

**Development of Reading, Writing, and Mathematics  
Extended Grade Level Expectations and  
Proficiency Level Descriptors for  
Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities**

**Historical Perspective**

In 1993, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED) developed Content Standards in English, Mathematics, Science, Geography, History, Skills for a Healthy Life, Government and Citizenship, Fine Arts, Technology, and World Languages. The Content Standards are broad statements of what students should know and be able to do as a result of their public school experience. A revised edition included content standards for employability, library information/literacy, and cultural standards for students.

In 1999, Alaska developed Performance Standards in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. The Performance Standards are measurable statements of what students should know and be able to do. In Alaska, these early performance standards functioned as age-range content standards. These Performance Standards were presented at four benchmark levels by age range: ages 5-7, ages 8-10, ages 11-14, and ages 15-18.

In 1999, the State Board of Education adopted Alternate Performance Standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities in the content areas of English/Language Arts, Math, and Skills for a Healthy Life. The reason for developing alternate (extended) standards was to allow for variation in the demonstration of skills across ages and abilities. Different content standards were assigned to and assessed at different grade levels.

In response to the 2001 No Child Left Behind legislation, a third edition of the Alaska Content Standards booklet includes expanded performance standards organized by grade level (Performance Standards/Grade Level Expectations), revised Science content standards, and Science performance standards by grade level. A fourth publication included Alaska History Standards.

The No Child Left Behind legislation also requires that if a state used alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities, “the assessment materials should show a clear link to the content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled although the grade-level content may be reduced in complexity or modified to reflect pre-requisite skills.” In response to this section, the Alaska EED began the process of developing Extended Grade Level Expectations and Proficiency Level Descriptors. (See Performance Descriptors Report, April 25-27, 2005, prepared for the Alaska EED by Patricia Almond.)

The Extended Grade Level Expectations (ExGLEs) are an interpretation of the content standards that should be taught and learned within each grade level. The content is reduced in complexity to provide entry points to the Grade Level Expectations (GLEs)

while still providing challenging academic expectations for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

### Summary of Methods and Procedures used to develop the Proficiency Level Descriptors and Extended Grade Level Expectations

Alaska adapted the Alternate Assessment Collaborative (2004) Expanded Benchmarks to provide extensions or entry points linking Alaska's Alternate Assessment to the *Alaska Standards*. The Alternate Assessment Collaborative was a multi-state collaboration among seven states and four organizations. Information on the collaborative can be found at [www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/EAG.asp](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/EAG.asp).

The first activity was to develop extensions or entry points to the academic content in the *Alaska Standards: Content and Performance Standards for Alaska, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Department staff worked with the Expanded Benchmarks in reading, writing, and mathematics developed by the Alternate Assessment Collaborative (AAC), and conducted a crosswalk between the Alaska Performance Standards and Alaska's Grade Level Expectations. During this process, Expanded Benchmarks were selected that matched the Alaska Standards. These Expanded Benchmarks provide the foundation documents for linking the new performance based alternate assessments to Alaska's standards and grade level content. Additional resources included the Extended Standards from the Kansas State Department of Education (<http://www.kansped.org/ksde/assmts/ksalt/ksalt.html>), and the Entry Points contained in the *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Disabilities*.

**April 25-27, 2005:** The draft document of extended grade level expectations was distributed to the committees of teachers/stakeholders. This document listed sets of skills for each content standard and strand found in the GLEs. The skills for each GLE were placed in a least complex to most complex arrangement. The first activity for the committees was to review, become familiar with, and provide feedback on the Expanded Benchmarks and their relationship to the Alaska Performance Standards and Grade Level Expectations. (See the Performance Descriptors Report, April 25-27, 2005, prepared for the Alaska DEED by Patricia Almond, for additional activities conducted at this meeting).

**September 12-13, 2005:** At the annual Alternate Assessment Mentor training, mentors were given training on alignment of instruction and assessment to content standards using the National Alternate Assessment Center's (NAAC) materials: *Part V: Linking to Content Standards: Is it Reading? Is it Mathematics*. Next, the mentors were given training on the purpose and the process of developing the Grade Level Expectations for general education students. Their assignments were to review and work with the expanded GLEs and determine:

- Are there a sufficient number of entry level points? (There could be too many or too few.)
- Do they extend "down" enough?

- Can they be organized in a way that more clearly links them to Alaska's GLEs? (For instance, do the strands within the expanded GLEs match the strands within the GLEs? Are there any individual expanded GLEs that do not link to the GLEs?)
- Were there any recommendations that would make the expanded GLEs a more useful document?

