

# A Profile of State Assessment Programs 2009

Since 2003, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has supported research that compares the proficiency standards of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) with those of individual states. State assessments are placed onto a common scale defined by NAEP, which allows states' proficiency standards to be compared not only to NAEP, but also to each other.<sup>1</sup> While the mapped NAEP equivalent scores of state standards are useful in determining the relative rigor of states' proficiency standards, the results of the studies should be interpreted with caution. Variations among states can be due to many factors, including differences in assessment frameworks, test specifications, the psychometric properties of the tests, the definition of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards, and the standard-setting process.

In 2007, in collaboration with the Education Information Management Advisory Consortium (EIMAC)—Task Force on Assessment of the Council of Chief State School Officers—NCES conducted a survey of state assessment programs to gain contextual information about the states' assessment programs in 2006–07 and to note changes in their assessments between the 2004–05 and 2006–07 school years that could affect the interpretation of the mapping results. The NAEP State Coordinator in every state was asked to provide information about the state's testing program through an online survey. After this information was verified and confirmed by the NAEP State Coordinator of each state, it was summarized in individual state profiles.<sup>2</sup> These profiles were designed in collaboration with a panel of NAEP State Coordinators.

In support of the 2009 Mapping Study, NAEP State Coordinators were asked by NCES to update the information collected on their state assessment program in 2007. Following similar verification steps, the information was summarized into profiles to provide a concise snapshot of all state assessment programs in the 2008–09 school year. Each profile presents information on the grades and subjects tested during the 2008–09 year, state performance levels and performance level descriptors, the composition of main state assessments, and changes to the state assessments between 2006–07 and 2008–09.

A sample profile is shown below. Information on the state assessment programs is presented in nine blocks. The first block combines all subjects. The remaining blocks (2–9) are presented twice, once for Reading/Language Arts and then for Mathematics. The example that follows is for Reading/Language Arts only. Some answers may have been edited for consistency or for space limitations; however, the substance of all answers is unchanged from what states provided to the NAEP State Coordinators. All web addresses in these profiles were verified on May 15, 2011. In any block, the symbol “—” indicates that a state's information was either not provided (for example, if there is no information on performance level descriptors of an alternate assessment for meeting AYP) or not applicable (for example, if the information relates to the proportion of the test score from short constructed response items, but the test does not use short constructed response items).

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<sup>1</sup> Documents that discuss the research on NAEP and state proficiency standards are available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/>.

<sup>2</sup> The 2007 State Profiles are available at: [http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/profile\\_standards\\_2007.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/profile_standards_2007.asp).

**Block 1** summarizes information about each state’s testing program: the name of the program, the different tests, the type and format of each test, the grades and subjects tested, and the tests’ purpose. States were asked to enter up to four tests in Mathematics, English Language Arts, Reading, and Science. Response options for test type were: regular, alternate, modified, and portfolio assessments.<sup>3</sup> Response options for test format were: criterion-referenced (CRT), norm-referenced (NRT), combination CRT/NRT, and other formats. Response options for test purpose were: instructional, student accountability, school accountability, staff accountability, and other. Additional information provided by NAEP State Coordinators summarizing their states’ tests and test purposes is included at the end of the block. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block1.asp>.

Block 1	Example State																			
	State Assessment and Accountability Program (SAAP)																			
	Component	Test		Grades Tested												Test Purpose <sup>1</sup>				
Type		Format	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Instructional	Student Accountability	School Accountability	Staff Accountability	Other
<b>Language Arts</b>																				
Comprehensive Assessments of State Students (CASS)	Regular	CRT		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		
CASS - Alternate (CASS-Alt)	Alternate	CRT	√			√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		
<b>Mathematics</b>																				
CASS	Regular	CRT		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		
CASS-Alt	Alternate	CRT	√			√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		
<b>Science</b>																				
CASS	Regular	CRT						√		√				√		√		√		
CASS-Alt	Alternate	CRT						√		√				√		√		√		

<sup>1</sup> Example purposes: Instructional: student diagnosis, student placement, instructional planning, program evaluation, improvement of instruction for groups of students, etc.  
Student Accountability: student awards/recognition, honors diploma, student promotion/retention, required remediation, exit requirement, etc.  
School Accountability: monetary awards/penalties, school accreditation, school performance reporting, high school skills guarantee, school improvement plans, etc.  
Staff Accountability: staff awards/recognition, salary increases, staff dismissal, staff evaluation or certification, staff monetary penalties, etc.

