



# STATE OF IOWA

CHESTER J. CULVER, GOVERNOR  
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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
KEVIN FANGMAN, ACTING DIRECTOR

DATE: December 30, 2010

TO: Community College Presidents  
Public School District Superintendents  
Area Education Agency Administrators

FROM: Kevin Fangman, Acting Director

Roger Utman, Administrator  
Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation

SUBJECT: **Senior Year Plus Proficiency Requirement: Alternative Assessment**

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In a letter dated March 19, 2010, the Iowa Department of Education (DE) responded to requests from school districts and community colleges regarding academic proficiency requirements for students who want to access college credit coursework through Senior Year Plus programs. The challenge expressed by educators and administrators was how to determine an alternate but equivalent measure of proficiency for students who were not proficient on the most recent administration of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) or Iowa Tests of Education Development (ITED). While guidance on alternative measures of proficiency were requested specifically for students enrolling in career and technical education (CTE) coursework, alternative measures for determining student proficiency adopted by a district apply to any student who wants to take coursework through Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) or concurrent enrollment.

Due to the requests from school districts and community colleges to make fair proficiency determinations for students who were not proficient on the measures listed above, the DE had school districts work with community colleges to admit students taking CTE courses during the **2010-11 academic year only**, based on the probability of success for these students in the postsecondary course(s) for which they desire enrollment.

The DE has worked with school districts, community colleges, and others to develop guidelines, or more specifically a sample approach, for the determination of equivalent alternative measures of proficiency provided for in Iowa Administrative Code 281-22.2(2)(b)(1) that measures proficiency in reading, mathematics and science in order to achieve consistency across the state. While this sample is offered to address the request for an approved alternative assessment for **2011-12 and beyond**, districts may continue to use their own local school board approved alternative measure of proficiency if they have adopted one, along with ITED/ITBS scores. **If you have any questions about this change, please contact Jeremy Varner at 515.281.3542 or [jeremy.varner@iowa.gov](mailto:jeremy.varner@iowa.gov).**

## **Additional Guidance on School District Implementation of Alternative Measures of Proficiency**

During the 2009-2010 academic year, the Iowa Department of Education (DE) received numerous questions regarding student proficiency requirements for determining student eligibility for college credit courses delivered through Senior Year Plus (SYP) programs and the implementation of alternative measures of proficiency. The DE convened a work team consisting of department staff and representatives of school districts and community colleges charged with developing additional guidance on student proficiency requirements and alternative measures of proficiency. This document is intended to provide greater clarity with regard to state requirements and the options available to school districts adopting alternative measures.

### **Student Proficiency Requirements**

To be eligible for Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), concurrent enrollment, and college credit career academy courses under SYP, a student must meet the academic requirements of both the school district and the postsecondary institution.\*

For the postsecondary institution, students must meet any assessment or prerequisite requirements including any placement exam requirements. Please note that while Iowa community colleges are open access institutions, they usually have college placement exam requirements, often including mandatory minimum cut scores for enrollment in certain courses.

For the school district, students must demonstrate proficiency in each of three academic areas—reading, mathematics, and science to be eligible. Proficiency is determined by the school district by using the students' most recent scores on the Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED) or the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) exams. Students are determined to be proficient if they score at or above the 41<sup>st</sup> percentile (national norms) in the subject area. The portions of the exams used for determining proficiency are the same as those used by districts for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and Annual Progress Report (APR) reporting (i.e., Reading Comprehension for Reading, Mathematical Concepts and Problem Solving for Mathematics, and Analysis of Science Materials for Science). *Students moving into a district from another state and who were considered proficient on that state's accountability measure for No Child Left Behind meet the proficiency requirement for SYP for the first school year.*

\*Student eligibility requirements do not apply to the following: Advanced Placement (AP) courses, unless they are concurrent enrollment courses designated as AP®, any courses which do not generate college credit including courses delivered by other districts or through Iowa Learning Online, and college credit courses delivered through a contractual agreement between a district and a college that are not eligible for supplementary weighted funding, including career and technical education courses used to meet district minimum "offer and teach" accreditation requirements.

Please note that districts may not set additional requirements on student eligibility beyond those specified in statute or administrative rule. For example, a district may not require a certain grade point average or high school course grade, require students to exhaust all available high school courses first, limit students to a certain number of college credits, disallow enrollment of students who previously performed below a certain level in prior college credit courses, or other academic performance criteria. Colleges, however, have academic eligibility requirements students must meet which may involve performance in high school. For example, some community colleges require high school students to maintain a certain high school grade point average to enroll in concurrent enrollment courses. Please also note that district staff members have an important advising role since students need to understand the importance of being ready for college-level coursework and of the consequences of having a failing grade on their college transcript.