**November 15-16, 2005:** A smaller committee of stakeholders, selected from the original April group, convened. The first assignment for the reading, writing, and math committees who were working on Extended GLEs and drafting the Proficiency Level Descriptors for students with significant cognitive disabilities was:

- Use the handout showing the continuum of skill development: Least to Most Complex.
- Determine grade level abilities for the ExGLEs in order to write performance descriptors.
- Ensure that Grade Level Expectations, when extended, are about age-appropriate materials and use adapted, less-complex but similar content and activities
- Become familiar with GLEs and Extended GLEs
- Make comments, provide feedback
- Make a preliminary determination of what skills a student show have at each grade in order to make the grade level decision

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Diane Browder recommends asking these questions:

- Will the skill have meaning for the student?
- When looking at the skill in isolation, can you still identify the academic domain? Or is it no longer reading, math, etc.?
- Could a curriculum content expert link it back to the specific state standard?

Additional Training on Extended GLEs was presented to various groups, and participants were given an opportunity to provide feedback.

- **Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference (ASSEC):** A three-hour training for teachers and administrators
- **Pathways Conference,** February 2006: A presentation for parents and other participants to educate people on the Extended Grade Level Expectations, with an opportunity to provide feedback.
- **Request for Public Comment:** The *Alaska Extended Grade Level Expectations for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities* document published on the assessment website with links to the special education website.
- **Special Education Directors Conference** (September 2005): A presentation for special education directors explaining the alternate assessment and providing an opportunity to provide feedback on Extended Grade Level Expectations.

**NOTE:** A list of committee members listing their experience and credentials, and the full report from the consultant/facilitator follows.

Whole Name	District	Content Expertise												Endorsements and Qualifications		Gender	Ethnicity
		Group	LIE	LIS	RE	RS	ME	MS	WE	WS	SE	SS	SPED	Endorse_Quals			
Aran Felix	Department of Education & Early Development	Facilitator											Yes	Parent, SPED - Learning Disability, ElemEd.	F	Caucasian	
Patrica Almond	Oregon	Facilitator											Yes		F	Caucasian	
Anne Prewitt	<a href="#">Anchorage Schools</a>	Math		Yes										ElemEd., SPED, Parent	F	Caucasian	
Cecilia Miller	<a href="#">Juneau Schools</a>	Math						Yes						EdTech, Math, ComputerEd	F		
Deborah Endicott	<a href="#">Southwest Region Schools</a>	Math					Yes		Yes		Yes			Parent	F	Caucasian	
Doris Tanner	<a href="#">Matanuska-Susitna Borough Schools</a>	Math												Parent, Advocate	F	Caucasian	
Linda Bark	<a href="#">Anchorage Schools</a>	Math	Yes										Yes	Governor Council, Parent	F		
Robert Voris	<a href="#">Anchorage Schools</a>	Math		Yes										SPED	M	Caucasian	
Sharon Shumacher	<a href="#">Juneau Schools</a>	Math											Yes	ELemEd., SPED, School Counselor, Early Childhood	F	Caucasian	
John Wahl	<a href="#">Juneau Schools</a>	Math					Yes							Elem.Ed., Math			
Victoria Garber	<a href="#">Lower Kuskokwim Schools</a>	Math	Yes											Multiple Disability Education Specialist	F	AK Native	
Carla Garrett	<a href="#">Dillingham City Schools</a>	Reading	Yes											SPED, LD, MH, ED, SPED Director, Principal,	F	Caucasian	
Cheryl Neuhart	<a href="#">Ketchikan Gateway Borough Schools</a>	Reading		Yes										SPED Secondary Teacher	F	Caucasian	
Debra Duncan	<a href="#">Lower Kuskokwim Schools</a>	Reading			Yes	Yes								Multiple Disability Education Specialist	F	Caucasian	
Jake Kramer	<a href="#">Yukon-Koyukuk Schools</a>	Reading	Yes	Yes										SPED, SS	M		
Kris Selman	<a href="#">Anchorage Schools</a>	Reading		Yes										Teacher Consultant, ElemEd., LA, Sci, SS, Visually Handicapped	F	Caucasian	
Rebecca Greeley	<a href="#">Anchorage Schools</a>	Reading				Yes				Yes				English, Reading	F	Caucasian	
Toni Jo Dalman	<a href="#">Juneau Schools</a>	Reading								Yes			Yes	SPED Coordinator, School Psychologist	F	Caucasian	
Treven Walker	<a href="#">Annette Island Schools</a>	Reading				Yes								HS English, Ssci, Principal, History	M	Caucasian	
Clark Brown	<a href="#">Copper River Schools</a>	Science			Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes			ElemEd., SPED - Moderate/Severe Handicapped	M	Caucasian	
Amy Kesten	<a href="#">Juneau Schools</a>	Writing											Yes	ElemEd., SPED, ED, Parent, Counselor	F	Caucasian	
Cindy Inis	<a href="#">Anchorage Schools</a>	Writing	Yes	Yes										SPED, LD, MH, LI	F	Caucasian	
Jeanne Foy	<a href="#">Juneau Schools</a>	Writing				Yes				Yes				Secondary LA, NAEP Coordinator	F		
Mark Weller	<a href="#">Delta/Greely Schools</a>	Writing	Yes										Yes	Resource Teacher	M	Caucasian	
Mary Mygatt	<a href="#">Anchorage Schools</a>	Writing	Yes											ElemEd., SPED, MH	F	Caucasian	
Natalie Dean	<a href="#">Anchorage Schools</a>	Writing	Yes	Yes									Yes	SPED Director	F	Caucasian	
Paula Saindon	<a href="#">Delta/Greely Schools</a>	Writing		Yes										ElemEd., SPED	F	Caucasian	
Russell Clark	<a href="#">Lower Yukon Schools</a>	Writing				Yes				Yes				English	M	Caucasian	
Thomas Duke	<a href="#">Juneau Schools</a>	Writing											Yes	Univ of AK, SE-SpecEd Coordinator, Professor	M	Caucasian	