<sup>3</sup> For reference, definitions of different types of assessments are available at the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) website, at: <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/NCEO/TopicAreas/AlternateAssessments/altAssessTopic.htm>.

**Block 2** summarizes information about the composition of the main state assessments in 2008–09 for grades 4 and 8 in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics. It shows the number of items for each type of question and each type’s respective weight in the final score. If the state indicated that an item type was not used, the type’s weight is indicated by “—.” An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at:

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block2.asp> .

**Block 3** includes additional information about the timing of the assessments and whether assessments measured skills acquired only in prior grades. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block3.asp>.

**Block 4** summarizes information about the assessments and performance levels used by the state in 2008–09 for state accountability for grades 4 and 8 in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics, as well as the assessments and performance levels used to determine AYP. The symbol “—” indicates that the information was not provided (e.g., if the state did not provide additional information about performance levels used during the 2008–09 academic year). An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block4.asp>.

<b>Example State</b>		<b>Reading/Language Arts</b>									
<b>Block 2</b>	<b>Composition of the Main Reading/Language Arts Test in 2008–09</b>										
	Multiple Choice		Short Constructed Response		Extended Constructed Response		Performance Tasks		Other		
	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	
Grade 4	24	50%	0	—	3	50%	0	—	0	—	
Grade 8	24	50%	0	—	3	50%	0	—	0	—	
<b>Block 3</b>	<b>Administration of the Main Reading/Language Arts Test in 2008–09</b>										
	Were any of the 2008–09 assessments used for AYP reporting for grades 4 or 8 administered in the fall 2008?						No.				
<b>Block 4</b>	<b>Performance Levels and AYP</b>										
	Performance levels used during the 2008–09 year						Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced				
	Test used for AYP determination						Comprehensive Assessments of State Students (CASS)				
	Performance level used for AYP						Proficient				
	Other tests used for AYP determination						CASS-Alt assessments are used in AYP determination.				
	Test used for state accountability						CASS				
	Performance level used for state accountability						Proficient				
	First implementation of performance standards for the 2008–09 assessments						2005–06 school year				
Additional information about performance levels used during the 2008–09 academic year						—					

**Block 5** provides the performance level descriptors used for meeting AYP in 2008–09 assessments for grades 4 and 8 in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics. The descriptors correspond to the proficient performance level as it is defined by each state. A web address is included if the state provided a link. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block5.asp>.

**Block 6** lists the performance level descriptors used for meeting AYP in 2008–09 alternate assessments for grades 4 and 8 in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics. The descriptors correspond to the proficient performance level as it is defined by each state. A “—” indicates that the state did not provide performance level descriptors. A web address is included if the state provided a link. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block6.asp>.

	Example State	Reading/Language Arts
<b>Block 5</b>	<p><b>Performance Level Descriptors for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress</b></p> <p><b>Grade 4:</b> Students performing at the Proficient level demonstrate a fundamental understanding of what they read by applying various strategies when reading textual/informational, functional, and literary/recreational materials. To some degree these students use various skills and strategies, including demonstrating a knowledge of sentence structure, making inferences, and distinguishing fiction from nonfiction. They recognize some literary elements and devices including characters, similes, and important details as they read literary/recreational text. As a part of understanding informational/textual and functional materials, students at this level are beginning to locate information, identify important details, use sentence structure, and distinguish fact from fiction. Their vocabulary knowledge includes recognition of some antonyms, synonyms, and some use of structural analysis skills.</p> <p>Performance level descriptors are available online at  <a href="http://www.STDOE.st.gov/pdf/AchievementLevelsGrade4.pdf">http://www.STDOE.st.gov/pdf/AchievementLevelsGrade4.pdf</a></p>	<p><b>Grade 8:</b> Students performing at the Proficient level utilize strategies to make inferences to determine bias or theme and use specific context clues to determine some word meanings. They can distinguish among characteristics of some types of poetry such as ballads, epics, haikus, limericks, and lyrics. They often identify literary elements and can describe their impact on setting, mood, characterization, or theme. These students also are able to identify the elements of plot.</p>
<b>Block 6</b>	<p><b>Performance Level Descriptors of Alternate Assessment for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress</b></p> <p><b>Grade 4:</b> A fourth-grade student performing at the Proficient level on the Example State Extended Standards in Reading demonstrates fundamental knowledge that meets the extended standards in multiple phoneme words, reading simple sentences, synonyms, literary elements (main characters and details), and letter blends. This knowledge might be demonstrated at different complexity levels and with varying degrees of assistance.</p> <p>Performance level descriptors are available online at:  <a href="http://www.STDOE.st.gov/pdf/AchievementLevels.pdf">http://www.STDOE.st.gov/pdf/AchievementLevels.pdf</a></p>	<p><b>Grade 8:</b> —</p>

