



Alaska

Comprehensive System of Student Assessment

Technical Report

Spring 2010

Grades 3–10

Standards Based Assessments (SBAs)



September 2010

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND OF ALASKA ASSESSMENTS

The Standards Based Assessments (SBAs) in reading, writing, and mathematics are criterion-based assessments that are aligned with the Alaska Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) for students in grades 3 through 10. The SBAs were first administered operationally in April 2005. Assessment items were extensively reviewed by Alaska educators and subsequently field-tested in a standalone field-test administered in October 2004.

Previously, assessments were administered in the benchmark grades 3, 6, and 8, and a commercial norm-referenced test was administered in grades 4, 5, 7, and 9. Provisions of the Improving America's School Act of 1994 mandated that states develop standards and related assessments for *each grade span*. In 1999, the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development adopted performance standards in mathematics, reading, and writing. Subsequently, in 2001, provisions of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act required that standards be developed *by grade* for grades 3 through 8 and that assessments be given that align with these grade-specific standards.

Spurred by Public Law 107-110, the NCLB statute, and the timeline of having a fully compliant assessment system by 2006, Alaska's Commissioner of Education and Early Development (EED), in discussions with the Alaska State Board of Education, principals, teachers, superintendents, and other stakeholders, determined that plans should be developed to administer a standards-based assessment in mathematics, reading, and writing in grades 3 through 10 (the Standards Based Assessments).

The Alaska SBAs are a coherent set of assessments aligned with Alaska GLEs developed for students in grades 3 through 10. The core set of assessments consists of custom assessments in mathematics, reading, and writing in grades 3 through 10 that are suitable for reporting student achievement in relation to state proficiency standards, and for inclusion in state and federal school/district accountability programs.

CHAPTER 2: TEST DESIGN & ITEM DEVELOPMENT

MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENT MEASURES

The mathematics component of the SBAs is composed of items that address GLEs in grades 3 through 10. The assessable GLEs for each grade level are distributed among the six reporting categories: Numeration, Measurement, Estimation and Computation, Functions and Relationships, Geometry, and Statistics and Probability. The organization of the mathematics GLEs mirrors the categories used by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Information about the GLEs assessed in each reporting category, as well as the types and numbers of items used in each category, can be found in the test blueprints (Appendix 1).

Multiple-choice (MC), short constructed-response (SCR), and extended constructed-response (ECR) items are used to assess the mathematics GLEs. These item types are designed to measure students' knowledge at various cognitive levels and provide a variety of information about mathematics achievement.

Multiple-Choice Items

MC items require students to select a correct answer from four response choices with a single correct answer. Each MC item is scored as right or wrong and has a value of 1 point. MC items are used to assess a variety of skill levels, from short-term recall of facts to problem solving. The selection of incorrect response choices, or distractors, by the student commonly results from misunderstood concepts, incorrect logic, invalid application of an algorithm, or computation errors.

Constructed-Response Items

The mathematics constructed-response (CR) items are designed to address comprehension of mathematics at higher cognitive levels in ways that MC items cannot. They offer the opportunity to present real-life situations that require students to solve problems using mathematics skills learned in the classroom. Students must read the items carefully, identify the information needed to solve the tasks involved, devise a method of solution, perform the calculations, and, when required, offer explanations. This process provides insight into the students' mathematical knowledge, abilities, and reasoning processes.

There are two types of mathematics CR items: SCR and ECR. The student can earn 0–2 points on SCRs and 0–4 points on ECRs. Both types are scored using item-specific rubrics. The abbreviated tasks of SCRs and the more elaborate tasks of ECRs are carefully constructed to reflect the scoring rubrics. All item-specific scoring rubrics are based on generic rubrics, which are written by DRC test development specialists and approved by EED and committees of Alaska educators.

READING ASSESSMENT MEASURES

The reading component of the SBAs is composed of items that address GLEs in grades 3 through 10. The assessable GLEs for each grade level are distributed among the three major reporting categories: Word Identification Skills, Forming a General Understanding, and Analysis of General Content or Structure. Information about the GLEs assessed in each reporting category, as well as the types and numbers of items used in each category, can be found in the test blueprints (Appendix 1).

MC, SCR, and ECR items are used to measure the reading GLEs. All items in the reading assessment are derived from a selection of literary and informational passages.

Multiple-Choice Items

MC items require students to select a correct answer from four response choices with a single correct answer. Each MC item is scored as right or wrong and has a value of 1 point. The selection of incorrect response choices, or distractors, commonly results from misinterpretation, predisposition, unsound reasoning, or superficial reading.

Constructed-Response Items

The reading CR items are designed to address comprehension of text in ways that MC items cannot. Composing a written response requires the student to prepare an answer using supporting details or examples drawn from the text.

There are two types of reading CR items: SCR and ECR. The student can earn 0–2 points on SCRs and 0–4 points on ECRs. Both types of items are scored using an item-specific scoring rubric. The abbreviated tasks of SCRs and the more elaborate tasks of ECRs are designed to be passage-dependent. All item-specific scoring rubrics are based on generic scoring rubrics developed by DRC test development specialists and reviewed and approved by EED and committees of Alaska educators.

WRITING ASSESSMENT MEASURES

The writing component of the SBAs has three major reporting categories: Write Using a Variety of Forms, Structures and Conventions of Writing, and Revising. Information about the GLEs assessed in each reporting category, as well as the types and numbers of items used in each category, can be found in the test blueprints (Appendix 1).

The writing assessment employs four types of items: standalone and stimulus based MC, SCR, and ECR (i.e., writing prompts). The different items are designed to measure students' understanding of different writing forms, conventions, and types of revisions, and their ability to draft a rough-draft response to a writing prompt.

Multiple-Choice Items

MC items require students to select a correct answer from four response choices with a single correct answer. Each MC item is scored as right or wrong and has a value of 1 point. On the writing assessment there are two types of MC items: standalone and stimulus-linked. The stimulus-linked items are linked to a written passage, or stimulus. The selection of incorrect response choices, or distractors, typically represents misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or misidentification. MC writing items are preferred when attempting to determine whether students can identify various forms of writing, are familiar with different writing conventions, and can select correct revisions.

Constructed-Response Items

CR items are independent writing items requiring written student responses. There are two types: SCR and ECR. SCRs are 2-point items and are scored using an item-specific scoring rubric. ECRs are 4-point writing prompts at grade 3, and 4-point and 6-point writing prompts at grades 4 through 10. The ECRs are scored using a general rubric. The ECRs at all grade levels are presented with a writing checklist for students' use as they draft their response. In responding to the prompt, students may use scratch paper for planning, organizing, and drafting ideas. The student's first complete draft is what is scored, and this response to the writing prompt is **not** considered as a final, published piece of writing.

The abbreviated tasks of SCRs and the more elaborate tasks of ECRs are constructed to reflect the scoring rubrics. All item-specific rubrics are based on generic rubrics written by DRC test development specialists and reviewed and approved by EED and committees of Alaska educators. The generic rubrics for grades 4 through 10 were written using the Alaska 6-point instructional rubric as a guide, so that they provide a direct link to writing as it is taught and assessed in the classroom. The generic rubrics (Appendix 2) are placed on the EED Web site well in advance of the assessment so that educators are able to see how student responses will be scored.

2010 OPERATIONAL PLAN

The 2010 grades 3–10 SBAs in mathematics, reading, and writing were comprised of a single recycled operational form at each grade level. In addition, each form at grades 3–9 included a single set of place holder items embedded throughout the form. These items were not scored and did not count toward a student's score. Their purpose was to hold positions for future field testing without having to change the length of the test in the future. For grade 10, seven forms of newly developed field test items were embedded throughout the form.

Table 2–1 displays the design for the recycled mathematics test for grades 3 through 10. The column entries for this table denote:

the grade level

number of core MC items

number of place holder (3–9)/field test (10) MC items

number of core SCR items

number of core ECR items

number of place holder (3–9)/field test (10) SCR and ECR

total number of MC, CR (SCR and ECR) items

total number of operational points

Table 2–1. Mathematics Test Plan 2010 per Operational Form

Grade	Multiple-Choice Items		Core SCR Items (2 pt.)	Core ECR Items (4 pt.)	Place holder or FT CRs (2 pt. or 4 pt.)	Total Items MC/CR	Total Operational Points
	Core	Place holder or FT					
3	56	6	2	1	1	62/4	64
4	56	6	2	1	1	62/4	64
5	56	6	2	1	1	62/4	64
6	56	6	2	1	1	62/4	64
7	56	6	2	1	1	62/4	64
8	56	6	2	1	1	62/4	64
9	56	6	2	1	1	62/4	64
10	34	8–9*	1	1	0–1	42–43/ 2–3	40

* This is presented as a range because of the need to field test HSGQE, SBA, and dual-coded items on each form.

Table 2–2 displays the design for the recycled reading test for grades 3 through 10. The column entries for this table denote:

the grade level

number of core MC items

number of place holder (3–9)/field test (10) MC items

number of core SCR items

number of core ECR items

number of place holder (3–9)/field test (10) SCR and ECR

total number of MC, CR (SCR and ECR) items

total number of operational points

Table 2–2. Reading Test Plan 2010 per Operational Form

Grade	Multiple-Choice Items		Core SCR Items (2 pt. or 3 pt.)	Core ECR Items (4 pt.)	Place holder or FT CRs (2 pt. or 4 pt.)	Total Items MC/CR	Total Operational Points
	Core	Place holder or FT					
3	52	10	2	1	1	62/4	60
4	52	10	2	1	1	62/4	60
5	52	10	2	1	1	62/4	60
6	52	10	2	1	1	62/4	60
7	52	10	2	1	1	62/4	60
8	52	10	2	1	1	62/4	60
9	52	10	2	1	1	62/4	60
10	63	10	4	0	1	73/5	72

Table 2–3 displays the design for the recycled writing test for grades 3 through 10. The column entries for this chart denote:

the grade level

number of core MC items

number of place holder (3–9)/field test (10) MC items

number of core SCR items

number of core 4 point or 6 point ECR items (writing prompt)

number of place holder (3–9)/field test (10) SCR items

number of place holder (3–9)/field test (10) ECR items

total number of MC, CR (SCR and ECR) items

total number of operational points

Table 2–3. Writing Test Plan 2010 per Operational Form

Grade	Multiple-Choice Items		Core SCR Items (2 pt.)	Core ECR Items (4 pt. or 6 pt.)	Place holder or FT SCRs (2 pt.)	Place holder or FT ECRs (4 pt.)	Total Items MC/CR	Total Operational Points
	Core	Place holder or FT						
3	46	8	5	1	1	0	54/7	60
4	46	8	2	2	1	1	54/6	60
5	46	8	2	2	1	1	54/6	60
6	46	8	2	2	1	1	54/6	60
7	46	8	2	2	1	1	54/6	60
8	46	8	2	2	1	1	54/6	60
9	46	8	2	2	1	1	54/6	60
10	28	11	2	4	1	1	39/8	50

An individual student's score is based solely on the core items. The total number of operational points is 64 points for mathematics, 60 points for reading, and 60 points for writing at grades 3 through 9, and 40 points for mathematics, 72 points for reading and 50 points for writing at grade 10. The total raw score is obtained by combining the points from the core MC and core CR (SCR and ECR) portions of the test as follows:

Student's Score in Mathematics = **Grades 3–9:** 56 MC items plus
two 2-point SCR items plus
one 4-point ECR item = 64 points

Grade 10: 34 MC items plus
one 2-point SCR item plus
one 4-point ECR item = 40 points

Student's Score in Reading = **Grades 3–9:** 52 MC items plus
two 2-point SCR items plus
one 4-point ECR item = 60 points

Grade 10: 63 MC items plus
three 2-point SCR items plus
one 3-point ECR item = 72 points

Student's Score in Writing = **Grade 3:** 46 MC items plus
five 2-point SCR items plus
one 4-point ECR item = 60 points

Grades 4–9: 46 MC items plus
two 2-point SCR items plus
one 4-point ECR item plus
one 6-point ECR item = 60 points

Grade 10: 28 MC items plus
two 2-point SCR items plus
three 4-point ECR items plus
one 6-point ECR item = 50 points

GRADE-LEVEL EXPECTATIONS SUBSUMED WITHIN REPORTING CATEGORIES

The mathematics, reading, and writing content area reporting categories (or strands) are further subdivided for specificity and eligible content or limits. For mathematics, each reporting category is subdivided into one or more areas of emphasis. For reading and writing, each reporting category is subdivided into one or more performance standards. If assessable and usable in statewide assessment, each respective area of emphasis or performance standard is subdivided into one or more GLEs. Areas of emphasis or performance standards that are not assessable and usable in statewide assessment are identified for local assessment. Test items are not written for these locally assessable areas of emphasis or performance standards.

Total mathematics, reading, and writing scores reported at the student level are based on the common items for each reporting category. The number of GLEs subsumed within each reporting category by content area and grade are listed in the Tables 2–4 through 2–6.

Table 2–4. Number of Assessable Mathematics GLEs by Reporting Category and Grade

Reporting Category	Grade							
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Numeration	7	10	10	8	7	9	5	7
Measurement	7	5	4	6	5	2	2	1
Estimation and Computation	5	4	3	3	5	4	4	2
Functions and Relationships	3	2	4	4	5	5	6	6
Geometry	6	6	5	7	7	8	4	6
Statistics/Probability	4	5	5	4	5	5	6	6
Total	32	32	31	32	34	33	27	28

Table 2–5. Number of Assessable Reading GLEs by Reporting Category and Grade

Reporting Category	Grade							
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Word Identification Skills	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Forming a General Understanding	6	7	7	7	6	6	9	9
Analysis of General Content or Structure	4	6	8	10	9	9	11	11
Total	13	17	19	21	19	19	24	24

Table 2–6. Number of Assessable Writing GLEs by Reporting Category and Grade

Reporting Category	Grade							
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Write Using a Variety of Forms	2	3	4	4	5	5	5	5
Structures and Conventions of Writing	2	2	2	4	5	5	5	5
Revise	1	1	1	1	4	4	4	4
Total	5	6	7	9	14	14	14	14

TEST DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

A series of major test development activities took place in 2009 and 2010, which culminated in the administration of the operational SBA assessments. These key activities included the:

- Development of items, tasks, and writing prompts.
- Review of items field tested in 2010 by external committees of educators (content review, bias/sensitivity review).
- Review of grades 3–9 items field tested in the April 2009 operational form (item review with data).
- Embedded field testing of the grade 10 new mathematics, reading, and writing items in April 2010 recycled operational form.
- Update of the Alaska Item Bank.
- Preparation of the selected recycled operational form.

ITEM AND TEST DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The most significant considerations in the item and test development process were: aligning the items to the GLEs; determining the grade-level appropriateness (reading level/interest level, etc.); depth of knowledge; cognitive level; item/task level of complexity; estimated difficulty level; relevancy of context for each item; providing rationales for distractors; and determining style, accuracy, and correct terminology. In addition, the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999) and *Universal Design* (Thompson, Johnstone, & Thurlow, 2002) guided the following steps in the item and test development process:

- Analyze the GLEs and test blueprints.
- Analyze item specifications and style guides.
- Select qualified item writers.
- Develop item-writing workshop training materials.
- Train test development specialists and item writers to write items.
- Write items that match the standards, are free of bias, and address fairness and sensitivity concerns.
- Conduct and monitor internal item reviews and quality processes.
- Prepare passages and items for review by committees of Alaska educators (content and bias/sensitivity).
- Select and assemble items for field testing.
- Field test items, scoring of the items, and analysis of the data.
- Review items and associated statistics after field testing, including bias statistics.
- Update item bank.

Item Writer Training

The test items were written by internal DRC item writers who have experience writing items, and selected writers from across the country who are experienced writers, teachers, or former teachers who have a great deal of specialized knowledge in the subject area of their expertise. All writers met the following qualifications:

- A bachelor's degree or higher in mathematics, reading, writing, curriculum and instruction, and/or related field.
- In-depth understanding and knowledge of the special considerations involving the writing of standards-based multiple-choice items, including an understanding of cognitive levels, estimated difficulty levels, grade-level appropriateness, depth of knowledge, readability, and bias considerations.
- In-depth understanding and knowledge of the special considerations involving the writing of standards-based constructed-response (0–2 point and 0–3 or 0–4 point) items, including the writing of scoring rubrics for each item.
- For the writing tests, in-depth understanding and knowledge of the special considerations involving the development of writing prompts (1–6 point) with scoring guidelines. General rubrics are found in Appendix 2.

All item writers were provided with one-on-one writing sessions with DRC test development specialists and lead item writers. Prior to developing items for the SBAs the cadre of item writers was trained with regard to:

- Alaska content standards, performance standards, and GLEs.
- Cognitive levels, including depth of knowledge.
- Principles of universal design.
- Skill-specific and balanced test items for the grade level.
- Contextual relevance.
- Developmentally appropriate structure and content.
- Item-writing technical quality issues.
- Style considerations and item specifications approved by the EED.

The *DRC Item Writer Training Manual*, *Fairness in Testing Manual*, *Depth of Knowledge Levels*, and *The Principles of Universal Design* document that were used during the training are provided in Appendices 3–6.

Reading Passage Selection

All reading items in the reading assessment were derived from a selection of literary and informational passages. Passages acquired were “authentic” in that they were culled from published materials or commissioned from experienced passage writers. To be used in the SBAs, approval to reprint published materials was secured from the publisher.

Passage finders and reading content specialists who have teaching experience at specific grade levels were given formal training on the specific requirements of the Alaska assessments. Passages were submitted to DRC’s reading test development team for screening and editing internally. The team screened and edited passages for:

- Interest and accuracy of information in a passage to a particular grade level.
- Grade-level appropriateness of passage topic and vocabulary.
- Rich passage content to support the development of high-quality test questions.
- Bias, sensitivity, and fairness issues.
- Readability considerations and concerns.

Passages that survived this extensive screening process were prepared for a formal committee review by Alaska grade-level reading teachers who read and reviewed the passages for the same criteria listed above. The Alaska Bias and Sensitivity Committee also read and reviewed the same passages for issues related to bias, sensitivity, and fairness. Passages were accepted and/or edited by both committees of Alaska educators. The final selection of passages to be field tested was based on the specific requirements for each grade-level assessment such as the percent of fiction and nonfiction, gender and ethnicity considerations, and diversity of passage topics.

Passage Readability

The readability of a passage was a judgmental process made by Alaska grade-level classroom teachers, DRC’s reading content specialists, and other individuals who understand each particular grade level and children of a particular age group. In addition, formal readability programs were also used by DRC to provide a “snapshot” of a passage’s reading difficulty based on sentence structure, length of words, etc. All of this information, along with the classroom context and content appropriateness of a passage, was taken into consideration when selecting a passage for a particular grade.