Content Expertise Key
LIE-Low Incidence Elementary
LIS-Low Incidence Secondary
RE-Reading Elementary
RS-Reading Secondary
ME-Math Elementary
MS-Math Secondary
WE-Writing Elementary
WS-Writing Secondary
SE-Special Educ Elementary
SS-Special Educ Secondary
SPED

Endorsements and Qualifications Key	
Endorse_Quals - Endorsements/Qualifications	SPED Director - Special Education Director
ElmEd. - Elementary Education	LD - Learning Disabilities
HS - High School	MH - Mentally Handicapp
SS - Social Studies	LI - Low Incidence
LA - Language Arts	ED - Emotionally Disturbe
Sci - Science	
SSci - Social Sciences	
EdTech - Education Technology	
ComputerEd - Computer Education	
SPED - Special Education	
SPED Coordinator - Special Education Coordinator	

## Performance Descriptors Report:

### Developing Performance Level Descriptors for Alaska's Reading, Writing and Mathematics Alternate Assessments with the Alternate Assessment Work Group

April 25-27, 2005

Prepared for the Alaska DEED  
by  
Patricia Almond

#### Introduction

This report describes the development of a preliminary draft of performance descriptors for grades 3 through 10 in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. The draft performance descriptors were developed as the first phase in setting achievement standards referred to here as proficiency levels for the Alaska Alternate Assessment. The work described in this report was informed by the *Handbook for the development of performance standards: meeting the requirements of Title I* (Hansche, 1998, p. 3) which “addresses the development of systems of content standards, performance standards, and assessments in general. Because performance standards cannot stand alone, content standards and assessments are addressed insofar as they interface with performance<sup>1</sup> standards.” The handbook recommends considering proficiency levels “part of an aligned system.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development is in the process of transitioning from a portfolio based alternate assessment to a performance based alternate assessment linked to Alaska's subject matter content as specified in the Alaska Performance Standards or Grade Level Expectations. An overview of planned steps and a tentative time frame for this transition are summarized in the table below. The current report describes step 1 in this table.

#### Transition Plan for Alaska Performance Based Alternate Assessments

<u>Time Frame</u>	<u>Steps</u>
Spring 2005	1. Develop draft performance descriptors
Fall 2005	2. Revised draft performance descriptors
Fall 2005 & Winter 2006	3. Establish performance based alternate assessments in reading, writing, & mathematics based on expanded benchmarks and performance descriptors

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<sup>1</sup> The handbook uses the term performance standards to refer to levels of student achievement that are identified in Alaska's system as “proficiency” levels. For the purposes of this report, “proficiency levels” will be used to describe these standards.

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|-------------|---|
| Spring 2006 | 4. Field test performance based alternate assessments                                   |
| Summer 2006 | 5. Conduct standard setting to set proficiency levels                                   |
| Fall 2006   | 6. Revise performance descriptions to align with proficiency levels                     |
| Spring 2007 | 7. Implement performance based alternate assessments in reading, writing, & mathematics |

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 Legislation Regarding this Work

The transition is guided by Alaska’s response to regulations and policies regarding both the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which specify that:

- All students with disabilities will have access to the general education curriculum and participate in state and district assessments,
- The participation and achievement of all students with disabilities will be reported at the same level of detail and with the same frequency as reported for students without disabilities,
- Scores for students with disabilities will be classified into the proficiency levels used by the state for purposes of determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP),
- All students including both students with and without disabilities will be held to high academic standards (in reading/English language arts, mathematics, and science) based on grade level content standards,
- Students with disabilities may, if needed, have access to accommodations or alternate assessment to show what they know and can do, and
- For students with disabilities, the IEP team will determine how students will participate in statewide assessment, e.g. which assessments and under what conditions (accommodations) the student will participate.

