



2025 Kansas State Assessment Cut Score Setting

KEY MESSAGES

We've been living with a misaligned system - current cut scores don't reflect actual student success. The proposed cut scores represent a more precise measure of student achievement.

- The deeper that we've studied individual student performance on state assessments against other measures like ACT performance, AP coursework, dual credit, graduation rates and postsecondary success, we found that Kansas assessment performance standards were misaligned.
- Today, only about 1 in 4 Kansas high school students score at Level 3 or 4—but more than half go on to succeed in college or career pathways. That mismatch means too many students are told they're not proficient when, in reality, they're thriving. The new cut scores provide a more accurate, data-informed picture of what success really looks like.

Kansas assessment proficiency standards are out of step with national benchmarks, and it has created confusion for students and their families.

- Kansas state assessment results don't align with nationally normed tests, making them difficult for educators and families to interpret or trust. In fact, research shows that students often must score in the **top 25% nationally** just to be labeled "proficient" in Kansas. That's not a fair or realistic measure—and it distorts how we identify success and support students.
- We've seen students who score at Level 2 on state assessments go on to score a 22 on the ACT. That doesn't add up.

Kansas educators set these cut scores based on real classroom experience.

- These proposed cut scores weren't made in a vacuum. Kansas teachers and school leaders who work with students every day used their professional judgment and real-world classroom experience to set cut scores that better reflect what students know and can do. This is a Kansas-led solution grounded in local expertise.



Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

2025 Assessment Cut Scores



KANSAS STATE ASSESSMENT CUT SCORES

- When individual student performance on the state assessment is measured against other measures like ACT performance, AP coursework, dual credit, graduation rates and postsecondary success, we've found that Kansas assessment cut scores were consistent outliers.
- We misidentified students scoring at a high Level 2. When measuring against multiple data points, we saw that students scoring at a high Level 2 behaved much more like students scoring at a low level 3.
- The administration of Kansas' new state assessments this year provided an opportunity to correct this misalignment.
- Kansas educators who set the new cut scores believe that the "Proficient" performance standard now most closely represents where students are performing in the classroom.

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

- Students scoring at Level 1 need the most intensive interventions. These students show a limited ability to demonstrate knowledge and skills of grade-level content standards and probably aren't functioning in the classroom without out significant support.
- Students scoring at Level 2 show a basic ability to demonstrate knowledge and skills of grade-level content standards but need specific interventions to address areas of deficiency identified by the data.
- Students scoring at Level 3 show a proficient ability to demonstrate knowledge and skills of grade-level content standards.
- Students scoring at Level 4 show an advanced ability to demonstrate knowledge and skills of grade-level content.
- 2025 state assessment results will serve as a benchmark moving forward.
- We will need at least three years of assessment data to determine whether adjustments to cut scores will need to be made.

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BACKGROUND

- Kansas administered new ELA and Math state assessments in 2025.
 - KSDE awarded this new assessment contract in 2019.
- The previous ELA and Math assessments were created in 2015.
- After 10 years, the retired assessment items had become dated.

STANDARDS SETTING AND CUT SCORES

- **Standards Setting:** This is the overall process used to determine what different levels of student performance (like Limited, Basic, Proficient or Advanced) mean. This involves defining the knowledge and skills students should demonstrate at each level and aligning those expectations with state content standards.
- **Setting Cut Scores:** Cut scores are specific points on a test's scoring scale that separate different levels of student performance. They determine the minimum score a student must achieve to be placed into a particular performance category – Limited, Basic, Proficient, Advanced.
- Any time a new assessment is administered, new performance cut scores must be set.
- KSDE follows established best practices in educational assessment to maintain the integrity of the standard setting process. This includes:
 - Utilizing performance level descriptors that define what students should know and be able to do at each performance level.
 - Engaging a broad range of educators in the process - those who know the students and the content standards best. -
 - Use of performance data collected under real testing conditions.
 - Review of procedures and materials by the KSDE's Technical Advisory Committee.

2025 Assessment Cut Scores



- Examining how Kansas assessment results compare to Kansas students' performance on other assessments (e.g., NAEP and ACT).
 - Independent observation of the meeting for fidelity of implementation.
- KSDE used the bookmark method
- 141 educators were selected to participate in setting cut scores. These educators represented each of the 10 State Board districts and included rural, town, suburban and urban sized schools.
- Educators analyzed test items, reviewed performance level descriptors and recommended cut scores to define each level of performance.

WHAT STATE ASSESSMENTS MEASURE

- The Kansas state assessment describes a student's demonstrated level of performance on the student's grade level content standards.
- To meet federal requirements, all state summative assessments must be designed to measure student performance on grade-level content standards. For example, the grade 3 math test measures the grade 3 math content standards, and the performance standards (cut scores) define expectations for proficiency specific to this test. While the state assessment **is not designed to indicate whether a student is performing below or above grade level**, students scoring at the lowest performance level face the most barriers and need support to engage with on-grade content in the following year.

2025 STATE ASSESSMENT PERFORMANCE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

- A student at **Level 1** shows a **limited** ability to demonstrate their knowledge and skills of (third, fourth, fifth, etc.) grade (ELA, Math, Science) standards.
- A student at **Level 2** shows a **basic** ability to demonstrate their knowledge and skills of (third, fourth, fifth, etc.) grade (ELA, Math, Science) standards.

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KANSAS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM



- A student at **Level 3** shows a **proficient** ability to demonstrate their knowledge and skills of (third, fourth, fifth, etc.) grade (ELA, Math, Science) standards.
- A student at **Level 4** shows an **advanced** ability to demonstrate their knowledge and skills of (third, fourth, fifth, etc.) grade (ELA, Math, Science) standards.

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