Item Writing

To ensure that all test items met the requirements of the approved target content test blueprint and item specifications and were adequately distributed across subcategories and levels of difficulty, item writers were asked to document the following specific information as each item was written.

Alignment to the Alaska Grade-Level Expectations: There must be a high degree of match between a particular question and the GLE it is intended to measure. Item writers were asked to clearly indicate what GLE each item was measuring.

Estimated Difficulty Level: Prior to field testing items, the item difficulties were not known, and writers could only make approximations as to how difficult an item might be. The estimated difficulty level was based upon the writer's own judgment as directly related to his or her classroom teaching and knowledge of the curriculum for a given subject area and grade level. The purpose for indicating estimated difficulty levels as items were written was to help ensure that the pool of items prepared for review by Alaska educators and EED and subsequent field testing would include a range of difficulty (easy, medium, and challenging).

Appropriate Grade Level, Item Context, and Assumed Student Knowledge: Item writers were asked to consider the conceptual and cognitive level of each item. They were asked to review each item to determine whether or not the item was measuring something that was important and could be successfully taught and learned in the classroom.

Multiple-Choice (MC) Item Options and Distractor Rationale/Analysis: Writers were instructed to make sure that each item had only one clearly correct answer. Item writers submitted the answer key with the item. All distractors were plausible choices that represented common errors and misconceptions in student reasoning. The rationale/distractor analysis for each distractor for mathematics was also provided.

Constructed-Response (CR): Each constructed-response item (SCR and ECR items) included specific scoring rubrics. Specific scoring rubrics were complete and explained why each score point would be assigned. The complete item-specific rubrics were also written to explain the strengths and weaknesses that were typically displayed for each score point.

Face Validity and Distribution of Complexity Levels: Writers were instructed to write items to reflect various levels of cognitive complexity using *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (Bloom et. al., 1956). As each item was written, the writer classified one of four cognition levels: recall, application, analysis, or evaluation for each item. The writers were instructed to write items so that the pool of items would represent a distribution of items across cognitive levels, as required by the test and item specifications.

Face Validity and Distribution of Items Based Upon Depth of Knowledge: Writers were asked to classify the depth of knowledge of each item, using a model based on Norman Webb's work on depth of knowledge (Webb, 2002). Items were classified as one of four depth of knowledge categories: recall, skill/concept, strategic thinking, and extended thinking.

Readability: For mathematics item development, writers were instructed to pay careful attention to the readability of each mathematics item to ensure that the focus was upon the concepts; not on reading comprehension. As a result, the goal for each mathematics writer was to write items that were, to the greatest degree possible, independent of the assessment of reading. Subject areas such as mathematics contain many content-specific vocabulary terms. These terms make it impossible to use the standard methods available for determining the reading level of test questions. Wherever it is practical and reasonable, every effort was made to keep the vocabulary one grade level below the tested grade level. Resources writers used to verify the vocabulary level were the *EDL Core Vocabularies* (Taylor et.al., 1989) and the *Children's Writer's Word Book* (Mogilner, 1992). In addition, every mathematics test question was taken before committees comprised of Alaska grade-level experts in the field of mathematics education. They reviewed each question from the perspective of the students they teach, and they determined the validity of the vocabulary used.

Curriculum-specific Issues: All items were to be curriculum independent with respect to both content and vocabulary. As items were written, writers were asked to document any specific curriculum issues.

Grammar and Structure for Item Stems and Item Options: All items were written to meet technical quality, including correct grammar, syntax, and usage in all items, as well as parallel construction and structure of text associated with each multiple-choice item.

Editorial Review of Items

After items were written, DRC test development specialists and editorial staff reviewed each item for item quality, making sure that the test items were in compliance with industry guidelines for clarity, style, accuracy, and appropriateness for Alaska students. While there are many published guidelines for reviewing assessment items, the list below serves to summarize some of the more major considerations DRC test development specialists and editors followed when reviewing items to make sure they conformed to standard item quality for good, reliable, fair test questions.

Guidelines for Reviewing Assessment Items

A good item should

- have only one clear correct answer and contain answer choices that are reasonably parallel in length and structure.
- have a correctly assigned content code (item map).
- measure one main idea or problem.
- measure the objective or curriculum content standard it is designed to measure.
- be at the appropriate level of difficulty.
- be simple, direct, and free of ambiguity.
- make use of vocabulary and sentence structure that is appropriate to the grade level of the student being tested.
- be based on content that is accurate and current.
- when appropriate, contain stimulus material that are clear and concise and provide all information that is needed.
- when appropriate, contain graphics that are clearly labeled.
- contain answer choices that are plausible and reasonable in terms of the requirements of the question, as well as the students' level of knowledge.
- contain distractors that relate to the question and can be supported by a rationale.
- reflect current teaching and learning practices in the subject area.
- be free of gender, ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and regional stereotyping bias.

Item Content Review

Prior to embedded field testing of items within the 2010 grade 10 form, all newly developed test items were submitted to content committees for review. The content committees consisted of Alaska teachers and subject-area supervisors from school districts throughout Alaska. The primary responsibility of the content committees was to evaluate items with regard to quality and content classification, including grade-level appropriateness, estimated difficulty, depth of knowledge, and source of challenge. They also suggested revisions, if appropriate. The committees also reviewed the items for adherence to the principles of universal design, including language demand and issues of bias, fairness, and sensitivity.

The content review was held August 5, 2009. Committee members were selected by EED, and EED-approved invitations were sent to them by DRC. The committee consisted of 18 educators, divided evenly between the content areas. EED also selected internal staff members for attendance. The meeting commenced with an overview of the test development process. Training was provided by DRC senior staff members. Training included how to review items for technical quality and content quality, including depth of knowledge and adherence to principles of universal design. In addition, training included providing committee members with the procedures for item review, including the use of tracking review forms to be used during the item content review.

DRC test development leads and specialists in mathematics, reading, and writing facilitated the review of items. Committee members reviewed the items for quality and content, as well as for the following categories designated on the item review tracking form. An example of this form is found in Appendix 7.

- GLE Alignment
- Difficulty Level (classified as Low, Medium, or High)
- Depth of Knowledge (classified as Recall, Application, or Strategic Thinking)
- Correct Answer
- Quality of Graphics
- Appropriate Language Demand
- Freedom from Bias (classified as Yes or No)
- Overall Judgment (classified as Approved, Accept with Revisions, Move to another grade level, or Rewrite)

Security was addressed by adhering to a strict set of procedures. Items in binders did not leave the meeting rooms and were accounted for at the end of each day before attendees were dismissed. All attendees, with the exception of EED staff, were required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement (Appendix 8). All materials not in use were kept in secure meeting rooms. During lunch and breaks, if meeting rooms were unused, they were locked or closely monitored by DRC personnel. While not in use by DRC, the meeting rooms were locked and unavailable to anyone other than one DRC person and the Chief of Security of the meeting facility. Rooms were attended to only under strict supervision by DRC personnel. Secure materials that did not need to be retained after the meeting were deposited in secure barrels, and their contents were shredded under supervision of a DRC employee.

Bias and Sensitivity Review

Prior to field testing items within the 2010 form, all newly developed test items were also submitted to Bias and Sensitivity Committees for review. This review took place in Alaska on August 5, 2009. The committee's primary responsibility was to evaluate passages and items as to acceptability with regard to bias and sensitivity issues. They also made recommendations for changes or deletion of items in order to remove the area of concern. The bias/sensitivity committee was composed of 10 Alaska educators who represented the diversity of Alaska students. All committee members were trained by a DRC test development lead to review items for bias and sensitivity issues using a Fairness in Testing Manual developed by DRC (Appendix 4). This manual was customized specifically for the Alaska program.

All mathematics, reading, and writing items were read by all of the respective committee members. Each member noted bias and/or sensitivity comments on review forms (Appendix 9). All comments were then compiled and the actions taken on these items were recorded by DRC. Committee members were required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement (Appendix 8) and strict security measures were in place to ensure that secure materials remained guarded.

Item Field Test

Items being field tested were embedded at grade 10 for the spring 2010 administration.

Item Field Test Data Review

Following the spring 2009 administration, which contained a single set of field test items at grades 3–9 and seven forms of field test items at grade 10, the following field test statistical analyses were completed:

- Proportion selecting correct response (p -values)
- Average person logit for all choices
- Number of persons attempting the item
- Item-total correlations
- Fit statistics
- Differential item functioning (DIF)
- Logit difficulty of item

Item analysis results were reviewed by DRC psychometricians to identify any items that were not performing as expected. These items were flagged so DRC test development specialists were made aware of potential areas of concern. For example, in the case of multiple-choice items, DRC test development specialists checked to make sure that the key for each item was correct and that none of the other response options were plausible. In the case of items where large values of DIF occur, DRC test development specialists reviewed each item flagged to consider whether or not a feature of the item may have caused a problem and/or contributed to the DIF. Under the guidance of DRC psychometricians, DRC test development specialists determined which of the flagged grades 3–9 items were to be reviewed by a group of internal DRC team members to determine whether or not the item was appropriate for use. This team was made up of content experts and psychometricians familiar with the Alaska program. In many cases, items with extreme DIF were removed from the pool of items available for use in forms construction. Additional guidelines concerning the review of item analysis results for the item-selection process are provided on page 19.

Items not identified for this review were those that had good statistical characteristics and, consequently, were regarded as statistically acceptable. Likewise, items of extremely poor statistical quality were regarded as unacceptable and needed no further review. However, there were some items that DRC deemed as needing further review by the internal DRC team. The intent was to capture all items that needed a closer look; thus the criteria employed tended to over-identify rather than under-identify items.

The review of the items with data was conducted internally at DRC on August 5, 2009. The committee members were responsible for the review of all flagged items from the 2009 administration from grades 3–9. The grade 10 items are scheduled for a larger in-state data review committee meeting in 2010. In this session committee members were first trained by a DRC senior psychometrician with regard to the statistical indices used in item evaluation. This was followed by a discussion with examples concerning potential reasons why an item might be retained regardless of the statistics. The committee review process involved a brief exploration of possible reasons for the statistical profile of an item (such as possible bias, grade appropriateness, and instructional issues) and a decision regarding acceptance. DRC test development specialists facilitated the statistical review of the items.

The results of the August 2009 Data Review for all items field tested in 2009 in grades 3–9 are shown in Tables 2–7 through 2–9.

Table 2–7. Mathematics Items at Data Review

August 2009 Data Review

Grade	Accepted Prior to Data Review	Accepted at Data Review	Accept Total	% Accept	Reject	Total
3	7	0	7	100%	0	7
4	6	0	6	86%	1	7
5	6	1	7	100%	0	7
6	6	1	7	100%	0	7
7	4	2	6	86%	1	7
8	6	1	7	100%	0	7
9	5	1	6	86%	1	7

Table 2–8. Reading Items at Data Review

August 2009 Data Review

Grade	Accepted Prior to Data Review	Accepted at Data Review	Accept Total	% Accept	Reject	Total
3	8	2	10	91%	1	11
4	9	2	11	100%	0	11
5	10	1	11	100%	0	11
6	8	2	10	91%	1	11
7	8	3	11	100%	0	11
8	5	4	9	82%	2	11
9	10	1	11	100%	0	11

Table 2–9. Writing Items at Data Review**August 2009 Data Review**

Grade	Accepted Prior to Data Review	Accepted at Data Review	Accept Total	% Accept	Reject	Total
3	9	1	10	100%	0	10
4	9	1	10	100%	0	10
5	9	1	10	100%	0	10
6	8	2	10	100%	0	10
7	8	2	10	100%	0	10
8	5	5	10	100%	0	10
9	8	1	9	90%	1	10

PSYCHOMETRIC GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING ITEMS**Proportion Correct**

The proportion correct, or p -value, is the proportion of the total group of test takers answering the MC item correctly. The proportion for an item will show how difficult the item was for the students who took that field-test form. In general, MC items with a proportion correct somewhat higher than half the difference between the chance level and 1.00 should be recommended for selection first, and the range for selection should be between 0.40–0.90. When necessary to meet the test blueprint or other test specifications, items that fall outside this range may be used, albeit sparingly. The overall form was constructed to a mean p -value target range of 0.63 to 0.67, with special care taken to select items that were at or near the cutpoints.

Average Person Logit

The average person logit for an item is the average measure of the persons attempting that item, which can vary from field-test form to field-test form. The average person logit for a response option is the average measure for the persons selecting that response. The average person logit for the correct response should be greater than the average logit for every other response. The difference between the average person logit for the correct response and the incorrect responses is an indication of the discrimination of the item. The larger the difference, the more discriminating the item. Item discrimination is also estimated by the item-total correlation.

Item-Total Correlation

The item-total correlation is the relationship between a student's performance on the item and the student's performance on the content-area test as a whole. If the item has a high item-total correlation, it generally means that the students who answered the item correctly achieved higher scores on the operational test than those who did not answer the item correctly. Item discrimination is an important statistic in the forms construction process, because the higher the average value for the test, the more reliable the test. Items with item-total correlations of 0.35 or greater were given primary consideration in the item selection phase of the test development process. The use of 0.35 is a rule of thumb that meets best practices. This value is higher for field-test items because the item-total correlation for Alaska field-test items generally decreases from field test to operational test. However, items with item-total correlation values between 0.20 and 0.35 were included if such items were necessary to satisfy specific content cells of the detailed test blueprint.

Fit Statistic

A goodness-of-fit statistic is computed as part of the calibration of all items in the field test. Essentially, a chi-square statistic that quantifies the sum of the squared standardized distances of the observed item performance from the expected performance for all persons, based on the Rasch model, is computed for each item. This statistic evaluates how well each item fits the psychometric model. Poor fit could be a result of an item not functioning as expected or because the item measures a different construct than the remaining items. Typically, items with values greater than +5 would be considered suspect.

Differential Item Functioning (DIF) Analyses

DIF analysis is conducted on all field-test items to determine whether an item potentially favors one group of students over another. DIF procedures examine the possibility that an item's characteristics may negatively affect the performance of select groups of students. Evidence of DIF is usually considered as a signal to test developers to examine an item more closely to consider whether or not it is defective.

DRC utilizes the Mantel-Haenszel (MH) or the Standardized Mean Difference (SMD) statistic for detecting DIF, depending on the item type. The MH statistic is the most commonly used technique for MC items in large-scale, educational assessment. It does not depend on the application or the fit of any specific measurement model. The SMD statistic is used for CR items with more than two score categories.

Essentially, these methods quantify the average amount more or less difficult that a member of the reference group found the studied item than did comparable members of the focal group. From this value, one of three severity classification categories is assigned (A, B, or C). The A category represents negligible potential DIF. The B category indicates moderate potential DIF; that is to say, that one group outperformed the other group once differences in skill levels between the two groups have been accounted for. The C category indicates that there is large potential DIF. Items assigned an A are given primary consideration in test construction. C items are considered only if the inclusion of such items is necessary to satisfy specific content cells of the detailed test blueprint or other test specifications. Items with C DIF must pass committee review before they are placed on an operational form.

ITEM BANK

Overview

The DRC item bank is a secure, searchable database. The item bank stores items along with associated graphic images, item characteristics (e.g., item ID, standard, answer key, subject, grade), administration information (e.g., form, sequence, year of administration), as well as item level statistics (e.g., *p*-values (proportion correct), item-total correlations, and omits (proportion leaving an item blank)). Items are maintained throughout an item's lifecycle from development through the form construction phase. Information about each item is accessible using the item bank's searching and reporting capabilities in the following situations: determining item development needs, constructing field test and operational test forms, locating released or rejected items, as well as verifying or researching information from committee review sessions.

Functionality

A unique, sequential item ID is assigned to items when they enter the bank. This ensures that each item is uniquely identified throughout its lifecycle with one item ID. Another client-specific item ID may also be assigned.

Current and historic information about item status and characteristics are easily accessible in the item bank. Item characteristics (e.g., standard, key, passage type, calculator status, etc.) are searchable and viewable in the item bank. The item image and associated graphics are also stored in the item bank. The items and graphics can be viewed and versioned based upon suggested modifications by committees and internal edits. Versioning allows changes to be made and archived for reference.

Item status information from committee review sessions is stored in the database. Items accepted by committees are available for form construction. Conversely, items rejected by committees remain in the database for reference and are flagged so they are not available for future test forms.

Item Cards and Reporting Options

Common outputs of the item bank include item cards and user-defined reports. DRC's item cards contain item text and associated graphics, unique item identifiers, as well as applicable administration and statistical information. Item cards are used for committee reviews, client reviews, and form construction purposes.

Information is queried in the item bank to generate reports. For example, a list of items with their associated statistics can be printed for a specific administration or a list of rejected or released items can be printed for reference.

Security

While the viewing options in the item bank are read-only, only approved DRC employees are allowed to make modifications or changes to items and their associated item level administration information.

Quality Assurance

The item bank is the central repository of all item level information at DRC. All changes to an item, its graphic, and associated item-specific information are made in this database. This allows our test development specialists to access the most current, reliable information available at any time in the item and form development processes.

The integrity of the item bank is maintained by tracking changes to items, graphics, and associated information during all stages of development. Similarly, item status codes reflect the availability of an item so that only the most recent version of an item image is placed on a test form. Items which have been released or rejected are flagged so that they are not available for form construction purposes.

During any form construction process, information is extracted from the item bank: DRC relies on the accuracy of the information stored in the item bank. DRC strives to make updates to items and all item related information in a timely manner to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the bank.

Item Bank Summary

The numbers of items eligible at each grade and subject level in the item bank available to be used on a new operational form are presented in Tables 2–10 to 2–12. These include the single set of items field tested in 2009 and accepted prior to or at data review. Because it was a recycled form, no items were used from the bank to build the 2010 SBA forms. The grade 10 item summary table for each content area shows eligible items after the fall 2007 HSGQE Retest was built as it was the most recent operational form constructed. Items doubled coded to both a HSGQE performance standard and a SBA Grade Level Expectation will appear in both Item Bank Summary tables in this document and the 2010 HSGQE Technical Report.