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This report describes five basic activities completed in developing the alternate assessment draft performance descriptors:

- Activity 1: Develop extensions or entry points to the academic content in the *Alaska Standards: Content and Performance Standards for Alaska, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*.
- Activity 2: Develop sample proficiency descriptors in reading, writing, and mathematics grades 3 through 10 as resources for the Alternate Assessment Work Group session scheduled for April 2005.
- Activity 3: Convene the Alternate Assessment Work Group, conduct an orientation and training session regarding the task of developing performance descriptors for Alaska’s Alternate Assessments, and form subject area subgroups to design and compose performance descriptors in all four proficiency levels: advanced, proficient, below proficient, and far below proficient.
- Activity 4: Gather student work and identify exemplars that illustrate student performance at each level of proficiency described in the performance descriptors.

- Activity 5: Collect proficiency descriptors and exemplars of student work from the Alternate Assessment Work Group session, reformatting, compiling, and assemble into a common format and organization for review and revision.

Each activity is described briefly in this report.

While time is of the essence and the Alaska DEED intends to complete this work in an expedient manner, their primary commitment is to providing a quality education to every student in Alaska schools. As part of this commitment, care is being taken to develop an inclusive assessment system that will hold all students to high expectations. The process outlined for the development of draft performance descriptors was designed to meet this commitment.

### Methods and Procedures

Activity 1: Develop extensions or entry points to the academic content in the <i>Alaska Standards: Content and Performance Standards for Alaska, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition</i> .
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Alaska adapted the Alternate Assessment Collaborative (2004) Expanded Benchmarks to provide extensions or entry points linking Alaska's Alternate Assessment to the *Alaska Standards*. The Alternate Assessment Collaborative was a multi-state collaboration among seven states and four organizations. Information on the collaborative can be found at [www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/EAG.asp](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/EAG.asp). Jeanne Foy, Alaska's NAEP Coordinator, worked with the Alternate Assessment Collaborative's (AAC) Expanded Benchmarks in reading, writing, and mathematics, conducting a crosswalk between the Alaska Performance Standards and Alaska's Grade Level Expectations. During this process, Expanded Benchmarks were selected that matched the Alaska Standards. These Expanded Benchmarks provide the foundation documents for linking the new performance based alternate assessments to Alaska's standards and grade level content.

Activity 2: Develop sample proficiency descriptors in reading, writing, and mathematics grades 3 through 10 as resources for the Alternate Assessment Work Group session scheduled for April 2005.
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Hansche (2004, p. 4) describes Alaska's arrangement of standards "as a *system* that includes [proficiency] levels, descriptions of student performance, examples of student work, and cut scores on assessments." This system defines standards by connecting subject matter content to information that describes how well students are learning the targeted knowledge and skills. Proficiency standards answer the question, how good is good enough? A system includes 1) labels for each level of achievement (advanced, proficient, below proficient, and far below proficient), 2) narrative descriptions of performance at each level, 3) examples of student work that illustrate the full range of performance at each level, cut scores that separate the different levels of performance. When all of the pieces are in place, the components of the system are highly interrelated. During the second activity, the Alaska DEED adapted performance descriptions from the Colorado Student Assessment Program-Alternate (CSAP-A) as a model or example for

members of the Alternate Assessment Work Group to use as a starting point in developing the narrative descriptions of performance at each proficiency level.

Alaska decided to work with the same labels used in labeling achievement for the general assessment (advanced, proficient, below proficient, and far below proficient). For this activity Alaska DEED staff, obtained the CSAP-A Performance Descriptors (2005) from the Colorado Department of Education website. Colorado uses five levels: inconclusive, exploring, emerging, developing, and novice. Two steps were taken to develop a sample that represented four levels for Alaska. First, the category of “emerging,” the middle level, from the Colorado levels was dropped from the version created for the Alternate Assessment Work Group. This left the two highest and two lowest narrative descriptions. Next the labels were renamed to match the Alaska levels so that “novice” was renamed as “advanced,” “developing” was renamed as “proficient,” “exploring” was renamed as “below proficient,” and “inconclusive” was renamed to be “far below proficient.” This approach was taken for expediency in order to have samples and concrete examples during training and orientation for the Alternate Assessment Work Group session.

Activity 3: Convene the Alternate Assessment Work Group, conduct an orientation and training session regarding the task of developing performance descriptors for Alaska’s Alternate Assessments, and form subject area subgroups to design and compose performance descriptors in all four proficiency levels: advanced, proficient, below proficient, and far below proficient.

The Alaska Alternate Assessment Work Group met in Juneau, Alaska on April 25, 26, and 27, 2005 in the Board Room at the Alaska Department of Education. Information about the organization of the meeting follows.

#### Goals of Meeting:

- Review and Familiarize Participants with the Expanded Benchmarks and their relationship to the Alaska Performance Standards and Grade Level Expectations.
- Develop preliminary draft alternate assessment performance descriptors in reading, writing, and mathematics for grades 3 through 10.
- Gather exemplars of student work that illustrate student performance at the four performance levels, “advanced” “proficient” “below proficient” and “far below proficient.”

