



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



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PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Mike Flanagan

DATE: April 23, 2007

SUBJECT: **APPROVAL OF PROPOSED PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR
MI-ACCESS PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORTED INDEPENDENCE
V1.5 ASSESSMENTS**

The purpose of this State Board of Education item is to present the tentative performance standards that were recommended for the new MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence Version 1.5 (P/SI v1.5) assessments. MI-Access is Michigan's alternate assessment program for students with significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to participate in the MEAP or MME assessments.

Standard setting took place on May 2 and 3, 2007. The procedures used to set the performance standards are described in this memorandum, and the results of the standard-setting activities are being presented to the State Board of Education at this meeting. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability's (OEAA) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which is comprised of nationally-recognized measurement and statistics experts, reviewed the procedures used on March 27, 2007. The TAC will review the standard-setting outcomes on May 7, 2007.

In its June 2006 standards and assessment peer review letter, the U.S. Education Department (USED) indicated that the original MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence assessments did not meet all of the required criteria for alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards. In particular, they did not explicitly measure the content areas of English language arts and mathematics. Therefore, in order for the USED to approve these assessments for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability purposes, new assessments needed to be developed and administered during the 2006-2007 school year. The USED also required the MDE to provide a description of the standard-setting process used, a list of the participants involved, and evidence of State Board of Education adoption of the standards.

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In response to the USED letter, the OEAA's Assessment for Students with Disabilities Program developed new MI-Access P/SI ELA and Mathematics assessments (hence the v1.5 notation). These assessments were piloted in fall 2006 and implemented statewide in spring 2007. Once they became operational, new performance standards (cut scores) had to be set for the English language arts and mathematics grades 3-8 and 11 assessments.

The performance standards adopted by the State Board of Education will define the levels of performance students can achieve on Michigan's MI-Access P/SI v1.5 English Language Arts and Mathematics assessments. The three performance levels are labeled as Surpassed the Performance Standard, Attained the Performance Standard, and Emerging Toward the Performance Standard.

Standard-setting activities were carried out for each grade assessed. The goal was to set standards similar to previous ones—if the panelists determined it was appropriate to do so—in order to avoid dramatic changes in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations based on the new performance standards.

Standard setting was carried out by panels of Michigan educators and other Michigan stakeholders working under the direction of the MI-Access contractor and Department staff. Each panel spent two days reviewing the assessment instrument(s) assigned to it, with members individually judging the level of student performance needed to achieve each of the three performance levels. Panelists discussed their opinions with each other and repeated the judgment process up to three times, with additional performance information being provided during each round.

Panelists made their final judgments individually, and the resulting recommendations represent a compilation of these individual judgments. At the end of the process, panelists were also asked to indicate their level of confidence in the standards that they set and the processes used to set them. A summary of their responses are being presented, along with the results of the standard setting process, to the State Board of Education at this meeting.

A detailed description of the standard-setting process is provided in Attachment A. A summary of the results of the MI-Access P/SI v1.5 standard-setting process in terms of recommended cut scores (Attachment B), and a summary of the panelists' evaluation of the MI-Access performance standard-setting process (Attachment C) will be provided at the May 8 State Board of Education meeting.

The result of this effort is that each panel recommended performance standards for each assessment, grade level, and content area. The panel recommendations then went to the OEAA TAC for review, and now the performance standards are being presented to the State Board of Education for discussion and approval.

It is recommended that the State Board of Education approve the recommended performance standards for the MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence v1.5 assessments, and direct staff to use these performance standards in reporting the 2006-2007 results for each of these MI-Access assessments.

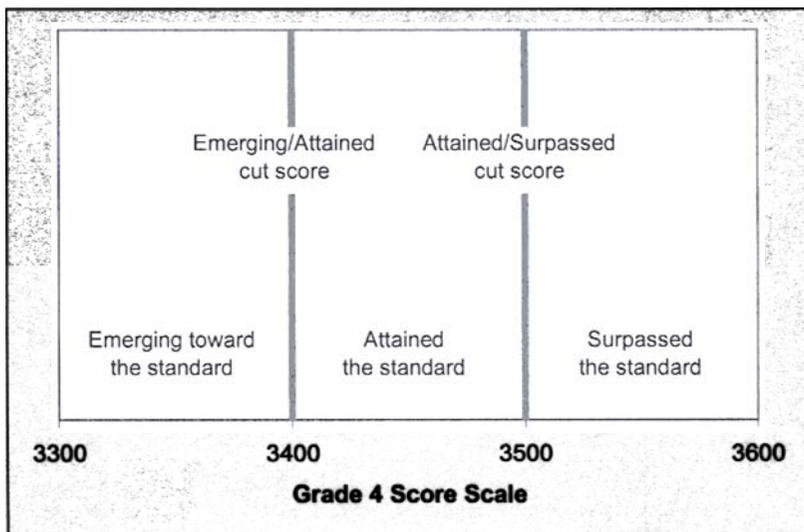
Overview of the MI-Access Performance Standards

This attachment describes the process used to set standards on the MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence v1.5 (P/SI v1.5) English Language Arts and Mathematics assessments. A complete standard-setting technical report is available upon request.

