



Idaho's SBAC Grade 10 Graduation Requirement Is Unreasonable

An Idaho State Board of Education administrative rule requires Idaho students to score “proficient or advanced” on the tenth grade *Idaho Standards Achievement Tests* (by SBAC) in order to graduate with a high school diploma. This State Board imposed performance requirement is a stark misuse of student achievement data.

Much information about an individual's student's achievement is lost when student scale scores ranging over 150 or so “equal interval” points are collapsed into four pre-defined “categorical” achievement/performance levels. As indicated in the English Language Arts table below, student scale scores from 2492 to 2577 are considered equivalent performance and labeled Basic, while student scores from 2578 to 2677 are considered equivalent performance and labeled Proficient. It is unreasonable to act and make decisions as if students with scale scores of 2492 and 2577 exhibited the same achievement. It is even more unreasonable to deny a student scoring 2577 (i.e., Basic) a diploma while granting a diploma to a student scoring 2578 (i.e., Proficient).

Percentile ranks have more inherent meaning for educators and parents than scale scores. A percentile rank of 70 means that a student scored higher than 70 percent of the students taking the test. In the Mathematics table below, percentile ranks from 38 to 70 were labeled Basic while from 71 to 90 were labeled Proficient. It is unreasonable to grant a diploma to a student who scored better than 71 percent of his peers in mathematics, but to deny a diploma to a student who scored better than only 70 percent of his peers.

ISAT by SBAC, Grade 10 Achievement Level Cutscores

English Lang Arts	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Scale Score	Up to 2491	2492-2577	2578-2677	2678 and Up
Percentile Rank 15	1-14	15-41	42-78	79-99

Mathematics	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Scale Score	Up to 2529	2530-2614	2615-2697	2698 and Up
Percentile Rank 15	1-37	38-70	71-90	91-99

The text of the graduation requirement in the State Board's *Rules Governing Thoroughness* appears below. Note that the first two lines state the graduation requirement while the remaining eight lines provides districts a way to get around the requirement, and no quality control measures are provided for the district plan. A district could devise an opportunity for students to demonstrate proficiency, require all students in the district to participate in the plan. If the district did this the “high stakes” burden of the SBAC graduation requirement would be removed from all students. The State Board rule is unreasonable, but it seems that creative districts are not required to abide by it.

06. Proficiency. Each student must achieve a proficient or advanced score on the grade ten (10) Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) in math, reading and language usage in order to graduate. Students who receive a proficient or advanced score on the grade ten (10) ISAT while in grade nine (9) may bank the score for purposes of meeting their graduation requirement. A student who does not attain at least a proficient score prior to graduation may appeal to the school district or LEA, and will be given an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency of the content standards through some other locally established plan. School districts or LEAs shall adopt an alternate plan and provide notice of that plan to all students who have not achieved a proficient or advanced score on the Grade 10 Idaho Standards Achievement Test by the fall semester of the student's junior year. All locally established alternate plans used to demonstrate proficiency shall be forwarded to the State Board of Education for review and information. Alternate plans must be promptly re-submitted to the Board whenever changes are made in such plans. (3-12-14)