#### Overview of Meeting Agenda

Juneau, AK

April 25—Monday

- Orientation and Training
- Introduction to Developing Performance Descriptors
- Alaska Content Standards and Grade Level Expectations
- “Entry points” and Expanded Benchmarks
- Break into subject area groups
- Produce 5<sup>th</sup> grade performance descriptors

- End of Day Debrief with teachers

April 26—Tuesday

- Early Morning—Refresher and framing for day’s task
- Morning work sessions in groups
- Afternoon—Break into subject area groups
- End of Day Debrief with teachers

April 26—Wednesday

- Early Morning—Refresher and framing for day’s task
- Morning work sessions in groups
- Afternoon—Break into subject area groups
- Summarize accomplishments and next steps
- End of Day Debrief with teachers—thank

### Participants

Both special education teachers and teachers with expertise in reading, writing, and/or mathematics participated in the development of the initial draft of performance descriptors of reading, writing, and mathematics (N = 25). The participants were divided into three groups, each responsible for a subject (reading, writing, or mathematics).

Participants represented both rural and urban parts of the state covering a broad geographic area. Most participants (80%) had experience in special education with an average of 16 years in special education. There were six participants who had more than 5 years of experience in general education. Most participants were white (94%) and most held master’s degrees (84%). Six participants had subject matter expertise in English language arts and two reported subject matter expertise in mathematics. Facilitators for the meeting were Aran Felix, Alaska Alternate Assessment Program Manager; Jeanne Foy, Alaska NAEP Coordinator, and Patricia Almond, Assessment Consultant to the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). The membership for each group is provided below.

<u>Reading</u>	<u>Writing</u>	<u>Mathematics</u>
Debra Duncan	Mary Mygatt	Deborah Endicott
Rebecca Greeley	Amy Kesten	John Wahl
Trevan Walker	Russell Clark	Cecilia Miller
Carla Garrett	Mark Weller	Victoria Garber
Cheryl Neuhart	Paula Saindon	Robert Voris
Kris Selman	Cindy Inis	Anne Prewitt
Stacy McKeown	Jeanne Foy	Linda Bark
Jake Kramer	Natalie Hoover	
ToniJo Dalman	Dean	
	Dr. Thomas Duke	

### Materials and Tools

The Alternate Assessment Work Group worked with four documents in crafting the narrative descriptions for the proficiency levels at each grade level in reading writing, and mathematics:

- Alaska Alternate Assessment Expanded Benchmarks, Draft 1 (*these were produced as the result of Activity 1 above*).
- Adapted Sample Performance Descriptors (*these were produced as the result of Activity 2 above*).
- *Alaska Standards: Content and Performance Standards for Alaska* in reading, writing, and mathematics for grades 3 through 10.
- The Alaska Grade Level Expectations in reading, writing, and mathematics for grades 3 through 10.

In addition to these documents, alternate assessment portfolios from 2003-2004 were available for review to provide examples of student work. Laptop computers, LCD projectors, chart paper, and pens were also available.

### Process

The work group met as a large group on the morning of the first day. The orientation involved a review of the concepts of standards based assessment including the system of standards described by Hansche (1998). The orientation addressed the following topics:

- The Work Group's Task & Standards Based Assessment
- Federal requirements & Who are the students
- Sequence and Progression of the "Proficient" descriptions
- Distinguish between "Proficient" and "Below Proficient"
- Produce an exemplary "Proficient" description

The slides presented during the orientation are included in the appendix.

Beginning in the afternoon of the first day, the subject area groupings were formed and began meeting in separate groups. Each group contained one or two subject matter experts along with special education teachers familiar with Alaska's current portfolio alternate assessment. Their first task was to become familiar with the Expanded Benchmarks and the sample narrative proficiency descriptions. Each subject area group broke into small groups of twos and threes and discussed the documents and the overall organization. Following an in-depth discussion by the small group the subject area grouping reconvened to come up with group observations to share with the combined large group. This process of small groups, subject area groups, and combined large group sessions was employed throughout the three day session to surface questions, share solutions, and retain the focus of the session. Over the course of the three days, each subject area group became well acquainted and reached an approach to consensus building that was uniquely characteristic of the group. Facilitators provided assistance and acted as resource staff for the subject area groupings. Alaska DEED staff provided organizational and clerical support throughout the three days.

Within the subject area groupings, the group selected a recorder and a group leader. Using the template provided by the sample narrative proficiency descriptions, a laptop computer, and an LCD projector, the group reviewed each sample description and revised or replaced the description from Activity 2 above. Groups were encouraged to anchor their discussion by starting with grade 5, then grade 10, and finally grade 3 in an attempt to get a sense of the range. Members were asked to then review these descriptions using the small group process and to consider whether the descriptions were too easy or low

performing or too challenging and whether or not the progression from grade to grade seemed ordered or sequential becoming gradually more difficult or more complex as the grades increased.