Table 2–10. SBA Mathematics Items

Grade 3

Standard	MC	CR
Numeration	10	4
Measurement	9	1
Estimation & Computation	10	2
Functions & Relations	8	2
Geometry	9	2
Statistics & Probability	6	2

Grade 4

Standard	MC	CR
Numeration	12	5
Measurement	9	1
Estimation & Computation	14	3
Functions & Relations	6	1
Geometry	13	2
Statistics & Probability	7	1

Grade 5

Standard	MC	CR
Numeration	11	0
Measurement	9	0
Estimation & Computation	12	2
Functions & Relations	10	0
Geometry	5	2
Statistics & Probability	10	5

Table 2–10 (continued). SBA Mathematics Items

Grade 6

Standard	MC	CR
Numeration	10	1
Measurement	9	2
Estimation & Computation	10	1
Functions & Relations	6	3
Geometry	11	2
Statistics & Probability	11	2

Grade 7

Standard	MC	CR
Numeration	10	4
Measurement	9	1
Estimation & Computation	10	2
Functions & Relations	12	1
Geometry	10	2
Statistics & Probability	7	4

Grade 8

Standard	MC	CR
Numeration	8	3
Measurement	7	1
Estimation & Computation	10	2
Functions & Relations	13	1
Geometry	11	3
Statistics & Probability	6	3

Grade 9

Standard	MC	CR
Numeration	10	0
Measurement	7	3
Estimation & Computation	7	0
Functions & Relations	15	1
Geometry	15	0
Statistics & Probability	5	7

Grade 10

Standard	MC	CR
Numeration	24	0
Measurement	12	0
Estimation & Computation	23	3
Functions & Relations	41	2
Geometry	23	2
Statistics & Probability	43	3

Table 2–11. SBA Reading Items

Grade 3

Standard	MC	CR
Word Identification	37	0
Forming a General Understanding	61	9
Analysis of Content and Structure	9	2

Grade 4

Standard	MC	CR
Word Identification	28	0
Forming a General Understanding	48	8
Analysis of Content and Structure	22	1

Grade 5

Standard	MC	CR
Word Identification	29	0
Forming a General Understanding	56	6
Analysis of Content and Structure	31	5

Grade 6

Standard	MC	CR
Word Identification	19	0
Forming a General Understanding	53	7
Analysis of Content and Structure	34	4

Grade 7

Standard	MC	CR
Word Identification	15	0
Forming a General Understanding	47	4
Analysis of Content and Structure	33	4

Grade 8

Standard	MC	CR
Word Identification	12	0
Forming a General Understanding	49	3
Analysis of Content and Structure	21	4

Table 2–11 (continued). SBA Reading Items

Grade 9

Standard	MC	CR
Word Identification	16	0
Forming a General Understanding	42	3
Analysis of Content and Structure	25	4

Grade 10

Standard	MC	CR
Word Identification	9	0
Forming a General Understanding	39	2
Analysis of Content and Structure	21	11

Table 2–12. SBA Writing Items

Grade 3

Standard	MC	CR
Write Using a Variety of Forms	23	4
Structures and Conventions of Writing	32	3
Revising	14	4

Grade 4

Standard	MC	CR
Write Using a Variety of Forms	18	17
Structures and Conventions of Writing	35	4
Revising	18	7

Grade 5

Standard	MC	CR
Write Using a Variety of Forms	33	25
Structures and Conventions of Writing	33	1
Revising	14	3

Grade 6

Standard	MC	CR
Write Using a Variety of Forms	26	19
Structures and Conventions of Writing	63	4
Revising	13	7

Table 2–12 (continued). SBA Writing Items

Grade 7

Standard	MC	CR
Write Using a Variety of Forms	28	19
Structures and Conventions of Writing	43	5
Revising	24	3

Grade 8

Standard	MC	CR
Write Using a Variety of Forms	24	16
Structures and Conventions of Writing	46	2
Revising	27	6

Grade 9

Standard	MC	CR
Write Using a Variety of Forms	25	21
Structures and Conventions of Writing	34	2
Revising	26	4

Grade 10

Standard	MC	CR
Write Using a Variety of Forms	46	15
Structures and Conventions of Writing	59	7
Revising	74	10

SPRING 2010 SBA OPERATIONAL FORMS CONSTRUCTION

The operational test forms used for the spring 2010 SBAs were recycled from a previous administration. The recycled form had already been constructed to meet the target range of the content specifications set forth in the target test blueprints, as well as meet psychometric standards for excellence. They also reflected a range of valid content at the appropriate level of difficulty.

The following information documents the steps DRC’s test development specialists took in the previous test forms construction process to ensure that the SBAs are of high quality, legally defensible, and meet the requirements as outlined by the Alaska testing program.

Steps in the Forms Construction Process

1. DRC test development specialists reviewed the content standards and test blueprints, including the number of items per domain or reporting category for each content-area test.
2. DRC psychometricians provided DRC test development specialists with the psychometric guidelines for operational forms construction.
3. DRC psychometricians analyzed item statistics for the field tested items and provided DRC test development specialists with characteristics for each item.
4. DRC test development specialists received all item cards and verified that each item image had its correct item characteristics and psychometric data.
5. DRC test development specialists reviewed all items in the operational pool and made an initial selection of items according to test blueprint guidelines and psychometric guidelines.
6. DRC test development specialists created item-mapping charts for the test.
7. Final recommendations for items selected for the operational forms were prepared for review by senior test development staff.
8. Based upon senior review, suggested replacements were made by DRC test development specialists, if necessary.
9. Operational forms were prepared for psychometric review and approval.
10. Based upon psychometric review, suggested replacements were made by DRC test development specialists, if necessary.
11. Operational forms were prepared for EED review and approval.

The Spring 2010 test forms were reviewed and approved by EED. Feedback was provided on the selected embedded field test items and a complete review done to ensure the recycled operational form remained consistent to its original administration.

DRC INTERNAL REVIEW OF THE ITEMS AND FORMS

At every stage of the test development process the match of the item to the content standard was reviewed and verified since establishing content validity is one of the most important aspects in the legal defensibility of a test. As a result, it is essential that an item selected for a form link directly to the content curriculum standard and performance standard to which it is measuring. DRC test development specialists verified all items against their classification codes and item maps, both to evaluate the correctness of the classification and to ensure that the given task measures what it purports to measure.

CHAPTER 3: TEST ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES

OVERVIEW

The 2010 SBA reading, writing, and mathematics assessments were administered to students in grades 3 through 9 during a 10-day window, April 5 through April 19, 2010. Specific statewide testing days within the test window were not designated and districts were not required to set the SBA testing schedule on consecutive days. Grade 10 students completed the SBA-HSGQE in 3 days, April 6 through 8, 2010. For grades 3 through 10, districts followed the designated SBA test order: reading test (first), writing test (second), and mathematics test (last). Variations on this schedule were not permitted. A District Test Coordinator was assigned at every school district. DRC distributed the testing materials to each District Test Coordinator (DTC).

STUDENT POPULATION TESTED

Districts submitted their enrollment, accommodated materials counts, and updates to district contact information via DRC’s Online Enrollment System November 9 through December 8, 2009. Districts also submitted their precode files via DRC’s Online Precode System, January 4 through January 19, 2010. Districts with 30 or more schools and 9,000 or more students were given the option to submit their enrollment files directly to DRC by December 8, 2009. Anchorage and Fairbanks took advantage of the opportunity to submit a file and then use DRC’s Online Enrollment System for review and verification of their data. In addition, these larger districts were allowed to submit their precode files via DRC’s Online Precode System until February 19, 2010 with precode and district/school labels arriving in these districts by March 18, 2010.

The enrollment and documents processed counts were as follows:

Table 3–1. Project Counts

District Count	School Count
54	494
Enrollment Count	Processed Count
Grade 3: 13,290	Grade 3: 9,847
Grade 4: 13,450	Grade 4: 9,851
Grade 5: 13,110	Grade 5: 9,738
Grade 6: 12,820	Grade 6: 9,413
Grade 7: 12,580	Grade 7: 9,508
Grade 8: 12,490	Grade 8: 9,409
Grade 9: 13,110	Grade 9: 9,696
Grade 10: 12,937	Grade 10: 9,395

ACCOMMODATIONS

Appropriate accommodations were available for students with disabilities while taking the assessments. These accommodations were required to be documented in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or in a 504 plan. Refer to the Participation Guidelines for examples of acceptable accommodations (http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/Assessment/participation_guidelines/ParticipationGuidelinesSept2007.pdf).

TEST ADMINISTRATOR TRAINING

DTCs were trained February 23–24, 2010 by EED and DRC. The training focused on test materials receipt, distribution and return procedures, and general testing information. DTCs scheduled training sessions with test administrators during March and April 2010.

TEST SECURITY

The SBA materials are considered secure materials. According to Alaska test security regulation 4 AAC 06.765, all test materials must be kept secure. No portion of test materials may be photocopied or duplicated at any time. Except for the person testing, no person, including test administrators, is permitted to read test items on the SBA prior to, during (except for the student testing), or after administration. Teachers, proctors, test administrators, or any testing personnel may not read test items aloud, silently, to themselves, or to another individual, unless it is specifically required to provide a documented accommodation to an individual or student group. Parents/guardians may not read test items under any circumstances.

The DTC designated the school and district personnel who had access to secure test materials, and who needed to sign the Test Security Agreements. All signed test security forms were returned to the DTC and kept on file in the district.

Prior to the first test administration of the school year, DTCs signed and sent their District Test Coordinator Test Security Agreements to EED.

MATERIALS

The following materials were produced for this administration:

- *District Test Coordinator's Manual*
- *Test Administration Directions*
- Form B Reading Test Books—grades 3 and 4
- Form B Writing/Mathematics Test Books—grades 3 and 4
- Form B Reading/Writing/Mathematics Test Books—grades 5–9
- Form B Reading/Writing/Mathematics Answer Booklets—grades 5–9
- Seven Forms (with varied embedded field test items) of Form D Reading Test Books—grade 10

- Seven Forms (with varied embedded field test items) of Form D Writing/Mathematics Test Books—grade 10
- Large Print Test Books
- Braille Test Books
- Sign Language DVDs—grade 10 writing and mathematics only
- Audio Tapes—grade 10 writing and mathematics only
- Ancillary materials—rulers, protractors, large print and Braille rulers, large print and Braille protractors, precode labels, district/school labels, “Do Not Score” labels, return shipping labels, security checklists, school box range sheets, shipping rosters, and packing lists

Samples of the *District Test Coordinator’s Manual* and *Test Administration Directions* are provided in Appendix 10.

Packaging and Shipping Materials

All materials were packaged by school and shipped to the districts in one shipment. All test materials arrived in the districts by March 8, 2010, as scheduled.

District ancillary materials were packed in the last box, which was labeled, “District Materials Enclosed.” Boxes were filled 75-percent full to allow districts space to return their materials after they had expanded due to being removed from shrink-wrap and used by students.

DRC overage was shrink-wrapped in groups of three. All secure materials were barcoded, packaged by range sheet, and shrink-wrapped. All accommodated assessments were also barcoded for security.

DRC entered, packed, and shipped requests for additional materials March 8–24, 2010. DRC processed 24 additional materials requests for this administration.

Materials Return

Districts returned all materials via Assessment Distribution Services on April 22, 2010, and most materials arrived at DRC’s warehouse on April 26, 2010. All districts used green, district-specific DRC return shipping labels.

Box Receipt

As materials arrived, DRC’s Materials Processing team (MAT) checked the bill of lading to ensure that the number of boxes received matched the number signed for by the DTC and Assessment Distribution Services. The Materials Processing team scanned each box using the Operations Materials Management System (OpsMMS) Box Receipt System and, as soon as box receipt was complete, notified DRC’s Education Project Management (EPM) team of any districts and schools that did not return a box. DRC’s automated system provided immediate information regarding materials return. DRC identified the date and time each box was checked in, where the box originated, and districts and schools that did not return materials.

CHAPTER 4: SCORING & STUDENT PERFORMANCE REPORTING

DOCUMENT PROCESSING

All secure materials were scanned in by district through DRC's OpsMMS system to ensure accurate counts. Through an automated precount system, DRC counted the books before check-in and again at scanning to ensure counts matched. If a count did not match, the books were reconciled to ensure accurate numbers. Accommodated testing materials were also checked in securely using the security barcode numbers on the documents.

The Materials Processing team produced a preliminary Missing Materials Report and performed quality checks based on this report. The report was then forwarded to EPM, who checked for the missing materials on the security checklists and in recorded correspondence from the districts. If sufficient documentation regarding a material was found, the item was removed from the Missing Materials Report.

DRC used its Image Scanning System to scan the SBA test books. Scanning of test books and answer booklets was completed on May 5, 2010. All predefined editing and validating rules were followed.

HANDSCORING OF CONSTRUCTED RESPONSES

For the Alaska SBAs, DRC employed a variety of score-point scales for scoring SCR (short constructed-responses) and ECR (extended constructed-response) items.

Preliminary rubrics for field test items were written during the item development stage, and these rubrics were refined once live student responses were available for review. DRC staff used the rubrics and live student responses to build anchor sets and training materials for each item assessed. Writing constructed-response items were scored using a "generic" (i.e., not item-specific) rubrics on 1–4 and 1–6 point scales (Appendix 2). DRC's performance assessment staff assisted in the crucial effort of writing and refining scoring rubrics.

READERS

The scorers for the Alaska SBAs were selected from DRC's larger pool of available professional test scorers. All of our readers for the Alaska SBAs had an undergraduate degree and background in the content areas being assessed.

DRC selects readers who are articulate, concerned with the task at hand, and, most importantly, flexible. Our readers must have strong content-specific backgrounds: they are educators, writers, editors, accountants, and other professionals. They are valued for their experience but, at the same time, are required to set aside their own biases about student performance and accept the scoring standards of the client's program. Candidates must demonstrate proficiency in the content areas they will be scoring. For example, mathematics scorer candidates must successfully solve a DRC mathematics problem and show all steps necessary to reach the correct answer. Reader candidates are asked to respond to a DRC writing topic.

Rangefinding and Developing Training Material

DRC's Scoring Directors and Content Specialists consensus scored "live" field test responses to create training materials for our scorers. During this process, student responses were selected and the rubric and scoring guidelines were applied. DRC staff moved from item to item until a sufficient number of scored responses were compiled to construct training materials. Responses that were particularly relevant (in terms of the scoring concepts they illustrate) were annotated for use in the scoring guide. The scoring guide for each item served as the readers' constant reference. An anchor set and a training set were created for each field test item. For operational items, these materials were enhanced with the addition of further training sets and qualifying sets.

Training the Readers

The fundamental objective of any handscoring activity is that results be accurate and consistent. Therefore, it is important that high-quality methods of training and monitoring readers be employed.

Training for readers in each content area began with a room-wide presentation and discussion of the scoring guide by the Scoring Director and/or Team Leader. The scoring guide for each item contained the scoring rubric and anchor papers that were selected and annotated to define and articulate the score scale. Next, the readers "practiced" by scoring the responses in the training sets. The Scoring Director and/or Team Leaders then led a thorough discussion of each set.

After the scoring guide and all training sets were discussed, readers of operational items demonstrated their ability to apply the scoring criteria by qualifying (i.e., scoring with acceptable agreement with "true" scores) on at least one of the qualifying sets. Any readers who did not qualify by the end of the qualifying process were not allowed to score any Alaska "live" responses.

IMAGING

DRC used its Image Scanning and Scoring system for the handscoring of the responses to constructed-response items.

DRC's hardware environment to support the image handscoring system consists of a server-based solution, with hundreds of handscoring workstations (PCs). Each DRC scoring site has a server, a local area network (LAN), and workstations for readers, Team Leaders, and Scoring Directors. There is locally resident software to view the students' constructed-responses and to recall images of any student document upon demand. Each handscoring site is connected to the DRC main operation facility with multiple T1 transmission lines. The operation facility has multiple application and secure database servers that support the scanning, editing, scoring, and handscoring processes. The database backups and archived images are also housed on the secure servers.

The student responses were separated for readers by item for each subject, and only qualified readers had access to student response images. The readers read each response and keyed in the correct score. After the score was entered, a new response image appeared. Images of specific sets of items (unit-specific) were sent to designated groups of readers qualified to score those items.

This process of routing and scoring sets of imaged items continued until all responses to items or prompts received the prescribed number of independent readings. Non-adjacent scores that

required resolving were routed to Scoring Directors or Team Leaders for electronic review and resolution.

Quality Control of Handscoring

DRC's quality control procedures helped to ensure that constructed-response items for the Alaska assessment were scored in an objective and accurate manner using the following approach.

With the exception of grade 10 responses, ten percent of all operational (common) items were independently scored by two readers for the purposes of monitoring inter-rater reliability. The imaging system re-directed every tenth item to a second scorer for another independent reading. Likewise, the majority of the spring field test items received a random ten percent second scoring. Since grade 10 items served as both SBA items and HSGQE items, the grade 10 items were scored using the HSGQE scoring rules, under which all responses are read by at least two readers. The HSGQE scoring rules are further detailed in the 2010 HSGQE Technical Report. The inter-rater reliability statistics are included in Appendix 11.

In order to monitor reader reliability and to ensure that an acceptable agreement rate was maintained, DRC monitored the daily statistics provided by the reliability reports, which documented individual reader data, including reader number and team designation, number of responses scored, individual score point distributions, and exact agreement rates. A ratio of one Team Leader for every 10–12 readers was maintained to ensure adequate monitoring of the readers. In addition to this information, Team Leaders conducted routine “read behinds” for all readers.

DATA PROCESSING

The original scanned multiple-choice data was converted into a master student file. Record counts were verified against the counts from the Document Processing staff to ensure all students were accounted for in the file.

DRC provided EED with the student file so corrections and updates could be applied. After the demographic information was updated, the student file was scored against the appropriate answer key, indicating correct and incorrect responses. Correct responses were designated by converting the numeric value into an alpha value (e.g., 1 becomes A, 2 becomes B). Incorrect responses remained numeric. In addition, the original response string was stored for data verification and auditing purposes.

Scores for a student's constructed responses were systematically matched to the student's multiple-choice responses by a unique document ID (lithocode). This process allowed DRC to score and create a student record for each test book returned for processing, while providing accurate and reliable data. Student scale scores and proficiency levels were determined prior to production of final data files and reports.

Once the scored master student file was deemed 100-percent accurate, DRC's Psychometric Services staff performed additional detailed analysis on the data files prior to EED's review and approval process.

REPORTING

DRC worked with EED to determine appropriate file layouts for student data files. The layouts included field names, field descriptions, and field values. DRC posted district-level data files and layouts to the DRC Report Delivery System and state-level data files and layouts to an FTP site that EED can access.

DRC created report mockups of the production reports that were produced and delivered for this administration. The mockups comprised simulated, but realistic, data elements and were in the required report layout, displayed the approximate font and font sizes, and demonstrated paper size and printing elements.

DRC followed a review process that allowed EED to review, change, and approve all mockups prior to report development. The mockups were reviewed by DRC's Business Analysts and the Software Quality Assurance Analysts for accuracy and consistency. EED reviewed the mock-ups as part of the Functional Specifications Document for Reporting review. During the review process, EED was able to evaluate the static content and layout of each report to make certain it reflected the format, verbiage, and design required. DRC worked closely with EED throughout the review process to incorporate any changes or modifications.

EED identified Kenai as the sample district for quality verification, and so DRC prioritized the scoring and reporting of the district's student documents.

