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### **Department offers standards-based classroom assessments**

Alaska's teachers now have three sources of classroom assessments linked to the state's academic standards. The assessments give teachers quick feedback on how well each student is learning so they can adjust instruction to meet students' needs.

The test items, called formative assessments, were recently posted on the web site of the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development. They are available to Alaska's school districts at no cost.

Alaska's formative assessments are designed to allow teachers to know, at periodic intervals, how well students are meeting state standards. Currently, Alaska students take the annual state standards-based assessments in April and receive results in late May.

"Alaska's formative assessments provide a tool for teachers to monitor the progress of students more frequently, and with fast results, rather than waiting for the results of once-a-year statewide assessments," said Roger Sampson, Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. "Periodic monitoring will allow teachers to change their instruction to meet the needs of each student while they're still teaching the unit. We are very excited about this statewide initiative, which will lead to improved student achievement."

The formative assessments help address all four main goals of the State Board of Education & Early Development: continuous academic growth for all students; continue to refine the state assessment and accountability system; promote the continuous growth of professionals and paraprofessionals to provide effective standards-based instruction; and increase effective instructional time.

The department's web site includes three sources of formative assessments.

One set of assessment items was created largely by Alaska teachers statewide over the past two years. The bank of approximately 650 items provides sample items, such as questions and prompts, linked to each of the state's grade-level expectations, which are detailed standards of what students should know and be able to do for grades 3 to 10 in reading, writing and math. Teachers can use the sample items as models for developing their own classroom assessments geared to the standards.

The second set of assessment items was largely created by educators in the Anchorage School District over the past two years. The bank of approximately 2,760 items incorporates the 650 items mentioned above. The items apply to grades 3 to 10 in reading, writing and math. The district has agreed to share its assessment items with Alaska's school districts under a password-protected system.

For the two sources of assessments mentioned above, teachers must print out or copy out the items and assess the students on paper, then correct the assessments themselves.

The third type of formative assessment is fully computerized. Students take the assessments online, and teachers receive the results online within approximately 20 minutes. The assessments are in reading and math for grades 3 to 10.

The Alaska Computerized Formative Assessments were created in the past six months by the Data Recognition Corporation and Computerized Assessments and Learning under contract with the department.

This formative assessment program contains multiple-choice items, with at least two reading assessments and multiple math assessments at each grade level. They are linked to Alaska's grade-level expectations.

The reading assessments, which are based on reading passages, are designed to provide a general picture of a student's reading comprehension. The math assessments target specific skills similar to those tested in the state's annual standards-based assessments.

The formative assessments may be given in a group setting such as a computer lab or to individual students at classroom computers. Each assessment is designed to be completed within one class period. Teachers will receive performance reports for individual students and the class as a whole.

The department has begun training school districts in how to use the assessments.

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