### Results

Three subject area groups worked together between April 25 and 27, 2005 to develop preliminary draft narrative proficiency descriptions for each proficiency level. An example of the narrative proficiency descriptions for grade 5 mathematics for the alternate assessment appears in the table below. Each subject area group developed preliminary draft proficiency descriptors for every grade, grades 3 through 10.

Example of Mathematics Proficiency Descriptors Produced by the Alternate Assessment Work Group

<b>Grade 5 Mathematics Alternate Performance Level Descriptors</b>				
<b>4/27/05 Alternate Assessment Team</b>				
	<b>Advanced</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Below Proficient</b>	<b>Far Below Proficient</b>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates a beginning ability to skip counts by 10's</li> <li>• Able to perform simple addend problems with sums in double digit</li> <li>• Can extend a simple pattern.</li> <li>• Beginning to interpret a simple graph</li> <li>• Beginning to use measures</li> <li>• Count backwards from five to zero.</li> <li>• Can find the value of sets of coins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses skills related to number sense, such as counting, to determine answers to simple addition problems.</li> <li>• Beginning to understand quantity, more or less.</li> <li>• Beginning to recognize that graphs can represent numerical data.</li> <li>• Able to identify and sort similar and different geometric shapes.</li> <li>• Can recognize patterns.</li> <li>• Identify coin and exchange coins according to their value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes that different numbers represent different quantities</li> <li>• Can rote count single digit numbers</li> <li>• Can identify first, second and third in activities.</li> <li>• Can identify basic geometric shapes (triangle, circle, square)</li> <li>• Can match items with like attributes</li> <li>• Recognize money has trade value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student's responses are minimal or inconsistent when presented with a variety of math materials.</li> </ul>

The mathematics subject area developed four narrative proficiency descriptions (advanced, proficient, below proficient, and far below proficient) for each of the eight grade levels (3-10). The reading subject area group developed three narrative proficiency descriptions (advanced, proficient, and below proficient) for each of the eight grade levels (3-10). The writing subject area group also developed three narrative proficiency descriptions (advanced, proficient, and below proficient) for each of the eight grade levels (3-10). The writing group, however, did not reach consensus on all descriptions. By the end of the day on Wednesday (final day), they still had two versions of narrative descriptions in some categories and they ran out of time to reconcile the differences between the descriptions. An example of the differences appears in the table below.

Example of Writing Proficiency Descriptors Produced by the Alternate Assessment Work Group

Grade	Below Proficient Version 1	Below Proficient Version 2
5	The Below Proficient student has a clear understanding that tools, technology and assistive devices are used for communication. This student uses chosen devices to produce writing through graphic representations.	Okay.
6	The Below Proficient student has a clear understanding of materials that are used for writing. This student chooses an appropriate tool that is appropriate to their need and the specific writing task to produce written representations.	The Below Proficient student has a clear understanding of materials that are used for communication. This student uses preferred device that is appropriate to their need and the specific writing task to produce graphic representations.

In order to complete the preliminary draft of the narrative proficiency descriptors “far below proficient” descriptions need to be added to reading and writing and the differences between conflicting narrative descriptions need to be resolved. The Alaska Alternate Assessment Program Manager should decide on the best course of action here. Since these are preliminary descriptions and are scheduled for review and possible revision in the fall of 2005, adding the far below descriptions and reconciling the conflicting descriptions could become the first tasks for the next Alternate Assessment Work Group session. Alternatively, Alaska DEED staff or a subgroup of teachers could be asked to complete the narrative proficiency descriptions over the summer and prior to the next step in the process.

Activity 4: Gather student work and identify exemplars that illustrate student performance at each level of proficiency described in the performance descriptors.

Each subject area group developed a matrix that listed the domains in the left hand column of a matrix and three grade groupings elementary (grades 3, 4, 5), middle school (grades 6, 7, 8) and high school (grades 9 & 10) across the top, see the Math Sample Matrix below. Tables are provided to for to proficiency levels: below proficient and proficient. The group members looked through student portfolios made available for this purpose and identified student work contained within the portfolios that corresponded to the grade range, the proficiency level, and the mathematics domain listed to the left. Since the portfolios were identified by number, the members entered the number into the cell where the row and column intersected. This effort was not as fruitful as had been hoped. Many of the portfolios contained few examples of student work that linked to the content standards and the teachers suggested that the portfolios may not be the best source of student work that provided examples of the proficiency levels. When student work linked to the standards was located, it fell into only a couple of strands. Finally, the examples did not provide clear examples that could be scanned and reproduced within a resource document as examples of student work at varying levels. There is still work to do here. Teachers suggested that they may have classroom assignments that provided

better examples of student work at varying levels. One teacher suggested that the program manager collect targeted samples of student work from teachers specifically designed to align with the content of the Alaska standards. This activity needs to be carried forward to the fall of 2005.