**Block 7** presents changes to the main state assessment in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics between the 2006–07 and 2008–09 school years. Each state self-reported whether the changes to its assessment were significant or not. For many states, additional information about the changes is included in a note below the block. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block7.asp>.

**Block 8** provides information about the comparability of the state assessments between 2006–07 and 2008–09. Specifically, it is the answer given to the survey question “Are the reported 2008–09 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 Reading or Mathematics directly comparable with the 2006–07 reported results?” Each state self-reported whether its 2006–07 and 2008–09 assessments were comparable or not. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block8.asp>.

**Block 9** provides additional information about changes to the state assessment, inclusion policies, or administration of the state assessment between 2006–07 and 2008–09 that would have an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block9.asp>.

**Example State**
**Reading/Language Arts**

**Block 7**

**Changes to State Assessments Between 2006–07 and 2008–09**

	No Significant Changes	Changed Cut Scores	Changed The Period of Administration	Changed Assessment Items	Used Entirely Different Assessment	Realigned To New Content Standards	Changed Proficiency Standards	Changed Accommodation Policy	Changed Re-Test Policy	Changed Test Contractors	Other Changes
Grade 4	√									•	
Grade 8	√									•	

**Block 8**

**Are the reported 2008–09 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 directly comparable with the 2006–07 reported results?**

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Yes, they can be compared. The testing contractors changed but the test and scales did not change.

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**Block 9**

**Are there differences in the administration of assessments or in the reporting of outcomes between 2006–07 and 2008–09 due to policy or legislative changes having an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time?**

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None.

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## Source

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2009 Survey of State Assessment Program Characteristics.

## Glossary

AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
CRT	Criterion-Referenced Test
ECA	End-of-Course Assessments
ELA	English Language Arts
ELP	English Language Proficiency
EOC	End-of-Course Exams
EOG	End-of-Grade Exams
IEP	Individualized Education Program
LEA	Local Education Agency
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NRT	Norm-Referenced Test
PLD	Performance Level Descriptor
SAT/10	Stanford Achievement Test – Tenth Edition
SEA	State Education Agency

# Alaska

## Alaska Comprehensive System of Student Assessment

Component	Test		Grades Tested												Test Purpose <sup>1</sup>					
	Type	Format	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Instructional	Student Accountability	School Accountability	Staff Accountability	Other
<b>Reading</b>																				
Standards Based Assessment	Regular	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√				
Alternate Assessment	Alternate	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√					√		
TerraNova [2]	Regular	NRT						√		√						√				
High School Graduation Qualifying Exam [3]	Regular	CRT											√	√	√		√			
<b>Mathematics</b>																				
Standards Based Assessment	Regular	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√	√	
Alternate Assessment	Alternate	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		
TerraNova [2]	Regular	NRT						√		√						√				
High School Graduation Qualifying Exam [3]	Regular	CRT											√	√	√		√			
<b>Science</b>																				
Standards Based Assessment	Regular	CRT					√				√	√				√		√		
Alternate Assessment	Alternate	CRT					√				√	√				√		√		

<sup>1</sup> Example purposes: Instructional: student diagnosis, student placement, instructional planning, program evaluation, improvement of instruction for groups of students, etc.  
 Student Accountability: student awards/recognition, honors diploma, student promotion/retention, required remediation, exit requirement, etc.  
 School Accountability: monetary awards/penalties, school accreditation, school performance reporting, high school skills guarantee, school improvement plans, etc.  
 Staff Accountability: staff awards/recognition, salary increases, staff dismissal, staff evaluation or certification, staff monetary penalties, etc.

