

## **SETTING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR THE BIOLOGY END OF COURSE EXAM AND THE WASHINGTON ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM PORTFOLIO**

### **Policy Consideration**

The State Board of Education is asked to consider approval of the recommended cut scores for the End-of-Course (EOC) Biology assessment and the Washington Alternate Assessment System portfolio.

The Biology EOC was given for this first time in spring 2012. Meeting standard on this assessment or an approved alternative will be required for graduation beginning with the class of 2015.

The Washington Alternate Assessment System (WAAS) has been updated to better meet the needs of students with significant cognitive challenges. It is designed for the small percentage of students for whom traditional assessments, even with accommodations, are not an appropriate measure of progress (approximately one percent of students).

The authority for SBE identifying scores students must achieve to meet standards is specified in RCW 28A.305.130.

### **Background**

The 2012 Biology EOC exam assesses the 2009 Science Learning Standards, and was given to students for the first time in spring 2012. The process for standard setting for the Biology EOC was presented to SBE by OSPI at the May 8, 2012 Board meeting, and the SBE approved the process.

Based on outcomes from standard-setting for mathematics EOC exams, compared to the results of the mathematics High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE), it is possible that the outcome from standard-setting for the Biology EOC will be a pass rate that varies significantly from the pass rate of the science HSPE. The HSPE and EOCs have different content and students take them in a different context.

The WAAS Portfolio is an assessment based on academic achievement standards that are adapted from the state content standards to meet the needs of students with significant cognitive challenges. In the summer of 2011, WAAS portfolio extensions to the state content standards were created. New standard setting is needed to address the WAAS Portfolio extensions.

The requirement for the SBE to approve scores and work with OSPI on the state academic assessment system is described in statute:

RCW 28A.305.130 requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to “identify the scores students must achieve in order to meet the standard on the statewide assessment... [and to] determine student scores that identify levels of student performance below and beyond standard.” It also requires SBE to “annually review the assessment reporting system to ensure fairness, accuracy, timeliness, and equity of opportunity, especially with regard to schools with special circumstances and unique populations of students.”

RCW 28A.655.070 (3)(a) states that “In consultation with the state board of education, the superintendent of public instruction shall maintain and continue to develop and revise a statewide academic assessment system in the content areas of reading, writing, mathematics and science for use in the elementary, middle, and high school years designed to determine if each student has mastered the essential academic learning requirements....”

### **Action**

The board will be asked to approve the cut scores for the performance levels of “Basic”, “Proficient”, and “Advanced” for the Biology EOC, and will be asked to approve the cut scores for the WAAS Portfolio in Reading, Science, Writing and Mathematics, as recommended by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.