



STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
300 DON GASPAR  
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501-2786  
Telephone (505) 827-5800  
[www.ped.state.nm.us](http://www.ped.state.nm.us)

HANNA SKANDERA  
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

SUSANA MARTINEZ  
GOVERNOR

July 1, 2011

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, Directors of State Educational Institutions, BIE School Administrators, and District Test Coordinators

**FROM:** Hanna Skandera  
Secretary-designate, Public Education Department

**RE:** **NEW SBA PERFORMANCE STANDARDS, SCALE, AND DATA**

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The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) is implementing new performance standards and a new scale for the 2011 Standards Based Assessment (SBA). New performance standards are necessary because the SBA was modified in 2011 to include more multiple choice items and grade 11 items aligned with updated high school English Language Arts content standards.

The new performance standards classify test scores into the four levels of performance already used by the SBA (Beginning Step, Nearing Proficiency, Proficient, and Advanced; please see attached Standards Based Assessment Performance Standards). The same performance standards apply to the English and Spanish language versions of the test. The SBA/High School Graduation Assessment also uses these performance standards.

Provisional performance standards were proposed in March by committees of New Mexico teachers in English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Bilingual Education, and Special Education. The committees selected performance standards using a modified bookmark method that rank ordered items by difficulty and specified where in the continuum that knowledge was "just enough" to fall into a certain performance level. A panel of teachers, assessment experts, and content specialists adjusted the provisional performance standards in June using data from the 2011 test. The performance standards for Reading and Science are increased modestly under my direction to remain consistent with high standards in other grades and content areas, improve alignment between SBA and NAEP standards, and improve

alignment with expectations for college readiness and the Common Core State Standards. These performance standards will be used to measure student progress, guide instruction, and make school, district, and state accountability determinations.

Performance standards are located on a vertically moderated scale. The new scale supports comparisons of student progress from grade to grade, just as the former scale did, and it provides significant technical improvements for sophisticated growth models. Scores on the vertically moderated scale range from 0 to 80, and a score of 40 represents Proficient performance. The first digit of a scale score identifies the grade level. For example, scale scores for grade 3 range from 300 to 380 (please see attached SBA Vertically Moderated Scale FAQ). A bridge study will be available on July 1 for converting scores between the vertical scale and vertically moderated scale. Please follow the link to the SBA Bridge Study under "What's New":

<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AssessmentEvaluation/index.html>

We are ready to answer your questions about these changes. Do not hesitate to contact Robert Romero, Acting Director of State Assessments ([robert.romero1@state.nm.us](mailto:robert.romero1@state.nm.us) or 505.827.6524) or Dr. Tom Dauphinee, Deputy Director of Assessment and Accountability ([tom.dauphinee@state.nm.us](mailto:tom.dauphinee@state.nm.us) or 505.827.6528).

District SBA data files are available in your secure online Web Application Portal at: <https://webapp.ped.state.nm.us> . To access your report, log in to SBA and click on REPORTS and RUN using the credentials issued to your SOAP Administrator.

If you have technical difficulties accessing the SBA SOAP website or login issues, please contact Jon Firschein at (505) 827-7950.

Warm regards,



Hanna Skandera  
Secretary of Education-designate

HS/TD/dt

Enclosures (2)

cc: PED Executive Team  
PED Leadership Team  
David Abbey, Director, Legislative Finance Committee  
Frances Ramirez-Maestas, Director, Legislative Education Study Committee  
Tom Sullivan, Executive Director, NMCSA  
Joe Guillen, Executive Director, NMSBA  
STARS Coordinators  
SOAP Managers

