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For Immediate Release

Utah State Board of Education approves SAGE proficiency levels

The Utah State Board of Education on Sept. 5, 2014, unanimously approved proficiency level cut scores for SAGE (Student Assessment of Growth and Excellence). Utah students were administered the new tests in three subject areas in spring 2014.

Although these tests results will result in fewer Utah students showing proficiency in English language arts, mathematics and science, they offer a more realistic appraisal of the college and career readiness of Utah students. The results more closely mirror ACT scores from throughout Utah, indicating SAGE provides a more accurate view of college and career readiness as well as student performance.

The Board of Education acknowledges in approving the proficiency levels that the number of students who will be assigned proficiency levels below expectations will increase. This is not due to decreased student performance, teacher instruction or school performance.

“Expectations have increased through our efforts to be more competitive,” Board of Education Chair David L. Crandall said. “Students now have opportunities to be measured as college- and career-ready, whereas they haven’t before.”

By approving the recommended proficiency levels, the Board of Education affirmed the work done by about 200 Utah educators in a weeklong “standard setting” workshop Aug. 11-15. During this period, test results were presented to educators, who applied their own expert judgment, previous performance data, and existing national testing results in setting proficiency levels.

SAGE assesses what students know and understand and are based on English language arts and mathematics standards the Board of Education made more rigorous in 2010. Since they are computer adaptive, they are also better at pinpointing academic performance.

In 2008, Utah began to pilot a new computer adaptive testing system. Its success led the Utah Legislature to establish a statewide computer adaptive system in 2013-14. This system is known as SAGE, and it was developed specifically for Utah students.

Over the last few years, many teachers have worked to develop test questions and review them in multiple bias and review committees. In spring 2014, students took the tests for the first time.

Following this spring's new assessments, Utah teachers and other stakeholders met to make recommendations on setting proficiency cut scores in each of the subjects for each of the grade levels. The cut scores determine if a student's test score in a particular subject is either:

Level 1, below proficient
Level 2, approaching proficient
Level 3, proficient, or
Level 4, highly proficient

With the approval of the final cut scores, the Utah State Office of Education will start the process of releasing individual student results to districts and charter schools.

Parents, educators and interested community members can learn more about SAGE at <http://schools.utah.gov/SAGE/>.

Updated training tests are also available at <http://sageportal.org/training-tests/> and provide opportunities for parents and public to review test questions similar to those on SAGE.

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