



SANDY GARRETT
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, July 01, 2009

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: [Shelly Hickman](#), Public Affairs Director, (405) 521-3371

**State Board votes to increase rigor of student proficiency standards
for all state Grade 3-8 math, reading assessments**

OKLAHOMA CITY – State Superintendent Sandy Garrett and the State Board of Education, of which she is the chair, today voted to increase the rigor of student proficiency standards for all state Grade 3-8 mathematics and reading assessments.

The action follows the Board's move last month to direct the state's Grade 3-8 testing vendor – Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) of Minneapolis, Minn. - to convene standard setting committees comprised of K-12 math and reading educators and representatives of higher education and business. These committees were to make recommendations on raising the bar on the exams, align proficiency levels closer to those on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and ensure proficiency standards were consistent across the grades.

"The Grade 3-8 math and reading tests were phased in between 2001-2006 and proficiency levels for some grades were set years before others," Garrett said. "The need to make certain that proficiency standards were consistent, that the bar was raised on the standards, and that we aligned to NAEP in the interest of competitiveness made it necessary for us to ask for new, robust standard setting recommendations for those exams."

The Board's action will affect individual and district test results for the most recent state exams administered this spring. However, whether schools are considered to have made Adequate Yearly Progress during the previous school year will be based on 2008 testing standards. 2010 AYP determinations will be based on 2009 standards. AYP, per the federal No Child Left Behind Act, determines which schools are identified for the state's School Improvement list.

Garrett said raising the bar is never without challenges and student proficiency rates are likely to significantly drop as a result of the more rigorous standards adopted by the Board. However, Oklahoma schools can and must rise to the occasion, increasing efforts to help all students become proficient in math and reading, she said.

"There's no doubt the bar has been significantly raised on what Oklahoma students are expected to know in math and reading in Grades 3-8," Garrett said. "However, the Board and I believe this action was necessary to ensure Oklahoma students are competitive nationally and internationally and that our schools continue to move forward."

With standards approved by the Board for what is proficient on state exams, as well as "advanced," "limited knowledge," and "unsatisfactory," DRC now will calculate and send results to Oklahoma school districts. Districts can then present their 2008-2009 testing results to their local boards and send individual student report cards to parents. DRC will have state results later this summer.

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