Math Sample Matrix

<b>Below Proficient</b>	<b>Elementary (3,4,5)</b>	<b>MS (6, 7, 8)</b>	<b>HS (9, 10)</b>
Numeration	548, 519, A		605
Measurement	540		
Estimation/comp			
Functions/Rel	676	525, 677, 679	
Geometry			
Statistics/Prob			
Process Skills			
<i>Problem Solving</i>			
<i>Communications</i>			
<i>Reasoning</i>			
<i>Connections</i>			
<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Elementary (3,4,5)</b>	<b>MS (6, 7, 8)</b>	<b>HS (9, 10)</b>
Numeration	548, 569, 519,562, D		605
Measurement	697, 536	547, 544, B	
Estimation/comp		524, C	
Functions/Rel	676, 679, 534		
Geometry			
Statistics/Prob			
Process Skills			
<i>Problem Solving</i>			
<i>Communications</i>			
<i>Reasoning</i>			
<i>Connections</i>			

Activity 5: Collect proficiency descriptors and exemplars of student work from the Alternate Assessment Work Group session, reformatting, compiling, and assemble into a common format and organization for review and revision.

Producing final drafts of the proficiency descriptors was designated as a summer activity. Since each subject area group had a different recorder who used the spreadsheet and word processing tools differently, the “final” proficiency descriptors from the Alternate Assessment Work Group Session in April are formatted with minor differences. One group had the proficiency levels in the columns headings ordered from advanced to far below proficient. Another group placed far below proficient in the first column with higher proficiency levels to the right. Different fonts were used and slightly different layouts. The Alaska DEED will be reformatting these documents to have a common look and feel in preparation for the fall review and revision.

### Next Steps

To continue with the transition plan outlined on page 1 of this report in the introduction there are three main next steps:

1. Complete the preliminary draft reading and writing narrative proficiency descriptions.
2. Develop the three preliminary proficiency descriptions (reading, writing, and mathematics) with a common look and feel.
3. Schedule a second Alternate Assessment Work Group to review and revise the descriptors.
4. Proceed with the transition plan.

### **References**

- Alternate Assessment Collaborative (2004). *Expanded benchmarks*. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Education. Retrieved on September 15, 2004 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/EAG.asp>.
- Colorado Department of Education. *Performance descriptors*. Retrieved from the world wide web at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/StuDis-Sub2.asp> on March 15, 2005.
- Hansche, Linda (1999). *Handbook for the development of performance standards: meeting the requirements of Title I*. Washington DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

## Appendix A

<b>Agenda</b>	Meeting:	Alaska Alternate Assessment Work Group
	Task:	First Draft Grade Level Performance Descriptors
	Dates:	Monday through Wednesday, April 25 to 27, 2005
	Location:	Alaska Department of Education, Juneau, Alaska
<b>Meeting called by:</b>	Aran Felix & Jeanne Foy	
<b>Facilitator:</b>	Pat Almond	
<b>Attendees:</b>	Invited Participants: Content Teachers, Special Education Teachers, and Other Stakeholders	
<b>Handouts::</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alaska Performance Standards: reading, writing, mathematics,</li> <li>• Alaska Proficiency Level Descriptors: reading, writing, mathematics,</li> <li>• Preliminary Draft AA Performance Level Descriptors, reading, writing, mathematics (3-10)</li> <li>• AAC Expanded Benchmarks—adapted for Alaska EED</li> <li>• Student Work Portfolios with examples of student work</li> </ul>	

### Session Outcomes/Products:

#### ***Participating educators will advise the Alaska EED through:***

- A documented review with recommendations for Expanded Benchmarks
- Draft 2—Reading Performance Level Descriptors for Alternate Assessment, Grades 3-10
- Draft 2—Writing Performance Level Descriptors for Alternate Assessment, Grades 3-10
- Draft 2—Mathematics Performance Level Descriptors for Alternate Assessment, Grades 3-10

### Training Goals

<b>One</b>	<b>Standards Based Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of Action</li> <li>• Content Standards, Performance Standards, Assessments               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ AK Performance (reading, writing, mathematics)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Performance Descriptors               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ AK Proficiency Level Descriptors (reading, writing, mathematics, grades 3-10)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Two</b>	<b>Familiarize participating teachers with</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal Requirements (NCLB &amp; IDEA)</li> <li>• AAC Expanded Benchmarks—adapted for Alaska EED in reading, writing, and mathematics</li> <li>• Students who take alternate assessments for students with significant cognitive disabilities</li> </ul>
<b>Three</b>	<b>Prepare teachers to Review,</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separate participants into groups by subject area</li> </ul>

