013Meetings/November2013/CommonCoreRegentsExams.pdf>), the Common Core Regents Exams can be designed to have one performance level ("Level 3") comparable to the current Regents Exam score of 65 and another performance level ("Level 4") comparable to the current Regents Exam score of 75/80.

As can be seen from the above, students who score a Level 2 on the Grades 3-8 ELA and math tests are considered on track to earn a Common Core Regents Exam score sufficient for graduation purposes⁴. Similarly, students who score a Level 3 on the Grades 3-8 ELA and math tests are considered on track to score in the proposed aspirational performance measure range on a Common Core Regents Exam. Department staff recommends that the Board consider further regulatory amendments to adjust the performance levels for Common Core Regents Exams, including the creation of a fifth performance measure range.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board direct Department staff to communicate this alignment between the Grades 3-8 ELA and math assessment and the Common Core Regents Exam performance level labels and definitions as we move forward with our elementary/middle-level and secondary-level assessment programs and to develop proposed amendments to Commissioner's regulations to adjust the performance levels for Common Core Regents Exams for the Board's consideration.

⁴ Please note that if graduation requirements change, then the Grades 3-8 ELA and math performance level that aligns with meeting graduation requirement will change as well.