



Arkansas Department of Education

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

Jacob Oliva, Secretary

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Arkansas Department of Education Presents Recommended Cut Scores for New Statewide Assessment System

State Board of Education to Vote Tomorrow on Recommendations

LITTLE ROCK — During a State Board of Education work session today, the Arkansas Department of Education presented its recommended cut scores for the Arkansas Teaching, Learning, and Assessment System (ATLAS) exams. The recommended cut scores came after thorough review and input from approximately 200 Arkansas educators.

Because a new statewide assessment, that is now aligned with recently-updated Arkansas Academic Standards, was administered in the spring, the board must vote on new cut scores that measure academic achievement. This year's results serve as a new baseline and should not be compared to results from different assessments administered in previous years.

“For the first time in Arkansas history, we have a robust, rigorous assessment system spanning kindergarten through high school that is aligned to the Arkansas Academic Standards,” Arkansas Department of Education Secretary Jacob Oliva said. “It is very important to note that from the development of the standards and creation of test items to input regarding the cut scores, Arkansas educators, in addition to national and state experts and policy advisors, guided the development of the system. We can be proud of this Arkansas-built system that truly measures student learning.”

Highlights of the System:

In addition to including content-specific tests for grades K-10, as well as Algebra 1, Geometry, and Biology, ATLAS also includes tests for grades K-2 and literacy and math screeners for grades K-3.

ATLAS is fully aligned to the Arkansas Academic Standards, or learning expectations of what students should know by grade level and subject area. The recommended cut scores maintain a high level of rigor in student performance similar to what is required by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, often called “The Nation’s Report Card,” that is administered to a sample of students in each state every two years. This allows Arkansas to better identify how Arkansas students are performing compared to students across the country.

Because this new statewide system includes various levels of tests for all students, the guesswork for educators has been eliminated. Not only are the tests aligned to clear academic standards, ATLAS also lowers the burden on teachers by requiring fewer, more effective assessments from the same system throughout the year.

This single assessment system gives educators and parents access to critical data over the course of a student's academic journey, allowing them to tailor supports specifically to address learning gaps and implement targeted instruction to accelerate learning.

Educator Input:

Educator input was critical to the development of this comprehensive system. More than 3,700 educators were involved in the development, which included providing feedback on the design of the system, revising the academic standards, approving test items, and providing recommended cut scores. More than 500 educators reviewed and approved test items that were included on the new assessment, and 200 educators participated in the standard setting process led by national experts to determine recommended cut scores. This comprehensive review by critical stakeholders ensures the cut scores are rigorous, fair, and truly measure student learning based on the academic standards.

Recommended Cut Scores:

Today the board reviewed four new performance levels for the end-of-year, or summative, assessments for grade 3 through high school, as well as the end-of-course exams. The following performance level descriptors define the expectation for each level.

- **Level 4:** Students demonstrate an **advanced** understanding.
- **Level 3:** Students demonstrate a **proficient** understanding.
- **Level 2:** Students demonstrate a **basic** understanding.
- **Level 1:** Students demonstrate a **limited** understanding.

Potential State Results:

To put the recommendations into perspective, the department presented the board with the statewide results below that reflect the percentage of students performing at each level if the board approves the recommended cut scores at its monthly meeting tomorrow. It is extremely important to note that ATLAS results should not be compared to results from different assessments administered in previous years.

	ELA (<i>Grades 3-10</i>)	Math (<i>Grades 3-8, Alg. 1 and Geo</i>)	Science (<i>Grades 3-8 and Bio.</i>)
Level 4	10.04%	11.54%	12.55%
Level 3	23.79%	21.07%	23.16%
Level 2	39.69%	31.60%	36.87%

	ELA (Grades 3-10)	Math (Grades 3-8, Alg. 1 and Geo)	Science (Grades 3-8 and Bio.)
Level 1	26.20%	35.79%	27.43%

Next Steps:

The department anticipates releasing grade-level and school-level results before November 1.

Resources:

More information regarding the ATLAS assessments is available at <https://dese.link/ATLAS>. Resources include testimonials from educators and experts involved in the development of the new assessment system. Information also is available in the ATLAS portal at <https://atlasportal.org/>.

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