### **Alternative Measures of Student Proficiency**

Districts may adopt equivalent alternative measures of proficiency for students who are proficient, but did not score at the 41<sup>st</sup> percentile on the ITBS in one or more of the content areas of reading, mathematics, and science or for students who have not taken the exams. Districts are not required to adopt an alternative measure of proficiency, but are encouraged to do so since students moving in from another state or students under competent private instruction dually enrolled in the district may not have taken the Iowa Tests.\* It is important to note the alternate proficiency requirement was established primarily for students who may not do well on standardized tests, but are able to demonstrate proficiency through their work and projects.

If a student is proficient on the most recent administration of the ITBS or ITED at 41<sup>st</sup> percentile (national norms) in each of the three areas, then they meet the student proficiency requirement. If he or she did not score at the 41<sup>st</sup> percentile in all three areas or did not take the exam, they may demonstrate proficiency through an equivalent alternative measure of proficiency, if one is adopted by the district.

\*Students under competent private instruction (CPI) (home-school students) must meet the same proficiency standard as students in the school district in which the student is dually enrolled and have the approval of the school board in that district to register for the postsecondary course. In lieu of ITBS or ITED scores as the state assessment, a school district shall accept either the annual assessment instrument used by a student under CPI pursuant to Iowa Code Section 299A.4, or the written recommendation of the licensed practitioner providing supervision to the student under CPI pursuant to Iowa Code Section 299A.2.

As noted in previous department guidance, school districts have flexibility in how they implement alternative measures of proficiency, should they opt to do so. These measures may

utilize evidence from a variety of sources including, but not limited to: portfolios of student work, student performance rubric, end-of-course assessments, college placement exams (e.g., Compass, Accuplacer)\*, college entrance exams (e.g., ACT), criterion-referenced exams (e.g., Iowa Collaborative Assessment Modules [ICAM] or Measure of Academic Progress [MAP]), high school course grades, and additional administrations of the state assessment.

While the DE recognizes that alignment between the Iowa Tests and other measures are imperfect, the goal of the alternative measure is to provide an accurate reflection of student proficiency within the content area. The DE recommends utilizing the 11<sup>th</sup> grade performance level descriptors (PLDs; see pages 5-6) as criteria since these descriptions of proficiency are aligned with the Iowa Tests and describe the knowledge and skills that a student must achieve to be proficient.

Alternate measures of proficiency, including criteria utilized by district staff to determine proficiency, must be approved by the school board.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) students must also meet student proficiency requirements to enroll in college credit courses under SYP. For students with IEPs who do not demonstrate proficiency in one or more of the three areas of the Iowa Tests, the IEP team may set an alternative, but equivalent measure of proficiency through the IEP. The measure may be used to demonstrate proficiency and should be documented on the learning portion of the transition assessments section on Page B of the IEP. Since the SYP courses do not include specialized instruction, the program itself could be included within the description of courses and activities section of the course of study.

When considering SYP programming for student with IEPs, teams should closely review the individual's self-determined use of accommodations. Colleges have their own requirements for determining which accommodations are necessary for an individual in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and are not required to follow those listed in the student's IEP. Students who need more support may be better served through special education services at postsecondary settings (e.g., those commonly referred to as 4Plus programs) which do not fall under the umbrella of SYP. Please note that districts may choose to contract with community colleges for students to take courses specifically related to their IEP goals. While not enrolled in a SYP program and ineligible for college credit, a student not meeting proficiency requirements may receive these services in the setting of a concurrent enrollment course section.

\*Most college placement exams do not include a science portion.

### **Sample Alternative Measure of Proficiency**

The following sample is intended to show the breadth of options available to school districts establishing alternative measures of student proficiency. The sample is not intended to serve as a model or best practice but to offer an approach that can be easily adapted for district use.

To be eligible to enroll in college credit PSEO, concurrent enrollment, or career academy courses, state law requires high school students to be proficient in reading, mathematics, and science. To demonstrate proficiency, students must meet one of the two following criteria:

- 1) Score at or above the 41<sup>st</sup> percentile on the most recent administration of the ITEDs or ITBS in each of the required subject areas (reading, math, and science).
- 2) Meet one of the district's equivalent alternative measures of proficiency (see below).

If the student is proficient in each of the three areas as determined by the Iowa Tests, the student meets the proficiency requirement and no further action is required. If a student does not score at or above the 41<sup>st</sup> percentile in one or more areas, an alternate measure of proficiency may be used to demonstrate proficiency in the subject area(s).