<sup>2</sup> State regulation requires NRTs to be administered at two grade levels.

<sup>3</sup> Students first take the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam in tenth grade and take it until all portions of the test have been passed.

## Composition of the Main Reading/Language Arts Test in 2008–09

	Multiple Choice		Short Constructed Response		Extended Constructed Response		Performance Tasks		Other	
	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score
Grade 4	52	86%	2	7%	1	7%	0	—	0	—
Grade 8	52	86%	2	7%	1	7%	0	—	0	—

## Administration of the Main Reading/Language Arts Test in 2008–09

Were any of the 2008–09 assessments used for AYP reporting for grades 4 or 8 administered in the fall of 2008?	No. The test window for the Standards Based Assessments is in April.
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## Performance Levels and AYP

Performance levels used during the 2008–09 year	Far Below Proficient, Below Proficient, Proficient, and Advanced
Test used for AYP determination	Standards Based Assessment
Performance level used for AYP	Proficient
Other tests used for AYP determination	The Alternate Assessment is also used for students with severe cognitive disabilities. The performance level for AYP is Proficient.
Test used for state accountability	Standards Based Assessment
Performance level used for state accountability	Proficient
First implementation of performance standards for the 2008–09 assessments	2004–05 school year
Additional information about performance levels used during the 2008–09 academic year	—

### Performance Level Descriptors for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress

**Grade 4:** The student uses context clues and structural elements to determine meaning of unfamiliar phrases; identifies statements in text to support a conclusion; identifies accurate restatements and summarized information from text; states main idea of narrative and informational text; identifies the details involved in the steps in a list of directions and their sequence; identifies literary elements and devices (i.e., dialogue, rhyme, alliteration, or simile); describes all story elements in a variety of stories; distinguishes between fact and opinion in text; identifies author's message or theme; and makes relevant connections to other texts.

Performance level descriptors are available online at:

[http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/SBA\\_prof\\_level\\_dscrpt.html](http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/SBA_prof_level_dscrpt.html)

**Grade 8:** The student uses context to determine meaning of content-specific vocabulary, and words with multiple meanings; makes inferences and draws conclusions across increasingly complex texts; compares and contrasts main ideas or concepts between texts; interprets complex directions to understand and solve problems; identifies the characteristics and the effect on the reader of fiction and nonfiction; analyzes, evaluates and makes predictions about the importance of plot, setting, character, point of view and theme to the text; compares and contrasts literary elements and devices using complex text; identifies author's purpose; makes connections to author's message or theme.

Performance level descriptors are available online at:

[http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/SBA\\_prof\\_level\\_dscrpt.html](http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/SBA_prof_level_dscrpt.html)

### Performance Level Descriptors of Alternate Assessment for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress

**Grade 4:** The student identifies signs and symbols; identifies letter sound relationships; blends sounds to make words; identifies a detail using pictures, symbols, or words from a story read aloud; identifies own name in print; and displays an understanding of print directionality.

**Grade 8:** The student reads a simple sentence of 4–5 or more words; identifies beginning, middle, and end of the sequence of events in the text; obtains information using text features including pictures (illustrations for text), visual cues (e.g., chapter headings, bolded or italicized text); identifies or reads words of increasing complexity (e.g., 5 or more letters, or 2 or more syllables); identifies answers to who, what, where questions about a reading passage; and follows 2-step written directions.

**Changes to State Assessments Between 2007 and 2009**

	No Significant Changes	Changed Cut Scores	Changed The Period of Administration	Changed Assessment Items	Used Entirely Different Assessment	Realigned To New Content Standards	Changed Proficiency Standards	Changed Accommodation Policy	Changed Re-Test Policy	Changed Test Contractors	Other Changes
Grade 4	√										
Grade 8	√										

**Are the reported 2008–09 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 directly comparable with the 2006–07 reported results?**

Yes.

