
Standards Setting and Adoption of Science Performance Level Cut Scores

The Background:

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

In accordance with the Tennessee Academic Standards review cycle, the Tennessee Department of Education administered updated assessments for all Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) science assessments in 2025-26. 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 (e.g., below, approaching, met, or exceeded expectations). The cut scores recommended by the Department are based on the recommendations of Tennessee educator committees that participated in a content-based, standards-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. During the week of July 13-17, 2026, panels of Tennessee educators convened in Chattanooga to review and recommend cut scores to designate performance levels on each TCAP science assessment. 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.

Connection to the [Master Plan](#):

This item supports the State Board's strategic focus on College, Career, and Military Readiness outlined in the Master Plan by establishing designations for levels of performance on all TCAP Science Assessments. These designations were established by and align with Tennessee educator expectations of mastery of grade-level TN Science Standards and indicate student preparedness for next grade-level instruction and postsecondary courses.

The Recommendation:

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