### **Sample Alternate Measure of Proficiency**

For Reading: Select any two of the following three--

- High School Course Grade of "C" or Better on Most Recent Course in the Subject Area (or in a particular course which aligns closely with 11<sup>th</sup> grade PLDs)
- Meet or Exceed Equivalent ICAM Score for 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Module
- Meet or Exceed Equivalent MAP RIT Score for Reading Portion
- Meet or Exceed Equivalent I-ELDA Score for Reading Portion
- Meet or Exceed Equivalent College Placement Exam Score (e.g., Reading Section of Compass)
- Meet or Exceed Equivalent College Entrance Exam Score (e.g., Reading Section of ACT)
- Teacher Determination of Proficiency Based on Evaluation of Portfolio of Other Student Work

For Math: Select any two of the following--

- High School Course Grade of "C" or Better on Most Recent Course in the Subject Area
- Meet or Exceed Equivalent MAP RIT Score for Mathematics Portion
- Meet or Exceed Equivalent College Placement Exam Score
- Meet or Exceed Equivalent College Entrance Exam Score
- Teacher Determination of Proficiency Based on Evaluation of Portfolio of Other Student Work

For Science: Select any two of the following--

- High School Course Grade of “C” or Better on Most Recent Course in the Subject Area
- Meet or Exceed Equivalent Science SCASS Score
- Meet or Exceed Equivalent MAP RIT Score for Science Portion
- Teacher Determination of Proficiency Based on Evaluation of Portfolio of Other Student Work

**Sample Form for Teacher Determination of Proficiency Based on Portfolio of Other Work**

Evidence of a student meeting the criteria is compiled into a portfolio of student work which contains a purposefully-selected subset of a students’ work that demonstrates proficiency criteria are met. The criteria used to demonstrate proficiency are the 11<sup>th</sup> grade performance level descriptors (PLDs). The portfolio is evaluated by a subject area teacher or team of teachers. The portfolio may include the artifacts themselves or simply the grade/score received. It may include authentic assessments (e.g., projects, reports, and other demonstration of meaningful application of concepts), scores on other assessment tools, representative samples of student work, or other evidence of a student meeting performance criteria. Examples of possible evidence are provided in italics but are not meant to be an exhaustive or prescriptive list. More or fewer student artifacts or assessments may be needed to demonstrate proficiency.

**Reading Proficiency**

Criteria	Examples of Possible Evidence
Factual Understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands stated information</li> <li>• Determines the literal meaning of words or phrases</li> </ul>	<i>Student project in Social Studies course</i>
Inference and Interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draws conclusions or deduces meanings not explicitly stated in the text</li> <li>• Infers relationships</li> <li>• Infers the traits, feelings, and motives of characters or individuals</li> <li>• Makes predictions</li> <li>• Applies information</li> <li>• Interprets non-literal language</li> </ul>	<i>Literary analysis of a short story</i>  <i>Response journals</i>
Analysis and Generalization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determines the main idea, topic, or theme of a passage or portion of a passage</li> <li>• Identifies major points</li> <li>• Makes generalizations and interprets non-literal language</li> <li>• Identifies the author’s or speaker’s viewpoint or purpose</li> <li>• Distinguishes among facts, opinions, assumptions, observations, conclusions</li> <li>• Recognizes aspects of a passage’s style, structure, mood, or tone</li> <li>• Recognizes literary or argumentative techniques</li> </ul>	<i>Research paper from an advanced composition course</i>  <i>Literary essay about modernism in American literature</i>

[Student’s Name] \_\_\_\_\_ has been determined to be proficient at grade level in reading upon review of a sample of his or her work.

Teacher(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**Mathematics Proficiency**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Examples of Possible Evidence</b>
Understanding Mathematical Concepts and Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selects appropriate procedures</li> <li>• Identifies examples and counter-examples of concepts</li> </ul>	<i>Journaling or other written/verbal communication with teachers or peers</i>
Data Interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes inferences or predictions based on data or information</li> <li>• Interprets data from a variety of sources</li> </ul>	<i>Formative assessments built into daily assignments</i> <i>Summative assessments at the end of topics</i>
Problem Solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasons quantitatively</li> <li>• Evaluates the reasonableness of solutions</li> </ul>	<i>Real world application of mathematical problems (mathematical modeling)</i>  <i>Assignments with multiple representations of data</i>

[Student's Name] \_\_\_\_\_ has been determined to be proficient at grade level in mathematics upon review of a sample of his or her work.

Teacher(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**Science Proficiency**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Examples of Possible Evidence</b>
Interpreting Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes inferences or predictions based on observed data</li> <li>• Infers unstated relationships</li> <li>• Extends conclusions to related phenomena</li> </ul>	<i>Assignment(s) in a science course</i>  <i>Applicable student project in career and technical education course</i>
Analyzing Scientific Investigations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defines the problem of an experiment</li> <li>• Discerns the rationale for a procedure</li> <li>• Identifies limitations of a procedure</li> <li>• Selects best procedure</li> </ul>	<i>Student lab assignment(s) in science course</i>
Analyzing and Evaluating information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinguishes among hypotheses, assumptions, data, and conclusions</li> <li>• Judges the relevance and adequacy of information for reaching a given conclusion</li> <li>• Selects the best evidence for answering a question</li> <li>• Judges the reliability of sources</li> </ul>	<i>Teacher-developed end-of-course assessment in science course</i>

[Student's Name] \_\_\_\_\_ has been determined to be proficient at grade level in science upon review of a sample of his or her work.

Teacher(s) \_\_\_\_\_