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State Board approves three regulations, proposes two others

The State Board of Education & Early Development, meeting July 24 by teleconference, set the proficiency level scores for the 10th-grade standards-based assessment, amended the passing scores for the high school exit exam, and established regulations for district-operated statewide boarding schools.

The board also opened a period of public comment on two proposals: a regulation for the new school performance incentive program, and amendments to the proficiency level scores for the English language proficiency assessment.

The board also appointed to the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Advisory Board Al Adams, Lois Rhodes and Chris Simon. Mt. Edgecumbe is the state-operated boarding school in Sitka.

In April 2006, Alaska 10th-graders took a state standards-based assessment for the first time as part of the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Following recommendations of a committee of educators and the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, the board approved the scores that determine which level of proficiency a student falls under: advanced, proficient, below proficient and far below proficient.

The board also approved two recommended changes to the passing scores, often called “cut scores,” for the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Examination. The examination itself was revised last school year.

The board moved the cut score for the reading test from 322 to 287, partly because the test now contains more reading passages at a higher level. The board moved the cut score for the writing test from 275 to 304. The math cut score was not changed. The cut scores were last set in 2002. Since then, Alaska has developed specific academic expectations for each grade level, which provides a better framework for setting cut scores.

The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development applied the new cut scores to past test results and found that the overall percentage of students who pass the test isn't likely to change.

The new regulation also allows students who were ninth-graders or above in school year 2005-2006 and who need to retake all or part of the test when they are in the 12th grade, to use either the old or new cut scores in their 12th-grade year.

The board on July 24 also approved the first state regulations for school district-operated residential educational programs that accept students from around the state. This year the legislature, in House Bill 16, created a method for paying part of the costs of travel, room and board for boarding programs that have been state-approved.

The new regulations require the state to identify a public need for such a school. Districts applying to run a residential program must specify the facilities, enrollment policies, courses, staffing and other items, and prepare a five-year budget. The regulation also requires residential programs to submit annual reports to the state.

The board also opened a period of public comment on regulations to implement the Alaska Public School Performance Incentive Program, which the legislature approved this year as a three-year pilot to begin next school year.

The program ties bonuses to school staff to significant improvement in students' scores on assessments in reading, writing and math. The regulations specify how the state determines which schools' staffs will receive payments under the program.

The board also opened a period of public comment on regulations that set proficiency level scores for the state's new English language proficiency assessment, which is given to students who may have limited English proficiency.

Those regulations also clarify security measures that apply to all of the state's standardized assessments.

Proposed regulations and methods of submitting comments are posted at <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/regs/>. The newly proposed regulations will be posted soon.

The board packet for the July 24 meeting, which contains the approved regulations and the proposed regulations, is available at http://www.eed.state.ak.us/State_Board/.

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