

Date: September 4, 2018

To: School Administrators

From: Lisa Sireno, Standards and Assessment Administrator

Subject: CCR-18-009--Process for Establishing Achievement Levels for Grade-Level and End-of-Course Assessments

We have seen recent communication that contained erroneous information regarding the process for establishing achievement level cutoff scores for the new assessments. We are taking this opportunity to provide clarification.

First, the process for setting achievement level cutoff scores in assessments is in no way connected with the recent Fordham Institute review of states' academic learning standards.¹ As you may know, the Fordham Institute played a significant role in the development and promotion of the Common Core State Standards. Their review of states' academic standards found fault with those that were no longer using the Common Core, including Missouri's change to the Missouri Learning Standards.

Second, the process of setting achievement levels for assessments is not new. It is a required process and follows a widely used approach for measuring performance to the standards. It includes several phases:

1. "Bookmark" process: Work sessions on achievement level setting include approximately 10 Missouri educators for each of the content areas and grade levels, representing various areas of the state and diverse demographic groups. Using descriptions of each performance level (below basic, basic, proficient, advanced), participants review actual test questions sequentially from least to most difficult, then recommend the questions that represent the cutoff scores that separate one level from the next. They use their own content knowledge, the Missouri Learning Standards, and national subject area standards as well as NAEP and ACT as reference points in making recommendations.
2. Policy advisory committee discussion: A member of our assessment technical advisory committee facilitates this meeting in which K-12 district and building leaders and faculty from higher education institutions review theoretical and draft impact data from the bookmark work sessions. They are asked to consider the data and external benchmarks such as NAEP, ACT, and higher education remediation rates. The group is asked to review overall patterns from a policy perspective to look for consistency and a logical foundation.
3. Assessment technical advisory committee: This group of nationally recognized experts in large-scale assessment, measurement, and related issues, meets three to four times each year. Their charge is to review all aspects of our assessment content and results. They review recommendations from the bookmark work sessions and policy committee

¹ The U.S. Department of Education uses the term "standard setting" to refer to the process for determining achievement level cut scores, but this is **not** a reference to the process for developing *academic learning standards*, which was the topic of the Fordham Institute report.

discussion and offer guidance for establishing achievement level cutoff scores on new assessments.

4. The final step in the process is for DESE leadership to consider all of the input and recommendations and set final achievement level cut scores for each new assessment.

For additional questions or information, please contact the Assessment Section in the Office of College and Career Readiness, (573) 751-3545 or assessment@dese.mo.gov.