**Are there differences in the administration of assessments or in the reporting of outcomes between 2006–07 and 2008–09 due to policy or legislative changes having an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time?**

None.

## Composition of the Main Mathematics Test in 2008–09

	Multiple Choice		Short Constructed Response		Extended Constructed Response		Performance Tasks		Other	
	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score
Grade 4	56	88%	2	6%	1	6%	0	—	0	—
Grade 8	56	88%	2	6%	1	6%	0	—	0	—

## Administration of the Main Mathematics Test in 2008–09

Were any of the 2008–09 assessments used for AYP reporting for grades 4 or 8 administered in the fall of 2008?	No. The test window for the Standards Based Assessments is in April.
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## Performance Levels and AYP

Performance levels used during the 2008–09 year	Far Below Proficient, Below Proficient, Proficient, and Advanced
Test used for AYP determination	Standards Based Assessment
Performance level used for AYP	Proficient
Other tests used for AYP determination	The Alternate Assessment is also used for students with severe cognitive disabilities. The performance level for AYP is Proficient.
Test used for state accountability	Standards Based Assessment
Performance level used for state accountability	Proficient
First implementation of performance standards for the 2008–09 assessments	2004–05 school year
Additional information about performance levels used during the 2008–09 academic year	—

### Performance Level Descriptors for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress

**Grade 4:** The student demonstrates conceptual understanding of numbers, mathematical operations, and number theory involving whole numbers and fractions; measurable attributes and measurement techniques involving equivalent measures, appropriate units, telling time, money, and measuring with a ruler; extending patterns; estimation strategies and computation involving addition, subtraction, and multiplication; equation solving; perimeter and area; geometric relationships of plane and solid figures; congruence, symmetry, and transformations; classification, organization, and analysis of data; and simple problems involving probability and possible combinations.

Performance level descriptors are available online at:

[http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/SBA\\_prof\\_level\\_dscrpt.html](http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/SBA_prof_level_dscrpt.html)

**Grade 8:** The student demonstrates conceptual understanding of real numbers, mathematical operations, and number theory; equivalent measures within systems; measurement techniques involving scale drawings; describing, extending, and generalizing patterns and functions; computation involving the four basic operations, conversion, ratio, and proportion; modeling and solving equations; using mathematical symbols to represent a written phrase; volume and surface area; circumference and area of a circle; geometric relationships of plane and solid figures; graphing on a coordinate plane; classifying, organizing, and analyzing data; and probability including problems involving sample spaces.

Performance level descriptors are available online at:

[http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/SBA\\_prof\\_level\\_dscrpt.html](http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/SBA_prof_level_dscrpt.html)

### Performance Level Descriptors of Alternate Assessment for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress

**Grade 4:** The student rote counts single-digit numbers to five; copies numbers; identifies first and last; identifies the basic geometric shapes of triangle, circle, and square; and matches items with the same attributes (e.g., matches blue triangles).

**Grade 8:** The student counts to 20 or above and skip counts by fives and tens; reads and writes/reproduces two-digit numbers; reads and writes two-digit numbers; identifies place value of ones and tens; creates simple tables, charts, or graphs; identifies which category of a table has the most or least; performs double-digit addition and subtraction without regrouping; identifies symbols +, -, and =; identifies units of measurement (e.g., time, money, linear, or distance); identifies value of a combination of coins; identifies paper currency (1, 5, 10, and 20); labels empty set as none or zero; identifies where an object is located relative to another object (e.g., in and out, over and under, in front of, and beside); and identifies whole and one-half.

**Changes to State Assessments Between 2007 and 2009**

	No Significant Changes	Changed Cut Scores	Changed The Period of Administration	Changed Assessment Items	Used Entirely Different Assessment	Realigned To New Content Standards	Changed Proficiency Standards	Changed Accommodation Policy	Changed Re-Test Policy	Changed Test Contractors	Other Changes
Grade 4	√										
Grade 8	√										

**Are the reported 2008–09 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 directly comparable with the 2006–07 reported results?**

Yes.

**Are there differences in the administration of assessments or in the reporting of outcomes between 2006–07 and 2008–09 due to policy or legislative changes having an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time?**

None.