During all phases of reporting, DRC performed a thorough quality assurance review prior to releasing of reports. A cycle of sample reports was reviewed by EED prior to producing live reports for districts and schools.

DRC provided the district and state reports as outlined under the "District Reports" and "State Reports" headings that follow. DRC also produced Parent/Student and Teacher/Staff versions of the *Guide to Test Interpretation*. Samples of these guides are provided in Appendix 12 and are also available on EED's Web site.

Final Grade 10 SBA reports were provided electronically on May 14, 2010. Paper copies of the final Grade 10 SBA reports were delivered to the districts as scheduled on or before May 21, 2010.

Final Grades 3 through 9 SBA reports were provided electronically on May 19, 2010. Paper copies of the final Grades 3 through 9 SBA reports were delivered to the districts as scheduled on or before June 1, 2010.

The erasure analysis, which included all straggler (late) returns, was delivered to EED on August 13, 2010.

District Reports

- Student Reports
- School Student Rosters
- School Summary Reports
- School Subpopulation Summary Reports
- District School Rosters
- District Subpopulation Summary Reports
- Student Data File
- Abbreviated Student Data File

State Reports

- Student Data File
- Abbreviated Student Data File
- State Subpopulation Summary Reports
- DVDs

CHAPTER 5: FORM ANALYSIS & ITEM CALIBRATION

RASCH MEASUREMENT MODELS

Scale scores for the SBAs were developed using the family of Rasch (1960) measurement models for scaling and equating. The advantage of using Rasch models in scaling is that all of the items measuring performance in a particular content area can be placed on a common difficulty scale, allowing the Rasch difficulty values for the individual items to be used in computing a Rasch logit for any raw score point on any test constructed from scaled items.

Rather than percent correct, the Rasch model expresses item difficulty (and student proficiency) in units commonly referred to as logits. In the simplest case, a logit is a transformed p -value with the average p -value represented by a logit of zero. The logit metric has several mathematical advantages over p -values. It is an interval scale, meaning two items with logits of 0 and +1 are the same distance apart as items with logits of +3 and +4. Logits are independent of the ability distribution of the students taking a particular test. A specific form will have a mean logit of zero, whether the average p -value of the test is 0.8 or 0.3. The Rasch model also allows person measures and item measures to be placed on a common scale. This allows the comparison of person proficiency and item difficulty to determine the probability that a person will respond correctly to any given test item. This comparison is not possible in the percent correct metric used in the true-score model. It is impossible to predict how well a person who answered 80% of the items correctly will perform on an item answered correctly by 80% of the persons.

The standard Rasch calibration procedure sets the mean difficulty of the items on any unanchored calibration at zero. Any item with a p -value lower than the mean receives a positive logit and any item with a p -value higher than the mean receives a negative logit. Consequently, the logits for any calibration, whether it is a third-grade reading test or a high-school mathematics test, relate to an arbitrary origin defined by the average of item difficulties for that form. The average third-grade reading item will have a logit of zero; the average high-school mathematics item will have a logit of zero in unanchored calibrations. This common logit scale describes both item difficulties and student abilities.

Because both dichotomous and polytomous items were part of the SBA assessments, DRC utilized a mixed-model item calibration approach that placed both item types onto a common scale. Multiple-choice (MC) items, scored either right or wrong, were calibrated using the familiar form of the dichotomous Rasch model. Constructed-response (CR) items were calibrated using another model in the Rasch family, Master's partial-credit model (Wright & Masters, 1982). The latter model parameterizes each threshold needed to obtain the maximum score on the task. Consequently, there is one item difficulty parameter for each of the $n - 1$ score transitions (0/1, 1/2, etc.), or thresholds. While the partial-credit model is a non-trivial extension of the simple logistic Rasch model, an MC item may be thought of as a partial-credit task with only one threshold.

With the partial-credit model, π_{nix} is the probability that person n scores x on item i . The conditional probability of a score of 1, given a score of 0 or 1 is:

$$\Phi_{ni1} = \frac{\pi_{ni1}}{\pi_{ni0} + \pi_{ni1}} = \frac{\exp(\beta_n - \delta_{i1})}{1 + \exp(\beta_n - \delta_{i1})},$$

where β_n is the ability of person n and δ_{i1} is the difficulty of the first threshold for item i .

The preceding equation can be expanded to obtain one general expression for the probability of person n scoring x on item i :

$$\pi_{nix} = \frac{\exp \sum_{j=0}^x (\beta_n - \delta_{ij})}{\sum_{k=0}^{m_i} \exp \sum_{j=0}^k (\beta_n - \delta_{ij})}, \quad x = 0, 1, \dots, m_i,$$

where m_i is the number of thresholds and for notational convenience,

$$\exp \sum_{j=0}^0 (\beta_n - \delta_{ij}) = 1.$$

This equation expresses the probability of person n scoring x on the m_i threshold of item i as a function of the person's measure (β_n) and the threshold difficulties (δ_{ij}) of the m_i thresholds for item i . The observation x is a count of the successfully completed item thresholds.

The unconditional, joint maximum likelihood (UCON) estimation procedure estimates the person parameters (i.e., ability) simultaneously with the item parameters (i.e., difficulty). The UCON procedure was accomplished using WINSTEPS Version 3.69.1.14 (Linacre, 2010). This calibration software is commercially available and widely used in the testing industry and is considered the industry standard for Rasch calibration.

ITEM STATISTICS

Appendix 13 provides item-level statistics by content area for the spring 2010 SBA operational assessments. These statistics (i.e., logit, standard error, fit, p -value, item-total correlation, and omits) represent the item characteristics most commonly used to determine whether an item functioned in an appropriate manner. Tables 5–1 through 5–8 present the mean or median of these statistics within each content area.

The logit column in the tables and appendix provides an estimate of the item difficulty. The standard error (SE) column provides the asymptotic standard error associated with the item difficulties.

The Rasch fit statistics are used to determine how well items conform to the requirements of the Rasch measurement model. The items were analyzed for scale comparability by examining the residuals between observed and expected scores for the persons and items (Mead, 1978; Smith, 2000). This process investigated the underlying construct measured by a test by analyzing the patterns of item covariation within the scale. For example, when local dependence is exhibited, it may indicate violations of unidimensionality, thus introducing sources of variability that are unrelated to the construct being measured, with the caveat that even if some minor item dependence existed in the CR item formats, they are likely to have minor influence on scores (Stout, 1987). A standardized weighted total fit (OUTFIT z -std) statistic was computed for each item. This fit statistic quantifies the sum of the squared differences between the observed item performance from the expected performance for all persons. Items may not fit the Rasch model for several reasons, all of which relate to students responding to items in an unexpected way. In many cases the reason behind why students respond in unexpected ways to a particular item is unclear. However, it is possible to determine possible causes of an item's misfit by re-examining the item and its distractors. As part of this investigative process, DRC content specialists examined all items with large fit statistics to confirm that each item exhibited the attributes of a high-quality item based on best practices.

The p -value for an MC item is the percent (or proportion) of all students that responded to an item correctly. The p -value for a CR item represents the average score earned divided by the maximum number of points for that item. For the spring 2010 SBA forms, the range of CR item scores can range from 0–2 or 0–4 points in mathematics, 0–2, or 0–4 in reading, and 0–2, 1–4, or 1–6 in writing.

The item-total correlation (PtBis or Corr.) provides a measure of the internal consistency of the responses. It assesses how well each item measures the trait defined by the set of items as a whole. Typically, students with high proficiency (i.e., those that perform well on the SBA content-area test overall) would be expected to answer items correctly, and students with low proficiency (i.e., those that perform poorly on the SBA content-area test overall) would be expected to answer items incorrectly. If these expectations are met, the item-total correlation between the item and the total test score will be high and positive, indicating that the item is a good discriminator between high ability and low ability students. An item-total correlation value above 0.30 is usually considered acceptable. An item-total correlation value below 0.30 indicates that an item may not be measuring what it was intended to measure, and should be reviewed. DRC content specialists reviewed all items with item-total correlations below 0.30 and verified that each item was acceptable as written and scored. As seen in Tables 5–1 through 5–8, the median item-total correlations for MC and CR items all exceeded the 0.30 criterion.

The omits column represents the proportion of persons leaving the item blank for MC items and the proportion of persons with blanks or other condition codes for CR items. Note, however, that the nonscorable codes are recoded as 0 points for the purposes of item calibration and scoring.

Table 5–1. Summary of Operational Item Analysis – Grade 3

Content Area	Item Type	Mean Logit	Mean SE	Mean Fit	Mean <i>p</i> -value	Median PtBis or Corr	Mean Omits
Mathematics	MC	0.01	0.03	-1.15	0.69	0.42	0.01
	CR	0.20	0.02	5.67	0.62	0.59	0.01
Reading	MC	0.14	0.02	-0.63	0.66	0.46	0.01
	CR	1.52	0.02	6.03	0.35	0.57	0.07
Writing	MC	-0.15	0.03	-2.22	0.67	0.49	0.01
	CR	0.69	0.02	8.53	0.49	0.54	0.06

Table 5–2. Summary of Operational Item Analysis – Grade 4

Content Area	Item Type	Mean Logit	Mean SE	Mean Fit	Mean <i>p</i> -value	Median PtBis or Corr	Mean Omits
Mathematics	MC	0.04	0.03	-2.35	0.70	0.41	0.01
	CR	0.46	0.02	9.90	0.56	0.52	0.01
Reading	MC	0.18	0.03	-1.89	0.67	0.48	0.01
	CR	0.86	0.02	6.30	0.47	0.56	0.04
Writing	MC	-0.10	0.03	-1.29	0.67	0.47	0.01
	CR	0.56	0.01	9.90	0.50	0.44	0.03

Table 5–3. Summary of Operational Item Analysis – Grade 5

Content Area	Item Type	Mean Logit	Mean SE	Mean Fit	Mean <i>p</i> -value	Median PtBis or Corr	Mean Omits
Mathematics	MC	0.07	0.03	-0.94	0.70	0.43	0.00
	CR	0.06	0.02	5.23	0.69	0.62	0.02
Reading	MC	0.07	0.03	-1.94	0.68	0.46	0.01
	CR	0.92	0.01	-2.10	0.44	0.61	0.04
Writing	MC	0.06	0.02	-0.19	0.68	0.43	0.00
	CR	0.30	0.02	9.90	0.54	0.47	0.02

Table 5–4. Summary of Operational Item Analysis – Grade 6

Content Area	Item Type	Mean Logit	Mean SE	Mean Fit	Mean <i>p</i> -value	Median PtBis or Corr	Mean Omits
Mathematics	MC	-0.03	0.03	-0.79	0.70	0.41	0.00
	CR	-0.03	0.02	7.77	0.68	0.59	0.01
Reading	MC	0.00	0.03	-2.56	0.71	0.46	0.00
	CR	0.72	0.02	9.90	0.52	0.51	0.03
Writing	MC	-0.12	0.03	0.00	0.69	0.45	0.00
	CR	1.07	0.02	5.00	0.45	0.50	0.02

Table 5–5. Summary of Operational Item Analysis – Grade 7

Content Area	Item Type	Mean Logit	Mean SE	Mean Fit	Mean <i>p</i> -value	Median PtBis or Corr	Mean Omits
Mathematics	MC	-0.22	0.03	-2.07	0.70	0.42	0.00
	CR	0.23	0.01	9.90	0.60	0.49	0.02
Reading	MC	-0.02	0.03	-1.18	0.68	0.42	0.00
	CR	0.95	0.02	7.10	0.50	0.54	0.04
Writing	MC	0.08	0.03	1.60	0.65	0.41	0.00
	CR	0.67	0.02	7.40	0.50	0.51	0.02

Table 5–6. Summary of Operational Item Analysis – Grade 8

Content Area	Item Type	Mean Logit	Mean SE	Mean Fit	Mean <i>p</i> -value	Median PtBis or Corr	Mean Omits
Mathematics	MC	-0.02	0.03	-2.02	0.68	0.42	0.00
	CR	0.47	0.01	2.03	0.55	0.60	0.04
Reading	MC	0.10	0.03	-1.71	0.68	0.40	0.00
	CR	1.65	0.02	2.23	0.32	0.39	0.04
Writing	MC	-0.13	0.03	-1.71	0.69	0.44	0.00
	CR	0.97	0.02	4.95	0.42	0.52	0.03

Table 5–7. Summary of Operational Item Analysis – Grade 9

Content Area	Item Type	Mean Logit	Mean SE	Mean Fit	Mean <i>p</i> -value	Median PtBis or Corr	Mean Omits
Mathematics	MC	-0.13	0.03	-2.23	0.68	0.41	0.00
	CR	0.02	0.01	5.87	0.64	0.61	0.03
Reading	MC	0.00	0.03	-3.33	0.71	0.42	0.00
	CR	1.32	0.02	7.87	0.44	0.45	0.05
Writing	MC	0.09	0.03	-0.38	0.68	0.42	0.00
	CR	0.97	0.01	6.70	0.48	0.51	0.04

Table 5–8. Summary of Operational Item Analysis – Grade 10

Content Area	Item Type	Mean Logit	Mean SE	Mean Fit	Mean <i>p</i> -value	Median PtBis or Corr	Mean Omits
Mathematics	MC	0.00	0.03	0.26	0.64	0.37	0.00
	CR	1.64	0.01	-5.90	0.32	0.63	0.14
Reading	MC	0.00	0.03	-1.11	0.75	0.40	0.00
	CR	0.69	0.02	9.48	0.64	0.39	0.02
Writing	MC	0.00	0.03	0.46	0.73	0.32	0.00
	CR	0.68	0.02	3.37	0.56	0.54	0.03

FORM STATISTICS

Appendix 14 contains summary descriptive statistics for student performance and item difficulty, including mean score, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum scores by content area. These statistics were generated using WINSTEPS v3.69.1.14 (Linacre, 2010) and illustrate student and item performance. The top halves of the student summary tables provide descriptive statistics for persons (i.e., students) measured. The column labeled “Measure” provides the mean and standard deviation of the estimated student proficiency measures. The “Model Error” column presents similar information for the asymptotic standard errors.

The top half of the item summary tables provide the same descriptive statistics outlined above, with the exception that items are the unit of analysis rather than students. In this table, “Measure” refers to estimated item difficulty, so that the average measure refers to the average difficulty of the items on the test. Again, “Model Error” is the descriptive statistics for the asymptotic standard errors.

The bottom half of the tables contain the Root Mean Square Error (RMSE). The Real RMSE corresponds to a worst-case error estimate, and Model RMSE corresponds to a best-case estimate. The adjusted standard deviation is an estimate of the “true” standard deviation, which adjusts for potential measurement error by removing it from the standard deviation estimate (Wright & Masters, 1982, see pages 92 and 113):

$$SA_I^2 = SD_I^2 - MSE_I ,$$

where SA_I is the adjusted standard deviation, SD_I is the observed standard deviation, and MSE_I is the mean square error, which is calculated using the following equation:

$$MSE_I = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^L s_i^2}{L} ,$$

where L is the number of items and s_i is the standard error of item i .

The RMSE is computed by taking the square root of the MSE value:

$$RMSE_I = \sqrt{MSE_I} .$$

The item separation value then provides the adjusted standard deviation in RMSE units. It is calculated by finding the ratio of the adjusted standard deviation to the RMSE:

$$G_I = SA_I / RMSE_I .$$

The test reliability estimate is called the index of “item separation reliability.” This is a refined measure of internal consistency reliability, which provides the proportion of observed item variance that is not due to estimation error. The item separation reliability estimate is computed using:

$$R_I = \frac{SA_I^2}{SD_I^2} .$$

It can also be calculated using only the separation value:

$$R_I = \frac{G_I^2}{1 + G_I^2} .$$

The processes for obtaining person separation and person separation reliability values are analogous to those for calculating item separation and item separation reliability values. The previous equations should be used, substituting a “ P ” for each “ I .”

Below the tables, the standard error of the mean for the persons and items tested, respectively, are provided. This value is an estimate of the average amount of error associated with the sample person and item means. Two additional statistics, the student raw score-to-measure correlation and Coefficient Alpha student raw score reliability, are also reported below the Student Summary tables.

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS

Items

Appendix 15 provides frequency distributions of all SBA item difficulties, including the thresholds for CR items. Each item sequence number is shown to the right of its corresponding logit, which represents the lowest possible value for that row. When more than one item falls in the logit range, the items are arranged from lowest to highest logit value. For instance, as seen in Figure 15–1 of the appendix, the logit value for grade 3 mathematics Item 38 is between 0.7 and 0.9, and it is also lower than the logit value for Item 17, which also falls between 0.7 and 0.9. In addition, each CR item sequence number is displayed to the right of its corresponding logit for each possible threshold.

Persons

Appendix 16 provides frequency distributions of raw scores and scale scores by content area for the spring 2010 SBA administration. The columns in these tables present each raw score, scale score, scale score asymptotic standard error, frequency count, frequency percent, cumulative frequency, and cumulative percent. The range of reported scale scores for the SBAs is 100 through 600.

CAUTIONS FOR SCORE USE

As with any assessment, student scores at the minimum or maximum ends of the score range will have large standard errors of measurement and should be viewed cautiously. For instance, if the maximum score for the SBA in grade 6 reading is 600 and a student achieves this score, it cannot be determined whether the student would have achieved a higher scale score if that score were possible. All that is known is that the student's scale score, as revealed by this test, is at least 600. In this manner, extreme scale scores may vary from one administration to the next even if the number of items tested does not, making comparisons of students that score at the extreme ends of the score distribution difficult. To minimize confusion and the potential for misinterpretation, the maximum scale scores possible on the SBA have been fixed so they do not change across administrations.

CHAPTER 6: SCALING & EQUATING

INTRODUCTION

To assist in maintaining equivalent passing standards across different administrations, EED, in collaboration with DRC, constructs all tests to be of similar difficulty. This similarity is maintained from administration to administration at the total test level and, as much as possible, at the reporting standard level.

The spring 2010 operational SBA tests in mathematics, reading, and writing for grades 3–10 were previously administered in identical forms in spring 2007.

In addition to the operational items, field-test items were embedded in the grade 10 SBA in order to expand the item pool for future form development. Field-test items are those being administered for the first time to gather statistical information about the item. These items do not count toward an individual student's score.

Since the all of the operational forms had been previously administered in an identical form in 2007, the same 2007 raw-to-scale score conversion tables were used in 2010.

GRADES 3–9 PRE-EQUATING

The spring 2010 grades 3–9 SBAs were pre-equated and operationally administered in spring 2007. In the pre-equating process, a newly developed test is linked to a previously administered test form. This allows for the new test form's difficulty level to be equated to previous administrations. This procedure utilizes common item equating, where the entire operational form serves as the common links. This produces high quality of equating from administration to administration (due to the large number of equating items).