Currently, MI-Access, Michigan’s Alternate Assessment Program, which is designed for students with significant cognitive disability (SWD), is comprised of three types of assessments: (1) Functional Independence assessments for students with mild cognitive disabilities, (2) Supported Independence assessments for students with moderate cognitive disabilities, and (3) Participation assessments for students with severe cognitive disabilities. All three of these current alternate assessments are based on alternate achievement standards.

For Functional Independence, standards were set for the English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics grades 3-8 and 11 assessments during 2005/2006. There are three performance levels students can achieve, which are defined by two cut scores as shown in Figure 1. For Functional Independence, the cut score between Emerging Toward the Standard and Attained the Standard is defined as $3000+(x*100)$ for grade x. For P/SI v1.5, the same type of cut scores are used, but the score scale is defined in a different manner in order to be consistent with the unique characteristics of these assessments.

Figure 1. Cut Scores and Performance Levels for fourth grade Functional Independence MI-Access scores.



Overview of Standard-Setting

The Panelists

There were four panels – each consisting of between 13 and 15 panel members. At a minimum, up to one-half of each panel consisted of participants from earlier standard-setting sessions for these assessments; the other panel members were new. Panels were established for Participation English Language Arts, Participation Mathematics, Supported Independence English Language Arts, and Supported Independence Mathematics. Each panel reviewed and made cut score recommendations for grades 3-8 and 11.

Panelists were carefully selected to represent the diversity of Michigan teachers and other stakeholders. Care was taken to balance the panels in terms of the grade levels of teachers, ethnicity, gender, income, geographical region, and education. Panelists experienced with the student populations assessed were carefully selected. In addition, panelists with curriculum and assessment expertise were recruited as were community members and parents. Significant efforts were made to recruit from each of these groups to encourage greater diversity.

The Processes

The process used to set cut scores was the same for each content area (English language arts and mathematics) and student population (Participation and Supported Independence). The method used is known as Bookmarking or Item Mapping.

The process depended upon detailed descriptions of student performance, or Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs). These PLDs are required by NCLB and indicate what students at each performance level can do on the assessments.

PLDs for the MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence assessments were developed prior to standard setting through a process involving Michigan stakeholders. The PLDs define the progression of what children can do at each performance level, from one level to the next, and from one grade cluster to the next within each performance level. In other words, the PLDs provided a guide to the MI-Access standard-setting panelists to determine into which performance level students with certain scores fit. The standard-setting panelists used the PLDs to guide their work, but had the prerogative of modifying the PLDs slightly to align them more completely with the content of the assessments.

Bookmarking or Item Mapping

The first activity in Bookmarking was to have panelists take and score their own assessments. In this manner they became intimately acquainted with the assessments both in terms of content and difficulty. Following the assessment, panelists studied the PLDs and the tasks on the assessment that would elicit the knowledge and skills described by the PLDs. Panelists also defined and became familiar with what it would mean to “just attain the standards” and “just surpass the standards.”

After becoming familiar with the PLDs, the panelists engaged in a practice activity that mimicked the activities in which they engaged for standard setting. This familiarized them with the process they would use before they actually made any judgments about student performance.

At this point, panelists were given a booklet of assessment items from a specific grade that had been ordered according to the difficulty of the items, from easiest to hardest, based on actual student performance on those items. The first task of the panelists was to independently determine where students who “just attained the standards” would move from being more likely to respond correctly to an item to being more likely to respond incorrectly to an item. At this point in the booklet, the panelist placed a “bookmark” indicating the point at which he or she judged the transition to be made.

Following the first round of judgments, the panelists were brought back together as a grade-level group to review and discuss the entire set of recommendations made by the panelists, including their rationales for making their judgments. They were also presented with impact data indicating what percentage of students fell into each performance category based upon the mean or median of the group’s recommended cut scores. After the second round of judgments, panelists were given impact data for significant student subgroups (e.g. male/female, black/white). Given the discussion and impact data, the panelists then independently revised their recommendations and were again brought back together for discussion. Panelists then repeated this process for the other cut scores they were to set for each assessment.

All standard-setting sessions involved three rounds of panel recommendations, consistent with the procedures used for previous MI-Access work of this type, as well as with the MEAP procedures. Between the first and second rounds, panels were given activity-difficulty data for their consideration. These data were based on the just-completed Spring 2007 statewide administration of the assessments. Prior to the last round of ratings for the sessions, panelists saw statewide impact data for the assessments. Similar data were provided during the original P/SI assessment standard-setting sessions. In addition, prior to the third round, statewide results (showing the percent of students scoring in each performance category) for the *original* versions of the P/SI assessments were presented as an “anchor” for the panelists.

All attempts were made to replicate as closely as possible the methodological procedures and specific tasks used in 2005 and 2006 to set performance standards for the original P/SI assessments.