New Mexico Public Education Department

**Standards Based Assessment Performance Standards,  
English and Spanish Language Versions**

Test Language	Content Area	Grade Level	Beginning Step	Nearing Proficiency	Proficient	Advanced Cut
English & Spanish	Mathematics	03	327 or below	328-339	340-358	359 or higher
		04	428 or below	429-439	440-452	453 or higher
		05	528 or below	529-539	540-550	551 or higher
		06	629 or below	630-639	640-652	653 or higher
		07	729 or below	730-739	740-752	753 or higher
		08	826 or below	827-839	840-854	855 or higher
		11	1126 or below	1127-1139	1140-1150	1151 or higher
English & Spanish	Reading	03	331 or below	332-339	340-355	356 or higher
		04	425 or below	426-439	440-451	452 or higher
		05	527 or below	528-539	540-551	552 or higher
		06	627 or below	628-639	640-651	652 or higher
		07	729 or below	730-739	740-753	754 or higher
		08	830 or below	831-839	840-857	858 or higher
		11	1128 or below	1129-1139	1140-1150	1151 or higher
English & Spanish	Science	04	429 or below	430-439	440-455	456 or higher
		07	729 or below	730-739	740-750	751 or higher
		11	1129 or below	1130-1139	1140-1151	1152 or higher
English & Spanish	Social Studies	11	1129 or below	1130-1139	1140-1151	1152 or higher
	Content Area	Grade Level		Nearing Proficiency	Proficient	
English & Spanish	Writing	03		339 or below	340 or higher	
		04		439 or below	440 or higher	
		05		539 or below	540 or higher	
		06		639 or below	640 or higher	
		07		739 or below	740 or higher	
		08		839 or below	840 or higher	
		11		1139 or below	1140 or higher	

Implemented 6/29/2011

## Frequently Asked Questions

### SBA Vertically Moderated Scale

The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) is implementing new performance standards and a new scale for the 2011 Standards Based Assessment (SBA). New performance standards are necessary because the SBA was modified in 2011 to include more multiple choice items and grade 11 items aligned with updated high school English Language Arts content standards. The new performance standards are located on a vertically moderated scale. The new scale supports comparisons of student progress from grade to grade, just as the former vertical scale did, and it provides significant technical improvements for sophisticated growth models. Information about these changes is provided in following questions and answers.

Question: What do scale scores say about student performance?

Answer: A student's raw score, or total points earned, on the Standards Based Assessment is translated into a scale score that precisely describes mastery of the content standards, while accounting for differences in grade levels and difficulty of multiple forms of a test. Sophisticated procedures are used to define a meaningful unit of measurement and link scores across grades and test forms. These procedures yield scale scores that facilitate student-to-student comparisons and tracking of student progress.

Question: What can the SBA's vertically moderated scale do that the former vertical scale could not?

Answer: The new vertically moderated scale is relatively uniform across grades and content areas. That is, the range of scores and the location of the Proficiency performance level are the same for all grade levels and content areas. Due to moderated performance standards, the proportion of students classified in corresponding performance levels across grades is also more consistent across grades. Because of these qualities, measurement of student growth is more accurate, which is important for advanced growth modeling typically used for education accountability.

Question: How is the vertically moderated scale configured?

Answer: Scores on the vertically moderated scale range from 0 to 80, and a score of 40 represents Proficient performance. The first digit of a scale score identifies the grade level. For example, scale scores for grade 3 range from 300 to 380. The placement of SBA performance levels for Nearing Proficiency and Advanced on the vertically moderated scale varies slightly from grade to grade. Please note that the Writing assessment only has two performance levels, Nearing Proficiency and Proficient. Proficient performance is also located at scale score 40 for Writing.

Question: How precise are measures of student progress using the vertically moderated scale?

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Answer: Scale scores can evaluate differences within a performance level. However, very small differences should be interpreted cautiously. Lower and upper boundaries are provided on the Student Report for Parents, Student Report to Teachers, and in the test data file that indicate a range of scores that encompass a student's performance, given variability in typical testing conditions. A score increase that falls outside that range represents measurable student growth.

Question: How can student growth be measured across the transition to the vertically moderated scale?

Answer: Scores on the SBA's vertical scale and the vertically moderated scale are not comparable unless they are converted to the same scale. A bridge study will be available on July 1 for converting scores between both scales. Please follow the link to the SBA Bridge Study under "What's New":

<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AssessmentEvaluation/index.html>