GRADES 3–9 OPERATIONAL ITEM CALIBRATION

Operational item calibration for the spring 2010 grades 3–9 SBAs was conducted in 2007, when the current forms were initially administered, and reconfirmed following the spring 2010 administration. The stability (invariance) of the item difficulties for the spring 2007 administration was determined by anchoring the operational item difficulty values to those obtained from the spring 2005 and 2006 field-test administrations. This anchored calibration method produced results such that the items and thresholds were on the same scale as the original (spring 2005) operational test form. The WINSTEPS v3.69.1.14 (Linacre, 2010) program was used to anchor (hold the item difficulty constant) the Rasch item difficulty estimates and the constructed-response (CR) threshold estimates for the items from the 2005 and 2006 field-test administrations, as well as estimate the change in item difficulty (displacement) between the field-test and operational administrations.

The calibrated item and threshold difficulties were used in conjunction with actual student performance to obtain Rasch ability estimates for each possible raw score value for the overall test, as well as each subscale/reporting standard. The generation of this raw score-to-Rasch ability was accomplished through fundamental formulas in the Rasch measurement model (Wright & Masters, 1982).

The combination of both dichotomously scored MC items as well as polytomously scored CR tasks required the use of a partial-credit model. The Newton-Raphson iterative procedure was used to obtain precise ability estimates:

$$b_r^{(t+1)} = b_r^t - \frac{r - \sum_i^L \sum_{k=1}^{m_i} k P_{rik}^{(t)}}{-\sum_i^L \left[\sum_{k=1}^{m_i} k^2 P_{rik}^{(t)} - \left(\sum_{k=1}^{m_i} k P_{rik}^{(t)} \right)^2 \right]}, \quad r = 1, M - 1,$$

where b_r^t is the estimated ability of the student with score r after t iterations, k is the number of thresholds, L is the number of items, $M = \sum_i^L m_i$, and $P_{rik}^{(t)}$ is the probability π_{nix} defined earlier in Chapter 5:

$$\pi_{nix} = \frac{\exp \sum_{j=0}^x (\beta_n - \delta_{ij})}{\sum_{k=0}^{m_i} \exp \sum_{j=0}^x (\beta_n - \delta_{ij})}, \quad x = 0, 1, \dots, m_i.$$

The asymptotic standard error was estimated from the denominator of the final iteration:

$$SE(b_r) = \left[\sum_i^L \left[\sum_{k=1}^{m_i} k^2 P_{rik}^{(t)} - \left(\sum_{k=1}^{m_i} k P_{rik}^{(t)} \right)^2 \right] \right]^{-1/2}.$$

The iteration was terminated using the WINSTEPS convergence criteria of 0.01 maximum logit chance.

GRADE 10 OPERATIONAL ITEM CALIBRATION

Operational item calibration for the spring 2010 grade 10 SBA was conducted in 2007, when the current forms were initially administered, and reconfirmed following the spring 2010 administration. For each content area of the grade 10, 2007 test administration, a separate calibration was performed via WINSTEPS. Initially all dichotomous item difficulties were estimated. These values were then ‘anchored’ while estimates were determined for the polytomous threshold values. This anchored calibration method produced results such that all items and thresholds were on the same scale.

ITEM BANK MAINTENANCE

The appropriate item banks were then updated with the operational item statistics from this administration.

CHAPTER 7: FIELD-TEST ITEM DATA SUMMARY

FIELD-TEST ITEMS

Once a newly constructed item had passed committee review, it was ready for field testing. For instance, for the 2010 grade 10 SBA reading test, this was accomplished by embedding ten MC items and one CR item within the 67 operational test items. Grade 10 had seven field-test forms per content area. Note that the field-test items do not count towards an individual student’s score. Only the operational test items count towards the individual score.

As discussed previously, the operational items were used as anchors for transforming the field-test item parameters to the same logit scale that was previously established. The full sample was used to estimate the difficulty of the MC and CR items.

FIELD-TEST ITEM DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Appendix 17 provides field-test item statistics by content area for the spring 2010 grade 10 SBA. These statistics represent the item characteristics most commonly used to determine whether an item functioned in an appropriate manner and are the same as those defined in Chapter 5 for operational items.

DRC utilized the Mantel-Haenszel (MH) or the Standardized Mean Difference (SMD) statistic for detecting differential item functioning (DIF) depending on the item type. The MH statistic is the most commonly used technique for MC items in large-scale, educational assessment. It does not depend on the application or the fit of any specific measurement model.

The MH procedure, as implemented by DRC, compared the observed and expected totals of a two-by-two-by-four contingency table (Holland & Thayer, 1986) shown in Table 7–1. The contingency table contrasts a focal group with a reference group by item response (correct/incorrect) by four performance levels (quartiles of the total test score). Males and Caucasians were considered the reference groups for the gender and ethnicity comparisons and the focal group was females or Alaska Natives and American Indians.

Table 7–1. Mantel-Haenszel Contingency Table

Group	Correct (1)	Incorrect (0)	Total
Reference	A_j	B_j	n_{Rj}
Focal	C_j	D_j	n_{Fj}
Total	m_{1j}	m_{0j}	T_j

An odds-ratio,

$$\hat{\alpha}_{MH} = \frac{\sum \left(\frac{A_j D_j}{T_j} \right)}{\sum \left(\frac{B_j C_j}{T_j} \right)},$$

was summed across each of the j -levels and then converted into the Educational Testing Service (ETS) “delta scale:”

$$\hat{\Delta}_{MH} = -2.35(\ln(\hat{\alpha}_{MH})).$$

The value $\hat{\Delta}_{MH}$ is the average amount more difficult that a member of the reference group found the studied item than did comparable members of the focal group.

The variance approximation for $\hat{\alpha}_{MH}$ was determined via the equation:

$$\text{Var}(\hat{\alpha}_{MH}) = \frac{1}{2U^2} \sum_j [T_j^{-2} (A_j D_j + \hat{\alpha}_{MH} B_j C_j)(A_j + D_j + \hat{\alpha}_{MH} (B_j + C_j))],$$

where

$$U = \sum_j \frac{A_j D_j}{T_j}.$$

From the $\hat{\Delta}_{MH}$ value, one of three severity classification categories was assigned (i.e., A, B, or C). Rules for the classification are found in Appendix 18. The A category represents negligible DIF. The B category indicates moderate potential DIF; that is to say, one group outperformed the other group once the effects of differences in skill levels between the two groups have been removed. The C category indicates that there is large potential DIF. The plus (+) and minus (-) signs that follow the DIF category indicate which group is favored by the item. The minus sign indicates that the reference group outperformed the focal group once the skill level differences between the groups have been accounted for. The plus sign indicates that the focal group outperformed the reference group once the skill level differences between the groups have been removed.

The analysis on CR items was based on the SMD procedure (Zwick & Thayer, 1996). SMD takes into account the natural ordering of the response levels of the item. In contrast to the MH procedure, this summary statistic compares the means of the reference and focal groups, adjusting for differences in the distribution of each group’s members across the four ability stratifications. Data were organized into a two-by- T -by-four contingency table shown in Table 7–2, where T is the number of score categories and the plus (+) signs denote summation over a particular index.

Table 7–2. SMD Contingency Table

Group	y₁	y₂	y₃	...	y_T	Total
Reference	n_{R1k}	n_{R2k}	n_{R3k}	...	n_{RTk}	n_{R+k}
Focal	n_{F1k}	n_{F2k}	n_{F3k}	...	n_{FTk}	n_{F+k}
Total	n_{+1k}	n_{+2k}	n_{+3k}	...	n_{+Tk}	n_{++k}

The *SMD* statistic was calculated using the equation:

$$SMD = \sum_k p_{Fk} m_{Fk} - \sum_k p_{Fk} m_{Rk} ,$$

where the proportion of focal group members who were at the k^{th} ability stratification was found by:

$$p_{Fk} = \frac{n_{F+k}}{n_{F++}} ,$$

the mean item score for the focal group at the k^{th} stratification was calculated using:

$$m_{Fk} = \frac{\sum_T y_T n_{FTk}}{n_{RTk}} ,$$

and the mean item score for the reference group was determined from:

$$m_{Rk} = \frac{\sum_T y_T n_{RTk}}{n_{RTk}} .$$

One of three severity classification categories was then assigned (i.e., A, B, or C). Appendix 18 provides rules for classification.

A summary of DIF results for field-test items across the seven grade 10 SBA forms is presented in Appendix 19.

ITEM BANK MAINTENANCE

Following field-test item calibration and analysis, the item bank was then updated with the new item information. Selected field-test items were then made available for Data Review Committee final appraisal. Once approved, the operational portion of subsequent forms could be constructed from the calibrated item bank.

CHAPTER 8: SCALE SCORES & PROFICIENCY LEVELS

OVERVIEW

To ensure that student proficiency results for each grade are reported on a common standard score scale, EED provides a unique scale score conversion system for each SBA assessment. In this system, raw scores are converted to a logistic metric. Logit measures are then transformed into scale scores. Scale scores are intended to make scores more meaningful by defining a scale of measurement that is not tied to a particular test form. The scales across all content areas and grades have a maximum of 600 and a minimum of 100, with the proficient cut score fixed to 300.

DESCRIPTION OF SCORES

Raw Score

The basic summary statistic on all SBA assessments is the raw score. A raw score is reported for each examinee in mathematics, reading, and writing. The raw score is the number of multiple-choice (MC) items answered correctly plus the number of points earned on constructed-response (CR) items on a content-area assessment. By itself, the raw score has limited utility; it can only be interpreted in reference to the total number of items on a content-area assessment, and raw scores should not be compared across tests or administrations.

Scale Score

Given that a particular raw score may not represent the same skill level on every test form, all statewide assessment score reports include scale scores. Scale scores are statistical conversions of raw scores that adjust for slight shifts in item difficulties and permit valid comparisons across all test administrations within a particular content area and grade.

When new test forms are developed, the new set of items will require slightly different levels of content-area skill to answer correctly. This depends on the difficulty of the specific questions used on each form. To be fair to students and to permit valid comparison of test scores across administrations, the skills represented by each score point must remain consistent from year to year.

As noted previously, scale scores adjust for slight shifts in underlying difficulty levels at each score point and provide valid points of comparison across all test administrations within a particular grade and content area. With scale scores, schools can reasonably compare the demonstrated knowledge and performance of groups of students across years.

Comparability of Scale Scores Across Grades

Through the process described in the previous section, the standards for Proficient were established to have consistent interpretation from grade to grade. The logit measures that defined the Proficient cut score for each content area and grade was thus defined to be a scale score of 300. As a result, a student who receives a scale score of 300 at each grade is making progress from grade to grade that is the same as the difference in the standards for Proficient across those two grades.

Further, the relationship between the logit measures and the scale scores was established so that the standard deviation of scale scores would be 75 on average across all the grades in the baseline year. In subsequent years, the standard deviation of the logit measures varies from grade to grade. Therefore the standard deviation of student scale scores is higher than 75 at some grades and less than that amount at others. In this administration, across all grades and content areas, the standard deviation of the scale scores ranged from a low of 66.66 for grade 8 reading to a high of 89.00 for grade 4 writing.

As a result, the interpretation of scale scores is the same for all grades and content areas in the following context: a scale score of 225, for example, means that the student scored approximately one standard deviation below the standard for Proficient. If that same student had a scale score of 250 in that subject at the next grade (meaning the student now is approximately 0.67 standard deviations below the standard for Proficient), the student is now closer to the standard of Proficient at this grade than he/she was the year previously to the standard for Proficient at the lower grade. Restated, a higher scale score at one grade than another means that the student is achieving better relative to the standard for Proficient at the higher grade.

TRANSFORMATIONS

Student measures were transformed mathematically to a more convenient metric. The minimum scale scores necessary for each proficiency level are provided in Tables 8–1 through 8–3. Tables 8–4 through 8–6 provide the equations used for each transformation. These equations were applied to the overall test as well as to each subscale reporting category.

Table 8–1. Mathematics Raw and Scale Score Cutpoints for Each Proficiency Level

Grade	Raw Score Cutpoint			Below Proficient		Proficient		Advanced	
	Below Proficient	Proficient	Advanced	SS Cut	SSSE	SS Cut	SSSE	SS Cut	SSSE
3	26	34	52	263	17	300	17	390	21
4	27	35	51	260	18	300	18	383	22
5	24	35	50	252	17	300	16	373	19
6	27	37	52	258	17	300	17	376	21
7	26	38	53	248	17	300	17	383	22
8	28	37	52	258	17	300	17	379	21
9	30	40	53	258	16	300	17	370	21
10	16	22	33	252	22	300	21	392	26

Table 8–2. Reading Raw and Scale Score Cutpoints for Each Proficiency Level

Grade	Raw Score Cutpoint			Below Proficient		Proficient		Advanced	
	Below Proficient	Proficient	Advanced	SS Cut	SSSE	SS Cut	SSSE	SS Cut	SSSE
3	16	24	44	261	18	300	16	392	18
4	17	25	47	260	19	300	18	415	21
5	15	24	48	251	19	300	17	418	20
6	16	30	48	234	19	300	17	394	21
7	17	27	47	246	20	300	19	406	22
8	16	26	44	243	20	300	18	402	21
9	15	28	44	229	20	300	18	382	20
10	28	45	62	222	18	300	18	400	25

Table 8–3. Writing Raw and Scale Score Cutpoints for Each Proficiency Level

Grade	Raw Score Cutpoint			Below Proficient		Proficient		Advanced	
	Below Proficient	Proficient	Advanced	SS Cut	SSSE	SS Cut	SSSE	SS Cut	SSSE
3	13	28	48	218	20	300	17	402	21
4	13	28	47	204	24	300	21	420	26
5	12	31	48	187	23	300	19	406	24
6	18	33	47	215	22	300	21	396	26
7	19	31	51	234	19	300	18	423	26
8	20	32	53	232	20	300	19	460	30
9	20	32	54	238	20	300	19	470	32
10	21	31	46	233	20	300	23	485	42

Table 8–4. Equations Used for Each Transformation in Mathematics

Grade	Conversion Equation	Logit Cuts		
		BP	P	A
3	Scale Score = (61.9835 x Logit) + 291.0799	-0.4508	0.1358	1.6023
4	Scale Score = (66.9643 x Logit) + 280.6843	-0.3091	0.2810	1.5209
5	Scale Score = (61.9835 x Logit) + 283.6666	-0.5175	0.2554	1.4354
6	Scale Score = (63.0252 x Logit) + 282.7344	-0.3923	0.2660	1.4826
7	Scale Score = (64.1026 x Logit) + 288.3632	-0.6263	0.1737	1.4709
8	Scale Score = (63.5593 x Logit) + 277.1580	-0.3074	0.3515	1.6095
9	Scale Score = (63.0252 x Logit) + 275.7762	-0.2816	0.3764	1.5009
10	Scale Score = (58.1395 x Logit) + 274.5000	-0.3861	0.4300	2.0123

Table 8–5. Equations Used for Each Transformation in Reading

Grade	Conversion Equation	Logit Cuts		
		BP	P	A
3	Scale Score = (57.6923 x Logit) + 311.5058	-0.8672	-0.2081	1.3915
4	Scale Score = (64.1026 x Logit) + 308.1343	-0.7534	-0.1347	1.6742
5	Scale Score = (61.9835 x Logit) + 314.7427	-1.0230	-0.2459	1.6635
6	Scale Score = (61.9835 x Logit) + 298.1758	-1.0297	0.0214	1.5498
7	Scale Score = (68.8073 x Logit) + 307.7720	-0.8924	-0.1202	1.4297
8	Scale Score = (65.7895 x Logit) + 306.6157	-0.9669	-0.1082	1.4532
9	Scale Score = (65.2174 x Logit) + 302.9500	-1.1337	-0.0529	1.2131
10	Scale Score = (70.0935 x Logit) + 251.6402	-0.4299	0.6828	2.1200

Table 8–6. Equations Used for Each Transformation in Writing

Grade	Conversion Equation	Logit Cuts		
		BP	P	A
3	Scale Score = (61.4754 x Logit) + 309.6745	-1.4902	-0.1655	1.4982
4	Scale Score = (73.5294 x Logit) + 309.6277	-1.4319	-0.1377	1.4958
5	Scale Score = (67.5676 x Logit) + 289.1747	-1.5169	0.1528	1.7239
6	Scale Score = (73.5294 x Logit) + 281.3051	-0.9032	0.2475	1.5653
7	Scale Score = (65.2174 x Logit) + 284.0147	-0.7680	0.2374	2.1252
8	Scale Score = (67.5676 x Logit) + 288.0692	-0.8368	0.1692	2.5389
9	Scale Score = (67.5676 x Logit) + 274.6686	-0.5415	0.3675	2.8945
10	Scale Score = (68.1818 x Logit) + 252.9795	-0.2972	0.6823	3.3982

Complete raw-to-scale score tables are provided in Appendix 16.

SCALE SCORE SUMMARY STATISTICS

Table 8–7 includes scale score descriptive information for each overall content-area test by grade. Subscale descriptive statistics can be found in Appendix 20. Histograms of the overall test scale scores are also provided in Figures 8–1 to 8–24. It should be noted that the spikes in the histograms occur when two raw score points fall in the same scale score range represented by the bar.