	<b>Expanded Benchmarks &amp; Review, Revise, and Edit Draft AA Performance Level Descriptors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review anatomy of performance level descriptors</li><li>• Practice developing descriptors and identifying student work that represents them</li><li>• Identify critical distinctions between “Proficient” and “Below Proficient”</li><li>• Sequence &amp; Progressions—continuity from grade to grade—skill groupings should build as students advance through the grades</li></ul>
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CSSA—Alternate Assessment  
Overview of Performance Descriptors Development  
April 25 to 27, 2005  
Juneau, AK

**April 25—Monday**

Orientation and Training

- ▶ Introduction to Developing Performance Descriptors
- ▶ Alaska Content Standards and Grade Level Expectations
- ▶ “Entry points” and Expanded Benchmarks

Lunch

- ▶ Break into subject area groups
- ▶ Produce 5<sup>th</sup> grade performance descriptors
- ▶ End of Day Debrief with teachers

**April 26—Tuesday**

- ▶ Early Morning—Refresher and framing for day’s task
- ▶ Morning work sessions in groups

Lunch

- ▶ Afternoon—Break into subject area groups (do we have separate groups for reading and writing? Or one larger English language arts group?)
- ▶ End of Day Debrief with teachers

**April 26—Wednesday**

- ▶ Early Morning—Refresher and framing for day’s task
- ▶ Morning work sessions in groups

Lunch

- ▶ Afternoon—Break into subject area groups
- ▶ Summarize accomplishments and next steps
- ▶ End of Day Debrief with teachers—thank

# Appendix B.



**Performance Level Descriptions**  
**Alaska Alternate Assessment**  
**Work Group**  
**Tuesday Morning**  
 April 26, 2005  
 Juneau, Alaska  
 Aran Felix & Jeanne Foy, AK EED  
 Patricia Almond, Ph.D., Assessment Consultant

**PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

- Performance levels a → Labels each level of achievement
- Performance descriptors** → **Describes each level of performance**
- Exemplars → Sample student work at each level of performance
- Cut Scores different → Scores that separate the levels of performance

**Develop Alt. Asmt. Performance Descriptions**  
**Similar to Gen. Asmt.**

- A Parallel Path
- Another side of the Same Coin
- Process Fitted to Special Education
- Process Adjusted to Meet the Unique Aspects of Alternate Assessment

**Development Process for Alternate Achievement Standards**

- ✓ Begin from state academic content standards for grade in which student is enrolled
- ✓ Adapt or extend standards to ensure meaningful access for students with significant cognitive disabilities
- ○ Draft **proposed achievement descriptors** (sometimes called "Performance Level Descriptors") that describe at least three proficiency levels
- Assess students and score results against preliminary scoring criteria and draft achievement descriptors
- Set achievement standards, refine achievement descriptors, fine-tune the assessment method and scoring criteria

Adapted from Jan Steidter presentation on April 26th teleconference - <http://edicator.com/education/Presentations/16161.htm>

**STANDARD SETTING**

**SET BY**

consensus among

- content experts
- curriculum experts
- classroom teachers
- policy makers
- public representatives

**BASED ON**

Content Standards

↓

Performance Standards

↓

Cut Scores or

"Proficient"

**2005 Standards Referenced Alternate Assessments**

Jan-Mar	Apr	Sept	Fall/Winter	Spring '06
Draft Benchmark & Descriptors	Revise Draft Performance Descriptors w/ Exemplars	Revise/Refine Performance Descriptors	Align Link Alt. Asmt. To Standards	Set Performance (Achievement) Standards

NOW WERE HERE

## Monday Training Overview

- ✓ The Task & Standards Referenced Assessment
- ✓ Federal requirements & Who are the students
- ✓ Sequence and Progression of the 'Proficient' descriptions
- ✓ Distinguish between 'Proficient' and 'Below Proficient'
- Produce an exemplary 'Proficient' description



## Aligning to standards from the "get go:"

Designing alternate assessments based on states' standards, expanded benchmarks, and universal design

Sue Richard - Measured Progress

## Process for expanding benchmarks

1. Identify foundational skills to describe what are all students asked to do, e.g.:
  - Reading = comprehend graphic symbols
  - Writing = use graphics to convey meaning
2. Conduct task analysis, e.g., reading:
  - Connect objects to words
  - Connect words to symbols
  - Connect symbols to print

## Expanding benchmarks (cont.)

3. Lay out expanded benchmarks along learning continuum for each essential concept/topic, in measurable terms, using universal language.
4. Conduct reverse alignment from benchmarks back to standards.

## Concepts and expanded benchmarks



## Develop assessments: Considerations of learning modality

- Principles of universal design used to construct tasks and activities.
- Students with significant disabilities require multiple means of access.
- Flexibility in adapting materials and providing response options is necessary for valid results.

