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Tenth-graders to take standards-based assessment

New test combined with high school exit exam

For the first time, Alaska tenth-graders will take a state standards-based assessment this spring, as part of the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

The state currently tests public school children in reading, writing and math in grades three through nine and in a high school exit exam.

The new test is in keeping with the goal of the State Board of Education & Early Development to refine the state's assessment and accountability system. The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, working with teachers, has created detailed expectations for student performance at each grade level.

"The new assessment provides schools with specific information about student performance so teachers can help tenth-graders master their grade level academic standards," said Education Commissioner Roger Sampson.

The State Board is scheduled to consider the tenth-grade assessment at its meeting December 12-13 in Juneau. The public may comment on the proposed regulation through November 9, and in person or by teleconference at 8:05 a.m. December 12.

See www.eed.state.ak.us/regs/comment.html for the proposed regulation, methods of making comment, and an electronic comment form.

The tenth-grade standards-based assessment will be administered as part of an expanded High School Graduation Qualifying Examination, which is given next on April 4-6. Part of the exam will measure the essential skills required for a high school diploma. The other part will measure skills at the tenth-grade level. Some test questions will measure both essential skills and tenth-grade skills.

Tenth-graders will receive two scores: one for the exit exam and one for the standards-based assessment.

As before, students must score proficient on the exit exam to be eligible for a high school diploma. The exit exam's cut score for proficiency will not change. In May 2006, a committee will develop the cut scores for the four proficiency levels of the standards-based assessment: advanced, proficient, below proficient and far below proficient.

Students in the eleventh or twelfth grades who are retaking the high school exam, because they did not score proficient in their earlier attempts, will take a test with exit-exam questions only.

“The tenth-grade exam has had the thoughtful input from many Alaska educators who have reviewed all items for appropriate content, rigor of questions, and bias and sensitivity of questions and passages,” said Les Morse, Director of Assessment and Accountability at the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development.

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