Table 8–7. Content-Area Scale Score Information

Grade	Statistic	Spring 2010 SBA		
		Mathematics	Reading	Writing
3	Mean	361.05	368.59	361.38
	Standard Error of Mean	0.79	0.73	0.85
	Median	360.00	370.00	364.00
	Mode	412	436	449
	Standard Deviation	78.15	72.37	83.55
4	Mean	356.57	375.35	377.50
	Standard Error of Mean	0.81	0.79	0.90
	Median	356.00	380.00	381.00
	Mode	420	424	419
	Standard Deviation	79.66	78.19	89.00
5	Mean	359.13	375.66	357.80
	Standard Error of Mean	0.79	0.75	0.81
	Median	356.00	379.00	358.00
	Mode	451	440	401
	Standard Deviation	77.71	73.45	79.88
6	Mean	352.14	367.61	355.65
	Standard Error of Mean	0.79	0.76	0.91
	Median	350.00	373.00	356.00
	Mode	387	422	413
	Standard Deviation	76.59	73.72	87.61
7	Mean	345.74	375.67	346.30
	Standard Error of Mean	0.81	0.78	0.77
	Median	346.00	379.00	345.00
	Mode	431	397	376
	Standard Deviation	78.48	75.05	74.49
8	Mean	341.61	374.66	347.93
	Standard Error of Mean	0.78	0.69	0.80
	Median	340.00	378.00	349.00
	Mode	362	397	391
	Standard Deviation	75.60	66.66	76.96
9	Mean	332.10	373.82	351.68
	Standard Error of Mean	0.78	0.74	0.80
	Median	325.00	373.00	354.00
	Mode	416	428	389
	Standard Deviation	75.96	71.53	77.59
10	Mean	323.93	355.72	339.69
	Standard Error of Mean	0.76	0.79	0.74
	Median	319.00	358.00	334.00
	Mode	311	420	343
	Standard Deviation	72.18	74.84	70.60

