
Assessment Standard Setting for Social Studies and Science

The Background:

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-1-302(a)(2), it is the duty of the State Board of Education to “set rules and policies for . . . evaluating individual student progress and achievement, evaluating individual teachers, and measuring the educational achievement of individual schools.”

The Department of Education administered updated social studies and new science summative assessments, which are part of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP), in 2019-20 and 2020-21. These assessments include grades 6-8 social studies, U.S. History end of course, grades 3-8 science, and Biology end of course exams, including grades 3-8 science and Biology alternate exams. In order to complete the reporting of test scores for these assessments, it is necessary for the State Board to adopt cut scores that will be used to assign students to performance levels on the social studies and science TCAP assessments. The cut scores recommended by the Department are based on the recommendations of Tennessee educator committees who participated in a content-based standard setting process.

Standard setting is a qualitative review of content standards with panels of educators who are content-area experts. Each panel completes three rounds of ratings and a process of vertical articulation to ensure alignment, consistency, and reasonableness across grade levels. During the week of November 9, 2020, panels of Tennessee educators convened virtually to recommend cut scores for these assessments. During the first two weeks of July 2021, panels of educators convened again to review the recommended cut score ranges against impact data to ensure vertical articulation and reasonableness across grade levels, as well as review student profiles for the determination of alternate assessment cut scores. The attached document provides the Department-recommended cut scores resulting from these processes.

The Fiscal Analysis Impact:

T.C.A. § 49-1-212 requires that the Department prepare a fiscal analysis of any policy, rule, or regulation proposed to the State Board of Education. This item has no financial impact on an LEA.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends approval of this item first and final reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.