

Standards Based Assessment (SBA) & High School Graduation Qualifying Examination (HSGQE)

Authority, Program History & Increment Details

The Department of Education & Early Development (EED) has been entrusted by the Alaska State Legislature to fulfill the constitutional mandate to establish and maintain a system of public schools. In doing so, the State Legislature has provided the department with the legal obligation through statutory authority under Alaska Statutes Chapter 14 in general for maintaining a public school system, which includes assessments that have been approved and adopted by the State Board of Education through regulation.

EED has conducted two separate formal solicitation processes in recent years to competitively seek a contractor to fulfill the services required by the state. The current vendor has been successful in offering proposals under the two solicitations. The first award was estimated to save the state \$12 million over the life of the contract based on the costs estimated at that time with the previous vendor.

The second solicitation process generated a similar outcome where the only other proposal was determined to be non-responsive due to the funding limitations prescribed in the budget. That bid, which was considered non-responsive, was \$17 million higher over the life of the contract than the successful vendor currently under contract.

As part of the public procurement process, the state must negotiate in good faith and provide an annual increase based on the scope of work required by the agency. The funding in the amount of \$250.0 for the negotiated annual increase is not contained within the department's budget and must be requested through the legislative process.

Increases related to the contract can be attributed to the development, implementation, and administration of the SBA and HSGQE program.

The current program includes:

- SBA for reading, writing and mathematics in grades 3-9
 - Two new forms were created during the current contract period
 - Practice tests were developed during the current contract period, using items from forms from the prior contract as well as other field tested items, therefore the state has available one full length practice test and one 50% length practice test
- SBA for science in grades 4, 8 and 10
 - A practice test was developed with the current contract, therefore the state provides two full length practice tests
- Combined SBA and HSGQE in grade 10
 - Four forms exist, and two more are being created
- HSGQE Retake exam
 - Four forms exist, and one more form is being created

Creating Test Forms

Creating a test form includes the following steps:

- Writing test items (including developing, or gaining permission to use, reading passages)
- Review of test items by Alaska content teacher experts
- Review of test items by Alaska stakeholders analyzing for bias and sensitivity
- Items that pass committee reviews are field tested with students in Alaska
- Items statistics from field test are reviewed by Alaska content teacher experts
- Items are constructed into the test
- Students are assessed, and test form is equated to prior forms to ensure coherence in assessment program
- Following each test administration, including field testing, technical reports are provided to the state to ensure psychometric standards have been met

Other Program Elements

The assessment contract with the current contractor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), includes the following major activities/components:

- Content, bias, sensitivity and data review committee support and facilitation required for creating test forms
- Creation of all materials, including manuals, practice tests, ancillary items
- Work with districts and the state to pre-code materials for quicker production of reports
- Shipping all tests to districts, and retrieving all tests from districts
- Production of all printed results, such as school reports, grade reports, and individual student reports
- Posting of all results in an electronic format that allows state and districts to download
- Load all data into the Data Interaction for Alaska Student Assessment (DIASA), and made analysis tool available to the state and all districts
- Provide technical reports following each test administration
- Participate in meetings as required by the state to ensure a smooth program delivery, including weekly audio-conference meetings and two face-to-face meetings with technical advisory committee

Reviewed, Approved & Recent Court Action

EED was required to submit to the United States Department of Education hundreds of documents of evidence that fell within seven categories to receive approval of the Alaska content standards and assessment program. All evidence was peer reviewed, and Alaska received full approval of the assessment system for use as required by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The standards and the assessment was the subject of court records in *Alaska v Moore*. In the case Judge Gleason indicated there were four requirements to meeting the Education Clause in the Alaska Constitution: 1) Standards, 2) Assessments, 3) Accountability and Oversight, 4) Funding. Judge Gleason ruled that the standards and the assessment developed and used by the state met the constitutional test.

Standards: Foundation of Standards Based Assessments

A content standard is a written description of what students should know and be able to do in a particular content or subject area. The state board adopts content standards.

The assessment is built to assess the adopted content standards, and Alaska educators are involved in that development of the assessment as described under “creating a form” to ensure common understanding of the meaning of the standards. The state also makes available practice assessments/item samplers to make public examples of how each standard is assessed.

Districts use standards to design curriculum (course of study that describes what is taught, activities used, materials used, and how learning will be assessed) and instruction. The standards document itself is primarily a technical document that describes the content using the language of the particular content area. Procedures for adopting/approving curriculum are the responsibility of local school boards (AS 14.14.090 (8)).

The current reading, writing and mathematics standards were written in the mid-1990s, and then expressed at each grade level in the Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) in 2004. The GLEs have been the foundation of the SBAs since 2005.

In December 2011 the State Board of Education put out for extended (January – May 2012) public comment new content standards for reading/language arts and mathematics. This was after the department worked with stakeholders from across the state to develop those standards from February 2010 through November 2011.

During this regulation promulgation process for the new standards the department is conducting extensive outreach to stakeholders, including public schools, university staff, professional organizations, business/industry, Native organizations/agencies, and the general public. The department also commissioned a study that compares the standards to expectations of post-secondary credit bearing courses taught both at the university and in various industry/career technology preparation programs.

If the board adopts the standards the department will begin working on the assessment development process in preparation for assessing students in 2016.