Figure 8–1. Grade 3 Mathematics Scale Score Frequencies

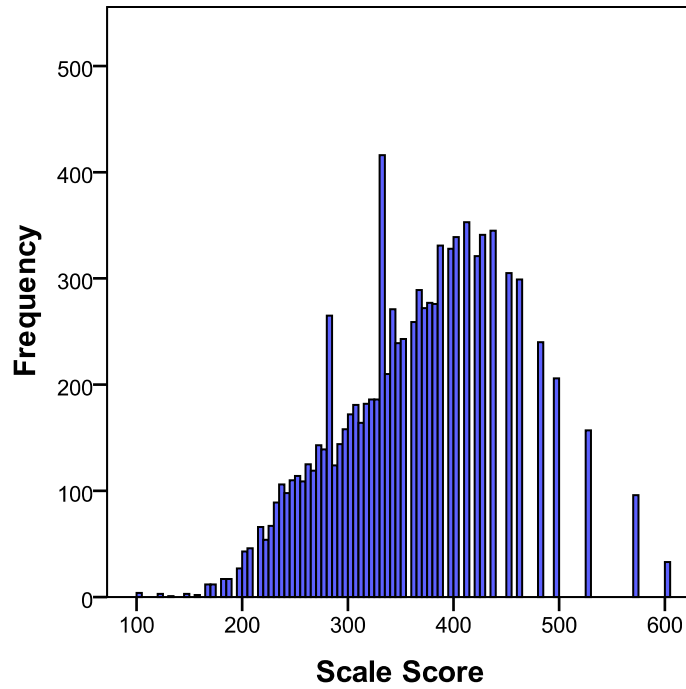


Figure 8–2. Grade 4 Mathematics Scale Score Frequencies

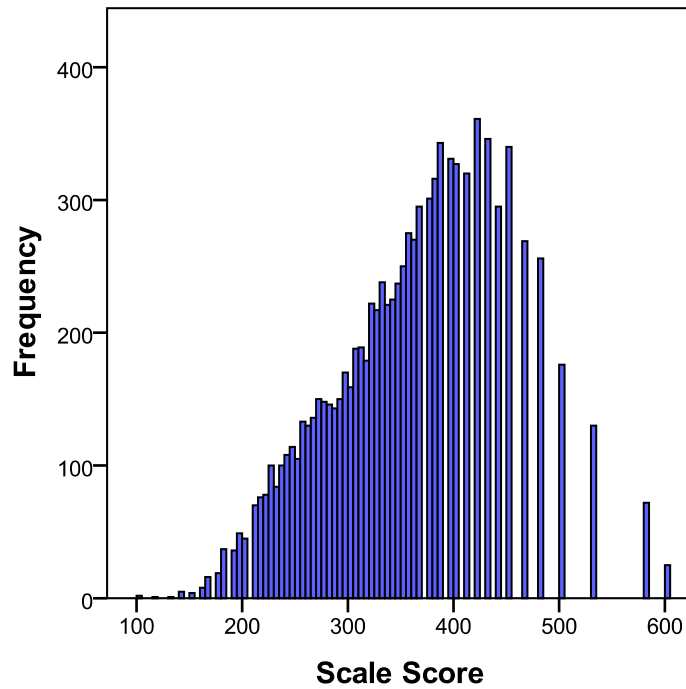


Figure 8–3. Grade 5 Mathematics Scale Score Frequencies

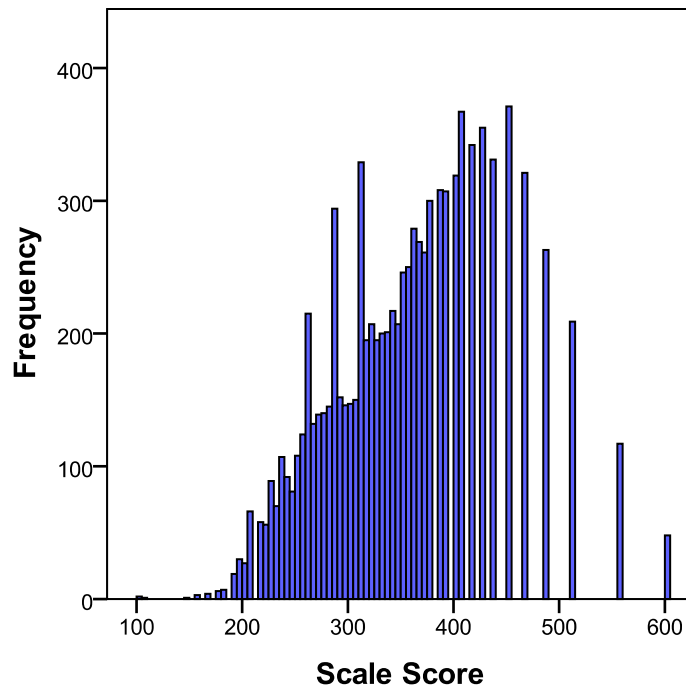


Figure 8–4. Grade 6 Mathematics Scale Score Frequencies

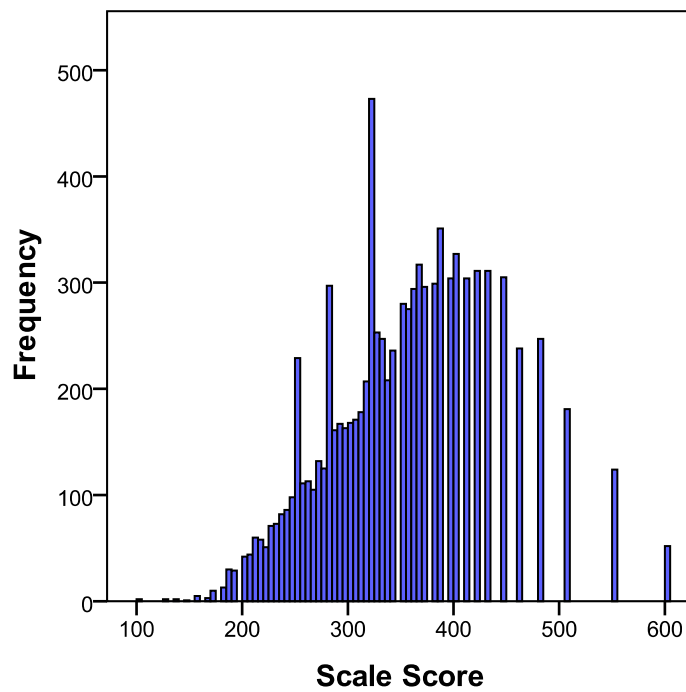


Figure 8–5. Grade 7 Mathematics Scale Score Frequencies

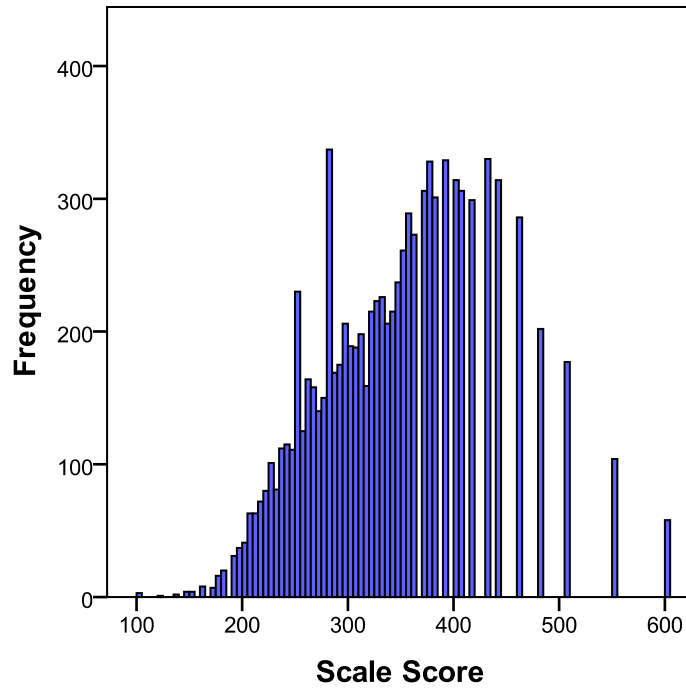


Figure 8–6. Grade 8 Mathematics Scale Score Frequencies

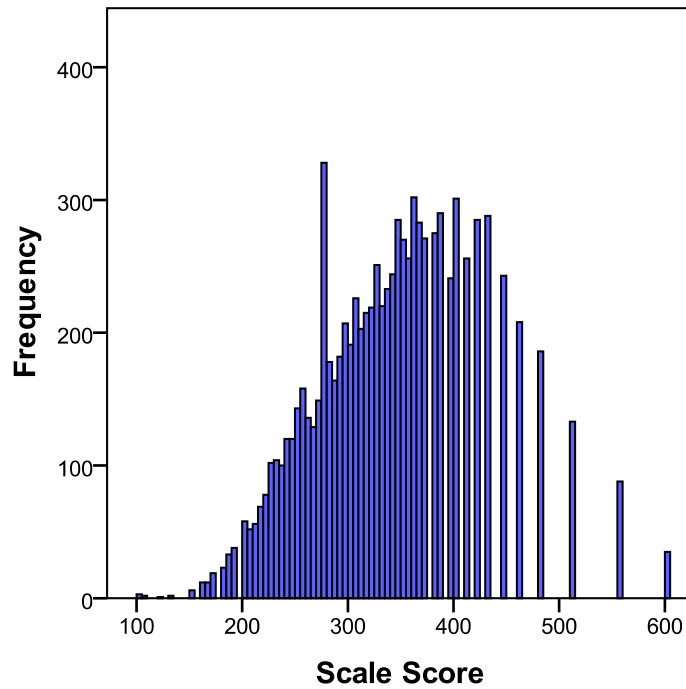


Figure 8–7. Grade 9 Mathematics Scale Score Frequencies

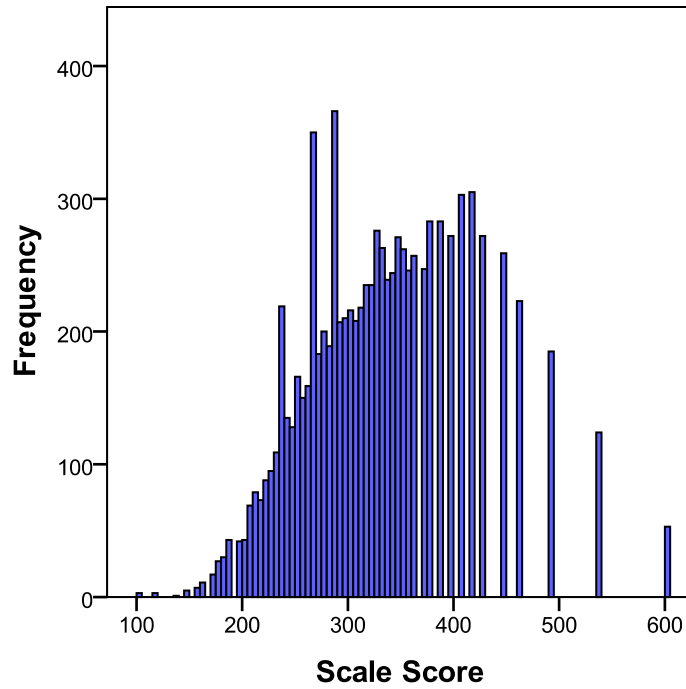


Figure 8–8. Grade 10 Mathematics Scale Score Frequencies

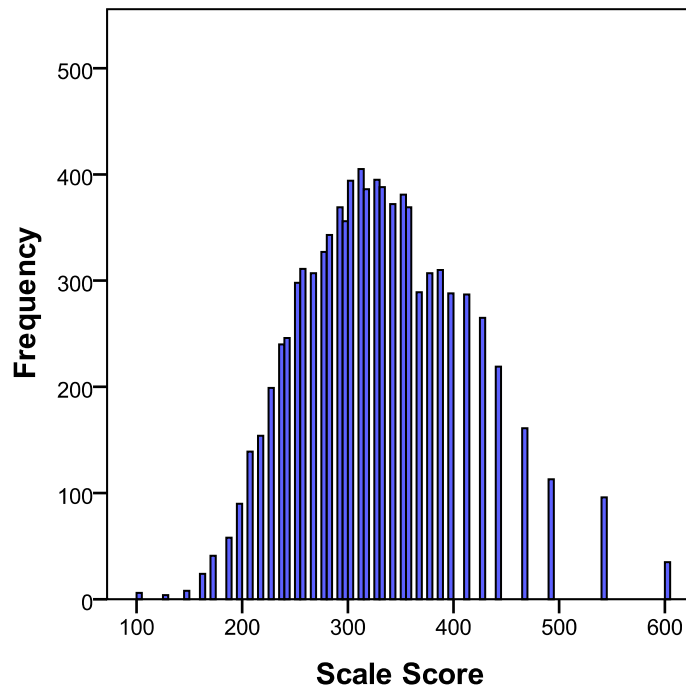


Figure 8–9. Grade 3 Reading Scale Score Frequencies

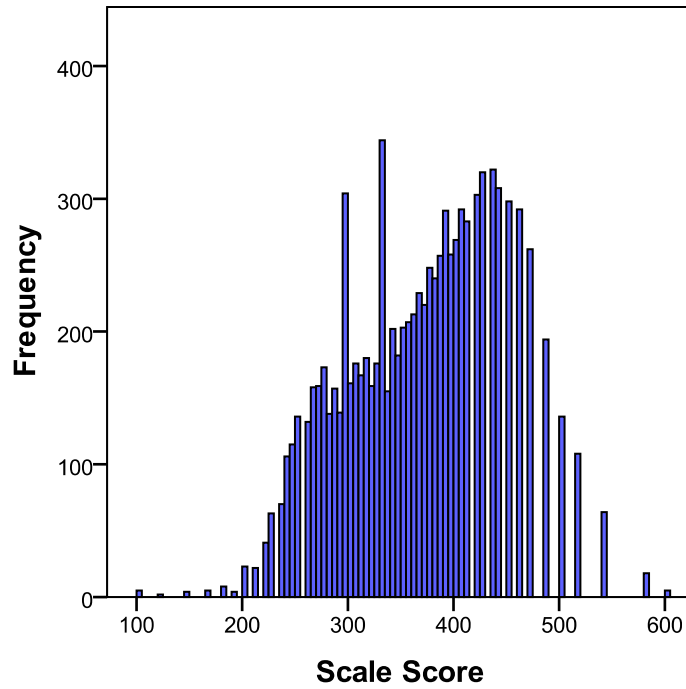


Figure 8–10. Grade 4 Reading Scale Score Frequencies

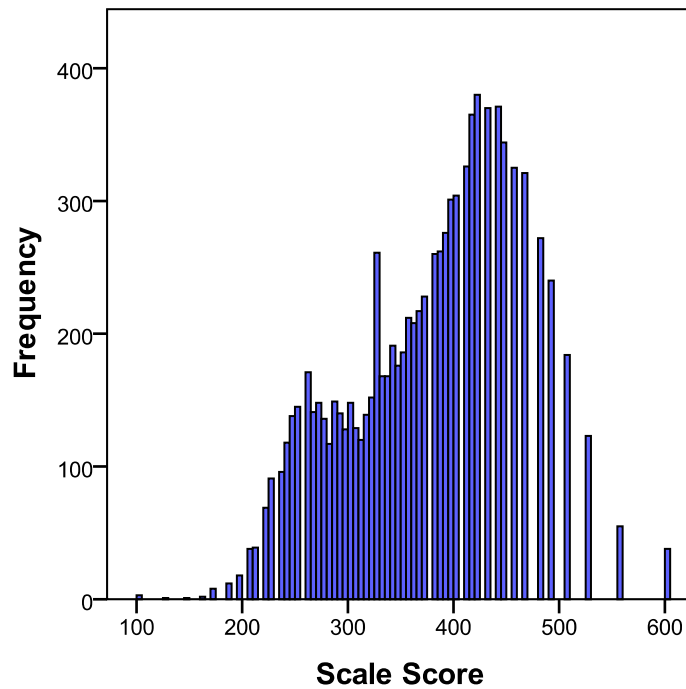


Figure 8–11. Grade 5 Reading Scale Score Frequencies

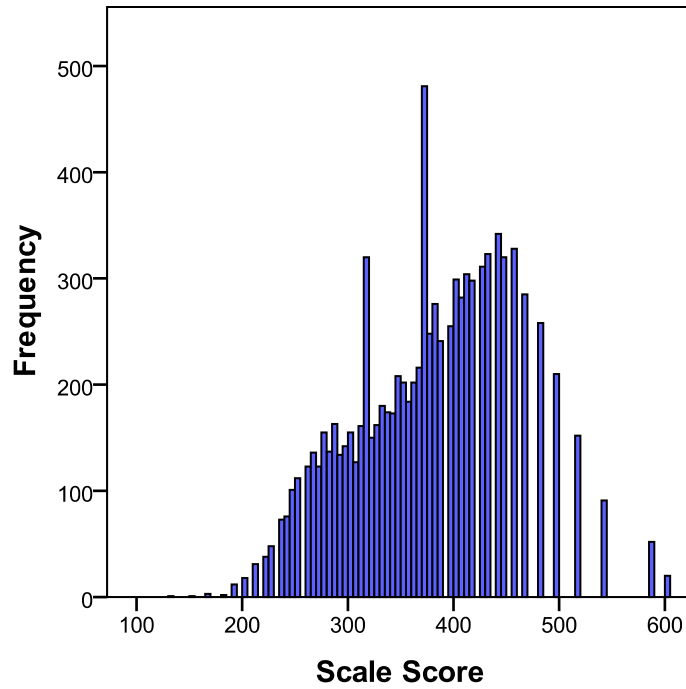


Figure 8–12. Grade 6 Reading Scale Score Frequencies

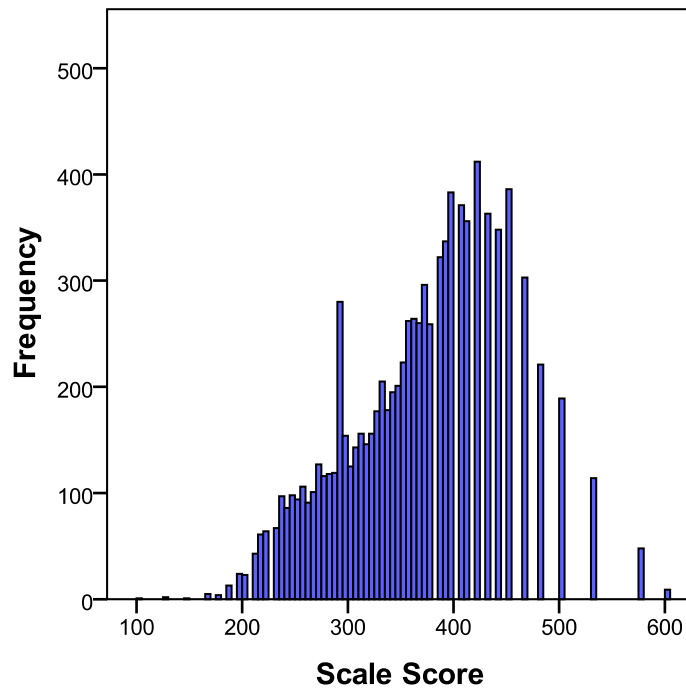


Figure 8–13. Grade 7 Reading Scale Score Frequencies

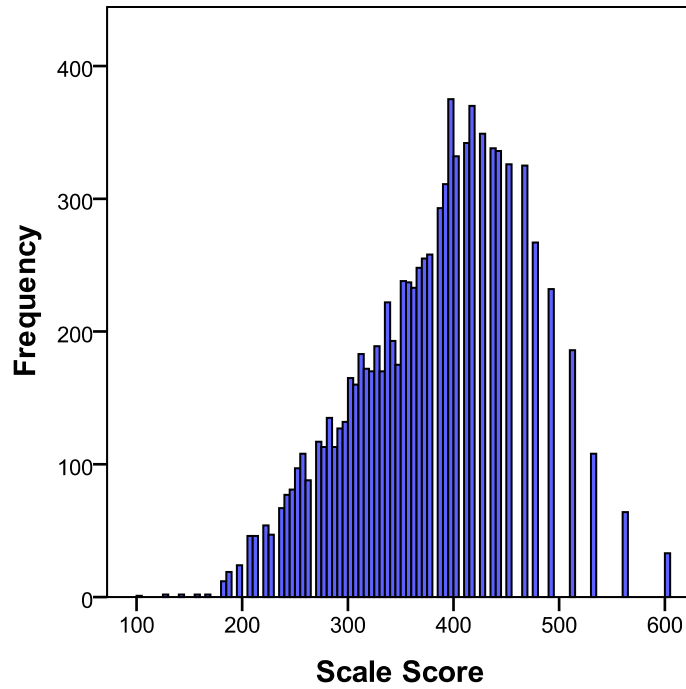


Figure 8–14. Grade 8 Reading Scale Score Frequencies

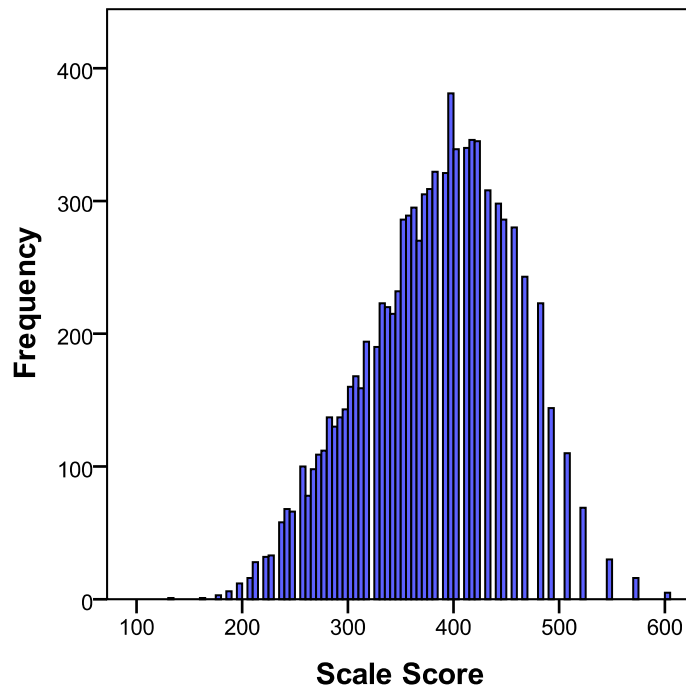


Figure 8–15. Grade 9 Reading Scale Score Frequencies

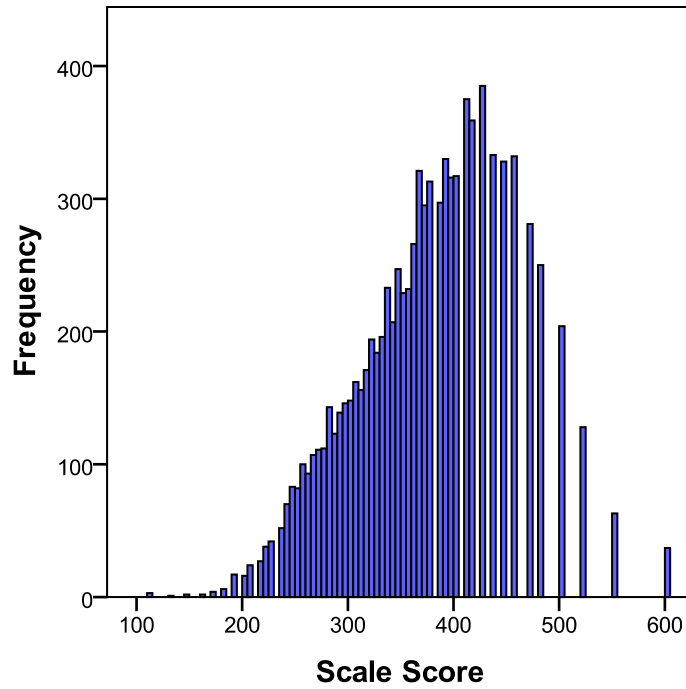


Figure 8–16. Grade 10 Reading Scale Score Frequencies

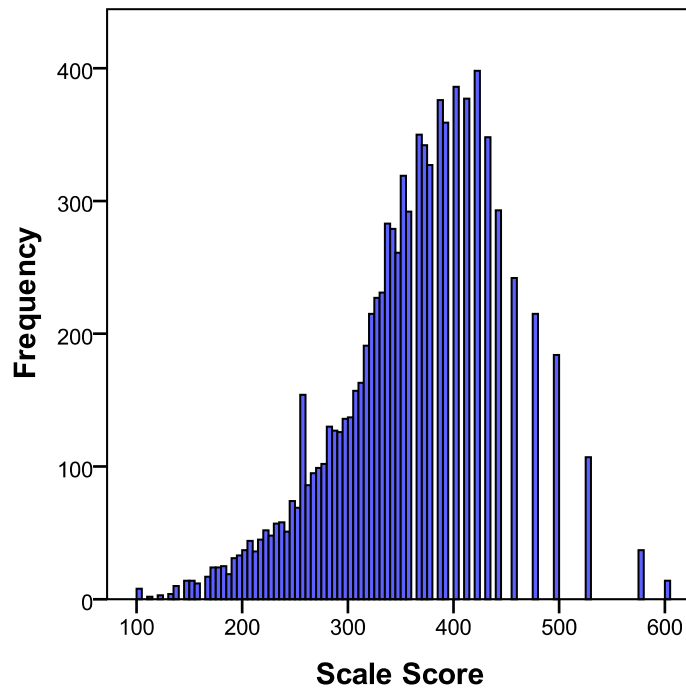


Figure 8–17. Grade 3 Writing Scale Score Frequencies

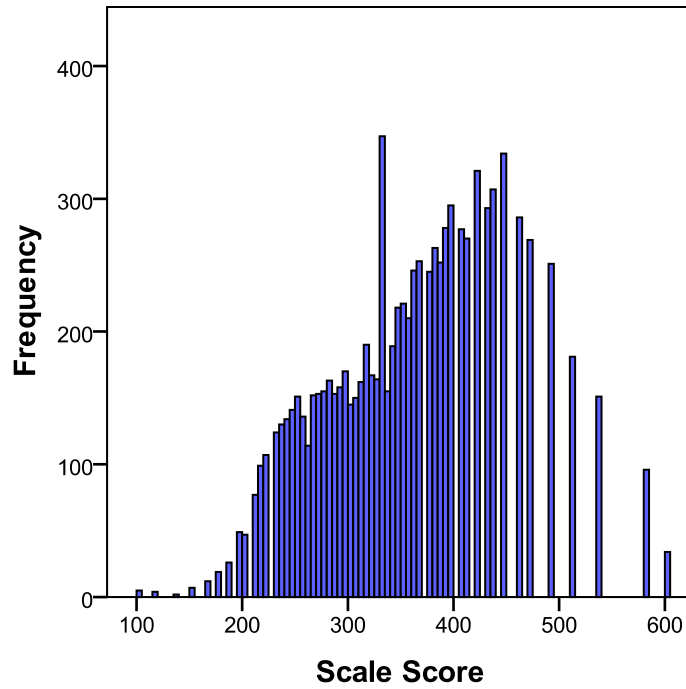


Figure 8–18. Grade 4 Writing Scale Score Frequencies

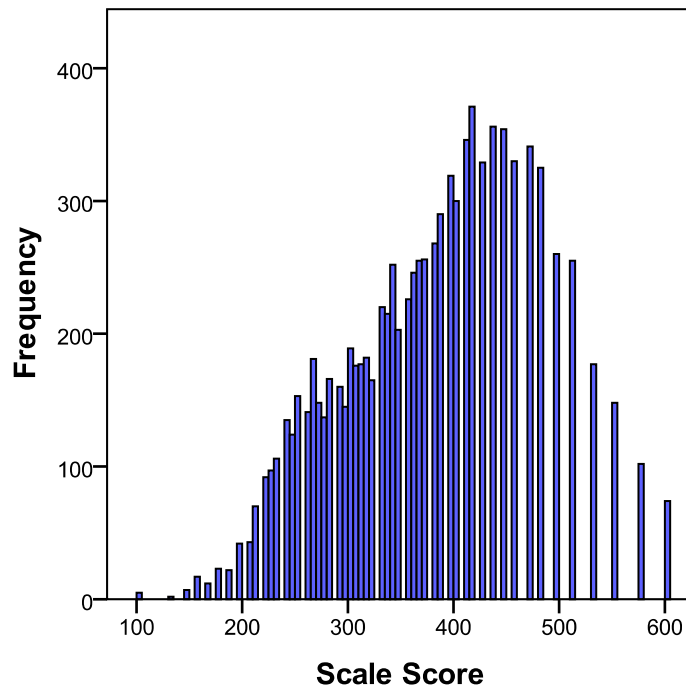


Figure 8–19. Grade 5 Writing Scale Score Frequencies

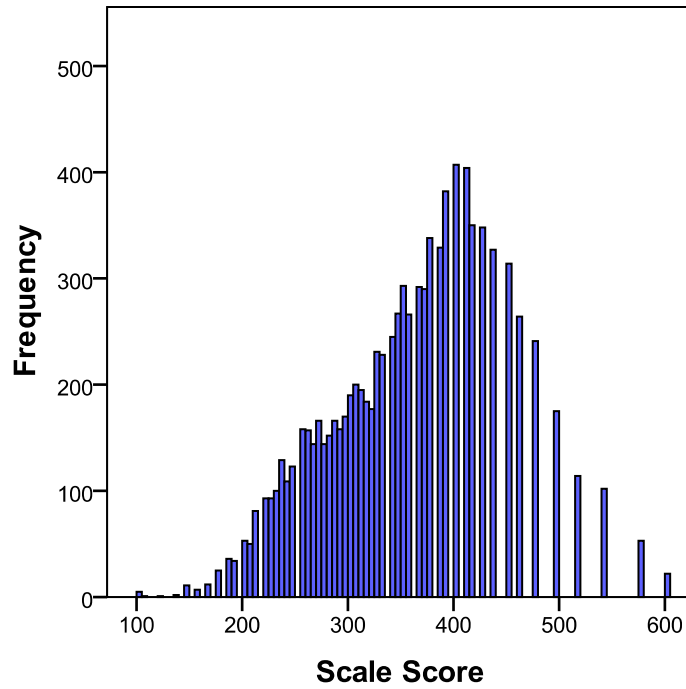


Figure 8–20. Grade 6 Writing Scale Score Frequencies

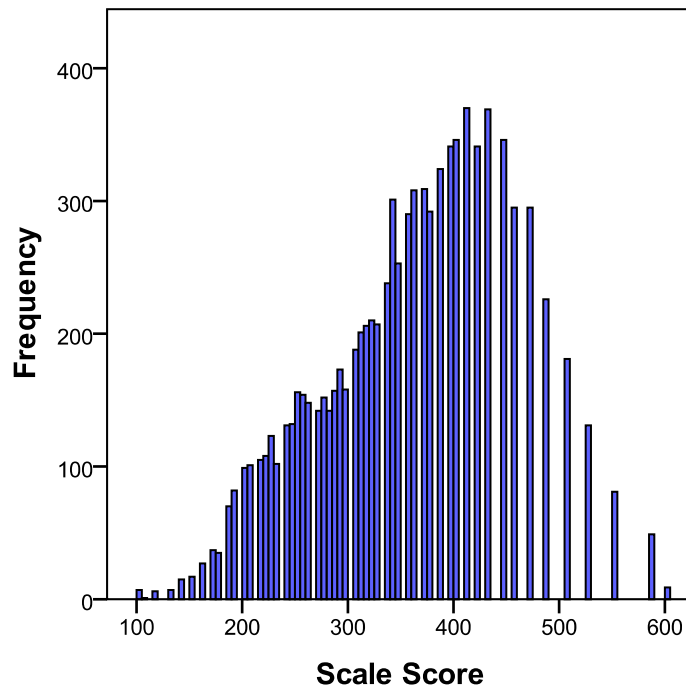


Figure 8–21. Grade 7 Writing Scale Score Frequencies

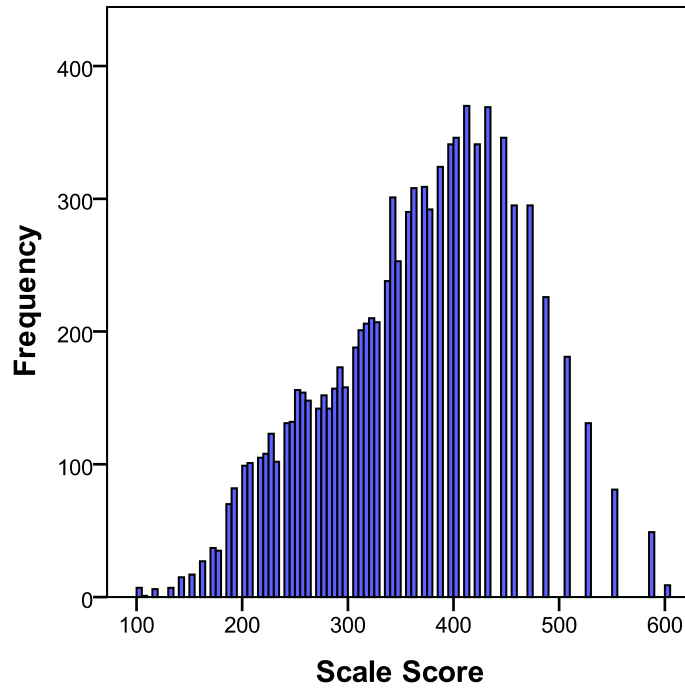


Figure 8–22. Grade 8 Writing Scale Score Frequencies

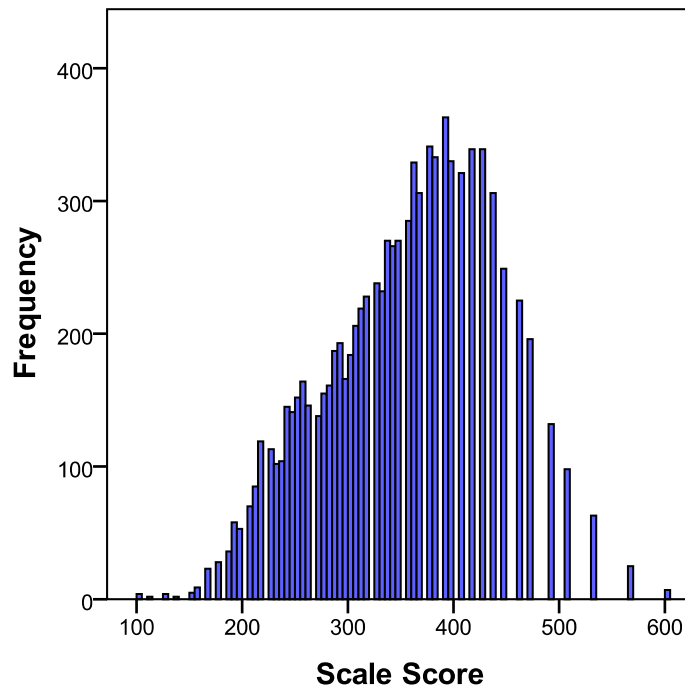


Figure 8–23. Grade 9 Writing Scale Score Frequencies

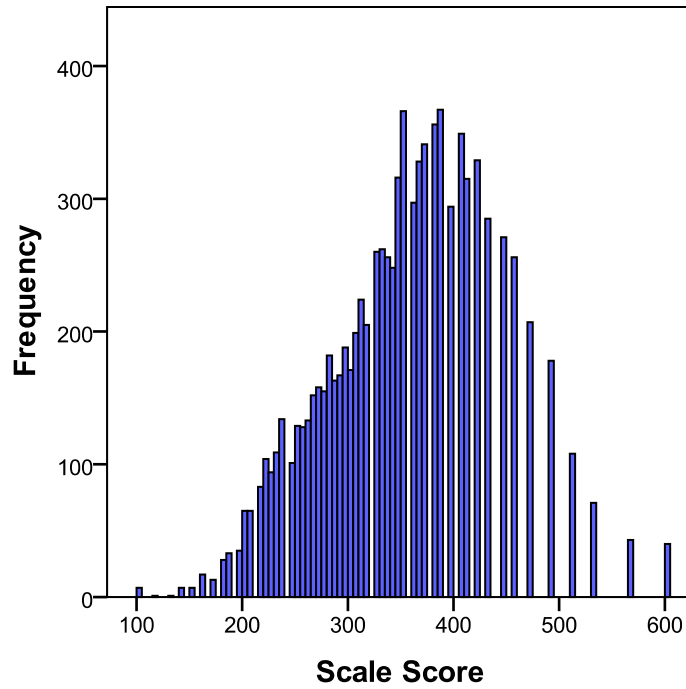
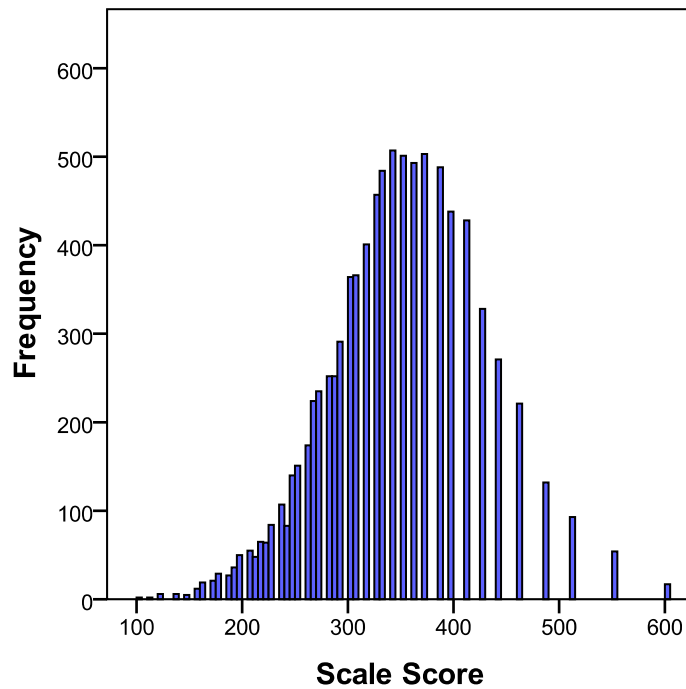


Figure 8–24. Grade 10 Writing Scale Score Frequencies



PROFICIENCY LEVELS

Information from the SBA is used to determine whether adequate yearly progress has been met in each school and district. Alaska has four levels of achievement on the SBA tests: Far Below Proficient (FBP), Below Proficient (BP), Proficient (P), and Advanced (A).

Scale score cutpoints at each level of proficiency are the same each year. Appendix 21 provides detailed information about the proficiency level as well as the Proficiency Level Definitions and Descriptors in each grade and content area tested.

Table 8–8 provides the distribution of students in each of the proficiency levels for all grades and content areas.

Table 8–8. Student Distribution of the Four Proficiency Levels

Grade	Level	Mathematics		Reading		Writing	
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
3	Far Below Proficient	1125	11.56	736	7.58	347	3.57
	Below Proficient	1092	11.22	1228	12.65	2141	22.05
	Proficient	4154	42.68	4010	41.31	4150	42.75
	Advanced	3363	34.55	3732	38.45	3070	31.62
4	Far Below Proficient	1191	12.23	779	8.01	130	1.34
	Below Proficient	1173	12.05	1130	11.61	1898	19.50
	Proficient	3782	38.84	4432	45.55	4656	47.83
	Advanced	3591	36.88	3388	34.82	3051	31.34
5	Far Below Proficient	827	8.59	404	4.20	100	1.04
	Below Proficient	1487	15.45	1225	12.74	2280	23.73
	Proficient	3092	32.12	5000	51.98	4514	46.98
	Advanced	4219	43.83	2990	31.08	2714	28.25
6	Far Below Proficient	991	10.63	308	3.31	504	5.42
	Below Proficient	1374	14.74	1587	17.06	2083	22.41
	Proficient	3603	38.65	3905	41.98	3668	39.47
	Advanced	3354	35.98	3503	37.65	3039	32.70
7	Far Below Proficient	972	10.39	401	4.28	634	6.78
	Below Proficient	1854	19.81	1111	11.86	1950	20.86
	Proficient	3513	37.54	4579	48.88	5484	58.67
	Advanced	3020	32.27	3276	34.97	1279	13.68

Table 8–8 (continued). Student Distribution of the Four Proficiency Levels

Grade	Level	Mathematics		Reading		Writing	
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
8	Far Below Proficient	1311	14.12	258	2.78	713	7.70
	Below Proficient	1473	15.87	1110	11.95	1852	19.99
	Proficient	3669	39.53	4539	48.86	5954	64.26
	Advanced	2829	30.48	3382	36.41	746	8.05
9	Far Below Proficient	1543	16.44	182	1.93	669	7.12
	Below Proficient	1864	19.86	1361	14.43	1790	19.04
	Proficient	3170	33.77	3554	37.68	6295	66.96
	Advanced	2809	29.93	4335	45.96	647	6.88
10	Far Below Proficient	1507	16.78	402	4.48	531	5.91
	Below Proficient	2013	22.42	1464	16.31	1909	21.24
	Proficient	3996	44.50	4509	50.23	6250	69.55
	Advanced	1464	16.30	2601	28.98	296	3.29

CHAPTER 9: TEST VALIDITY & RELIABILITY

INTRODUCTION

Validity is the process of collecting evidence to support inferences from the use of the scores derived from the assessment process. Evidence on content validity of the spring 2010 SBA is presented in terms of how the assessments were assembled to reflect the EED-prescribed blueprints that in turn reflect state content standards in each grade and content area.

Reliability is defined as the consistency of measures. The ability to measure consistently is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for making valid interpretations of the results.

VALIDITY

Content/Curricular

The SBA is a criterion-referenced assessment. This assessment is based on an extensive definition of the content it assesses. Therefore, the SBAs are content-based and aligned directly to the Alaska statewide content standards and should demonstrate good content validity. Content validity addresses whether the test adequately samples the relevant material it purports to cover.

Relation to Statewide Content Standards

From the inception of the SBAs, a committee of educators, item-development experts, assessment experts, and EED staff have met to review new and field-tested items. A sequential review process has been put in place by EED. This provides many opportunities for these professionals to offer suggestions for improving or eliminating items as well as offer insights into the interpretation of the statewide content standards for the SBAs. These review committees participate in this process to ensure test content validity of the SBAs.

In addition to providing information on the difficulty, appropriateness, and fairness of these items, committee members provide a needed check on the alignment between the items and the content standards they are intended to measure. When items are judged relevant, that is, representative of the content defined by the standards, this judgment provides evidence to support the validity of inferences made (regarding knowledge of this content) with SBA results. When items are judged to be unacceptable for any reason, the committee can either suggest revisions (e.g., reclassification, rewording) or elect to eliminate the item from the field-test item pool. Items that are approved by the review committee are later embedded in operational SBA forms to allow for the collection of performance data. In essence, these committees review and verify the alignment of the test items with the objectives and measurement specifications to ensure that the items measure appropriate content. The nature and specificity of these review procedures provide strong evidence for the content validity of the SBAs.

Educator Input

For the spring 2010 SBAs, Alaska educators provided valuable input on the alignment of the items and the statewide content standards during item development. Items were written specifically to measure the objectives and specifications of the content standards for the SBAs. Because many different people with different backgrounds wrote the items, the process included a built-in system of checks-and-balances for item development and review that reduced single-source bias. This direct input from educators offers evidence regarding the content validity of the SBAs. See Chapter 2 for details regarding the content review process.

Developer Input

EED and DRC staff have a history of test-building experience, including content-related expertise, that they contributed to the spring 2010 forms. The input and review by these assessment professionals provided further support of the item being an accurate measure of the intended objective. Thus, these reviews offer additional evidence for the content validity of the SBAs.

Item to Content Area Match

Expert judgments from educators, test developers, and assessment specialists provide support for the alignment of the SBAs with the statewide content standards. In addition, because expert teachers in the content areas were involved in establishing the content standards, the judgments of these same expert teachers in the review process provide a measure of content validity. A match between the content standards and the components of the SBAs provides evidence that the assessment measures the content standards. A table showing the number of assessment components, tasks, or items matching each content-standard is often used to provide documentation of the content validity of an assessment. The SBA test blueprints provide this documentation. The blueprints for mathematics, reading, and writing are presented in Appendix 1.

Construct Validity

The term construct validity refers to the degree to which the test score is a measure of the educational domain (i.e., construct) of interest. A construct is an individual characteristic that is assumed to exist in order to explain some aspect of behavior (Linn & Gronlund, 1995). When a particular individual characteristic from the assessment results is inferred, a generalization or interpretation of some construct is made. For example, problem solving is a construct. An inference that students who master the mathematical reasoning portion of an assessment are “good problem-solvers” implies an interpretation of the results of the assessment in terms of a construct. To make such an inference, it is important to demonstrate that this is a reasonable and valid use of the results.

Construct-related validity evidence can come from many sources. *The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999) provides the following list of possible sources:

- High intercorrelations among assessment items or tasks attest that the items are measuring the same trait, such as a content objective, sub-domain, or construct.
- Substantial relationships between the assessment results and other measures of the same defined construct.
- Little or no relationship between the assessment results and other measures that are clearly not of the defined construct.
- Substantial relationships between different methods of measurement regarding the same defined construct.
- Relationships to non-assessment measures of the same defined construct.

Evidence of Construct Validity

The collection of construct-related evidence is a continuous and ongoing process. Three indicators of construct validity for the spring 2010 SBAs are item-total correlations, Rasch item fit statistics, and intercorrelations.

Item-Total Correlations

An item-total correlation is the correlation between an item and the total test score, excluding that item score. Conceptually, if an item has a high item-total correlation (i.e., 0.40 or above), it indicates that students who performed well on the test overall usually answered the item correctly and students who performed poorly on the test overall usually answered the item incorrectly. That is, the item did a good job discriminating between high performing and low performing students. Assuming that the total test score represents the extent to which a student possesses the construct being measured by the test, high item-total correlations indicate that the items on the test require knowledge of this construct in order to be answered correctly. Item-total correlations for items on the spring 2010 SBA can be found in Appendix 13. The majority of items have item-total correlations over 0.30 (90% overall and 90% for mathematics, 88% for reading, and 91% for writing for grades 3–10). These high item-total correlations provide evidence for construct validity.

Fit Statistics

In addition to item-total correlations, Rasch fit statistics also provide good evidence of construct validity. The Rasch model requires unidimensional data. Therefore, statistics showing that the items fit the measurement model also provide evidence of construct validity. Fit statistics for the spring 2010 SBAs can be found in Appendix 13. Note that 75% of mathematics item fit statistics, 76% of the reading item fit statistics, and 70% writing item fit statistics for grades 3–10 are less than +5.00, indicating good construct validity.

Intercorrelations

A third indicator of construct validity is the intercorrelations between the content-area total scale scores and the subscale reporting category scale scores. This information is contained in Appendix 22 and is reported by grade. In addition, intercorrelations between the scale scores for the three content area total scale scores are presented.

Validity Evidence for Different Student Populations

The primary evidence for the validity of the SBAs lies in the content and constructs being measured. Because the test assesses the statewide content standards required to be taught to all students, the test should not be more or less valid for use with one subpopulation of students over another subpopulation. In other words, because the SBAs are measuring what is required to be taught to all students and are given under the same standardized conditions to all students, the validity of score interpretations should apply to all students. A summary of student demographic information is presented in Appendix 23 for grades 3–10.

Great care has been taken to ensure that the items comprising the SBAs are fair and representative of the content domain expressed in the content standards. Much scrutiny is applied to the items and their possible impact on minority or other sub-populations making up the population in the state of Alaska. Every effort is made to eliminate items that may have gender, ethnic, or cultural biases. See Chapter 2 for the discussion of how potential item bias is identified.

RELIABILITY

True-score theory considers all measures as having a “true” component and an error component. Errors occur as a natural part of the measurement process and can never be eliminated entirely. For example, uncontrollable factors such as differences in the physical world and changes in examinee disposition may work to increase error and decrease reliability. This is the fundamental premise of true-score reliability analysis and measurement theory. Stated explicitly, this relationship can be seen as the following:

$$X = T + E, \tag{1}$$

where X represents the observed test score, T , the student’s true score, and E , random error.

If the variance of the observed measures is denoted by σ_X^2 and the variance of error by σ_E^2 then the reliability (ρ_{XX}) is given by:

$$\rho_{XX} = \frac{\sigma_X^2 - \sigma_E^2}{\sigma_X^2}. \tag{2}$$

The variance of the observed measures can be estimated from the variance of the raw scores using the usual variance formula and the error variance can be estimated by:

$$\Sigma p(1-p), \tag{3}$$

where p is the proportion correct for each item.

The reliability index used for the 2010 administration of the SBAs was Coefficient Alpha (Cronbach, 1951):

$$\alpha = \left(\frac{k}{k-1} \right) \left(1 - \frac{\sum \sigma_i^2}{\sigma_X^2} \right), \tag{4}$$

where k is the number of items, σ_i^2 is the variance of the set of scores associated with item i , and σ_X^2 is the variance of the set of observed total scores.

Acceptable α values generally range in the high 0.80s to low 0.90s. When there is no error, the reliability index is the true score variance divided by the true score variance, which is one. Appendix 14 provides Coefficient Alpha for each grade/content area combination. As can be seen in the tables, all mathematics, reading, and writing tests for grades 3–9 have Coefficient Alphas over 0.90. Two tests, mathematics and writing for grade 10, have reliability lower than 0.90, but the values are in the high 0.80s. These high α values provide evidence for good reliability. Appendix 24 provides the reliability of the assessments for each subpopulation required by NCLB.

Standard Error of Measurement

The standard error of measurement uses the information from the test along with an estimate of reliability to make statements about the degree to which error is impacting individual scores. The standard error of measurement is based on the premise that underlying traits, such as academic achievement, cannot be measured exactly. The standard error expresses unreliability in terms of the raw score metric. Using the standard error of measurement, an error band can be placed around an individual score indicating the degree to which error might be affecting that score. In true-score test theory, the standard error of measurement can be calculated by:

$$SEM = \sigma_x \sqrt{1 - \rho_{xx}} , \quad (5)$$

where σ_x is the standard deviation of the total test (observed measure scores) and ρ_{xx} is the reliability estimate (Coefficient Alpha) for the test.

The true-score test theory approach to judging a test's consistency can be useful for making overall comparisons between alternate forms. However, it is not very useful for judging the precision with which a specific student's score is known. The Rasch measurement model provides asymptotic standard errors that pertain to each unique ability estimate (i.e., raw score).

Ability estimates from scores near the center of the test are known with greater precision than are abilities associated with extremely high or low scores. The expression for computing the asymptotic standard error via WINSTEPS was provided in Chapter 6. This value is then transformed to the SBA scale to obtain the final *SEM* for each raw score. These values for the spring 2010 SBAs are provided in the raw-to-scale score tables in Appendix 16. In addition, person separation reliability and item separation reliability values, which use these asymptotic standard errors, are provided in Appendix 14. Person separation reliability is the Rasch equivalence of reliability described in Equation 2.

Indicators of Consistency

Criterion-referenced tests are often used to place the examinees into two or more performance classifications. It is thus useful to have some indication of how consistent such classifications are.

Decision Consistency Index

Method I

In a personal communication to DRC from Dr. Huynh Huynh on the DRC/South Carolina project, an extension of the two-parameter beta-binomial model (Huynh, 1976) to polytomous constructed-response items was detailed. This extension was used in these computations. Table 9–1 depicts the general framework of multiple decisions.

Table 9–1. Multiple Decisions—General Framework

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Total
Category 1	p_{11}				$p_{1.}$
Category 2		p_{22}			$p_{2.}$
Category 3			p_{33}		$p_{3.}$
Category 4				p_{44}	$p_{4.}$
Total	$p_{.1}$	$p_{.2}$	$p_{.3}$	$p_{.4}$	$p_{..}$

From this general framework the reliability index can be computed:

$$\kappa = \frac{1 - p}{p - p_c},$$

where $p = p_{..}$,

$$p_c = \sum_i p_i^2,$$

$$p_{11} = \sum_{x,y=c_1}^n f(x, y),$$

and

$$p_{1.} = \sum_{x=c_1}^n f(x).$$

Method II

To solve the problem of a complex assessment, Livingston and Lewis (1995) proposed an effective test length,

$$n = \frac{(\mu_x - X_{\min})(X_{\max} - \mu_x) - r\sigma_x^2}{\sigma_x^2(1 - r)},$$

which transforms the original raw score random variable from $X = 0, \dots, K$ into a new random variable $X' = 0, \dots, n$, where n is the number of dichotomous, locally independent, equally difficult items required to produce a raw score of the same reliability. Then, using the transformed observed distribution X' , parameters are estimated for a four parameter beta-binomial model where the conditional error distribution is assumed to be binomial. The X' distribution is then converted back onto the original X scale using interpolation. This method is designed only to estimate a contingency table, not a full bivariate distribution which means the probability of a consistent decision by chance, and subsequently kappa, cannot be estimated.

The results of both consistency analyses are presented in Table 9–2.

Table 9–2. Decision Consistency Indices

Huynh (1976)					Livingston and Lewis (1995)	
Mathematics						
	4 categories (FBP, BP, P, A)		2 categories (Not Proficient, Proficient)		4 categories (FBP, BP, P, A)	2 categories (Not Proficient, Proficient)
Grade	Consistency Index	κ	Consistency Index	κ	Consistency Index	Consistency Index
3	0.77	0.65	0.92	0.76	0.78	0.93
4	0.75	0.64	0.91	0.76	0.76	0.92
5	0.77	0.66	0.92	0.77	0.77	0.92
6	0.75	0.64	0.91	0.76	0.76	0.91
7	0.75	0.65	0.90	0.77	0.75	0.91
8	0.74	0.63	0.90	0.76	0.74	0.91
9	0.73	0.62	0.89	0.77	0.73	0.90
10	0.66	0.51	0.85	0.68	0.66	0.85
Reading						
	4 categories (FBP, BP, P, A)		2 categories (Not Proficient, Proficient)		4 categories (FBP, BP, P, A)	2 categories (Not Proficient, Proficient)
Grade	Consistency Index	κ	Consistency Index	κ	Consistency Index	Consistency Index
3	0.78	0.67	0.92	0.76	0.79	0.93
4	0.79	0.67	0.93	0.76	0.78	0.94
5	0.80	0.67	0.93	0.75	0.80	0.94
6	0.79	0.67	0.92	0.75	0.78	0.93
7	0.78	0.65	0.93	0.73	0.78	0.93
8	0.77	0.62	0.92	0.68	0.78	0.93
9	0.78	0.65	0.93	0.72	0.79	0.93
10	0.77	0.64	0.91	0.73	0.75	0.92

Table 9–2 (continued). Decision Consistency Indices

		Huynh (1976)			Livingston and Lewis (1995)		
		Writing					
		4 categories (FBP, BP, P, A)		2 categories (Not Proficient, Proficient)		4 categories (FBP, BP, P, A)	2 categories (Not Proficient, Proficient)
Grade	Consistency Index	κ	Consistency Index	κ	Consistency Index	Consistency Index	
3	0.80	0.70	0.92	0.79	0.79	0.92	
4	0.79	0.66	0.91	0.73	0.78	0.92	
5	0.78	0.66	0.90	0.74	0.77	0.91	
6	0.75	0.63	0.89	0.74	0.75	0.91	
7	0.77	0.61	0.89	0.73	0.75	0.90	
8	0.79	0.60	0.89	0.73	0.78	0.91	
9	0.80	0.61	0.89	0.73	0.78	0.90	
10	0.76	0.50	0.85	0.62	0.79	0.87	

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