



With new standards and tougher tests, state adjusts AIS requirements

In light of the major changes taking place in classrooms across the state – including new learning standards and tougher state assessments – state leaders have lowered the threshold that determines when a district must provide formal academic support programming to a student.

Instead of Academic Intervention Services (AIS) being triggered by any score below proficiency – level 1 or level 2 – on state exams, new regulations have designated specific scores for each test and grade level that determine when AIS is required. Most of these threshold scores fall somewhere in the scoring range for a level 2 score, indicating that a student is partially, but insufficiently, proficient in the new standards.

As predicted by state leaders, proficiency levels declined significantly on the state math and English language arts (ELA) exams taken by students in grades 3-8 last spring. These were the first assessments based on the new, more rigorous Common Core Learning Standards, and statewide the percentage of students who scored at or above proficiency fell from 55.1 percent to 31.1 percent in ELA and from 64.8 percent to 31 percent in math.

Absent any change in regulations, these results would have led to a dramatic spike in the number of students requiring academic intervention services across the state and in many districts. In fact, even with the changes, the drop in test scores means many districts will still see an increase in the number of students receiving AIS.

The Board of Regents directed the state Education Department to amend its AIS regulations “to ensure that existing support services... remain relevant and appropriate as New York implements the CCLS,” according to Deputy Education Commissioner Ken Slentz. The changes to the AIS requirements mean that students scoring at or above newly designated scores would “not be required to receive academic intervention instructional and/or student support services during the 2013-14 school year unless the school district, in its discretion, deems it necessary.”

In general, AIS is extra time within the school day in which educators work with a student or group of students to supplement general instruction and assist those students in meeting learning standards with which they have struggled.

The Board of Regents approved the amendment at its September 16 meeting.

To understand the change in AIS, it's important to know how the tests are scored:

- Each student’s performance on the tests is measured by what is called a “scale score.” Scale scores have a broad range, which can vary by test and subject, but were generally between 100 and 425 for the 2013 tests.
- The scale scores are then converted into the scoring range of 1 to 4. Scores at level 3 and 4 indicate proficiency (4 is mastery), while levels 1 and 2 indicate a student is below proficiency for his or her grade level by some degree. The term “cut scores” refers to the point where one scoring range ends and another begins.

- For example, the proficiency “cut score” for Grade 3 ELA in 2013 was 320. Students who score at or above this level reached proficiency, while those scoring below that figure are considered below proficiency.
- The cut scores to reach proficiency were adjusted upward in 2013-14. **In other words, not only were the tests tougher due to the new standards, but students needed a higher score on them to be proficient.**

Here is how the change to the AIS regulations works:

- Previously, districts were required to provide Academic Intervention Services (AIS) for any students who scored at levels 1 and 2.
- Under the new regulation change, this threshold is no longer aligned broadly with the proficiency cut score. Instead, the threshold for requiring a district to provide AIS has been set to a particular scale score for each test at each grade level.
- In other words, the requirement to provide AIS will no longer be based on whether or not the student’s score is proficient, but rather where that student’s score falls in relation to a specific AIS threshold. If a student’s scale score is below the threshold, AIS services are required.
- These AIS “thresholds” fall mostly somewhere in the range of level 2. This means that some students who scored a level 2 will not be required to receive AIS. (For grade 5 math and grade 7 math, the threshold for requiring AIS falls in the level 1 range.)

Here’s an example of how the change would be applied to a hypothetical student:

- In grade 3 English language arts (ELA), a student had to achieve a scale score of 320 to be deemed proficient. The AIS threshold is 299. So, a hypothetical student with a scale score of 300, for example, would not be required to receive AIS services because he or she scored higher than the AIS threshold – even though his/her score was less than proficient.

Grade 3-8 ELA and Math Tests – Level 2 and Level 3 Ranges & AIS Threshold

	Level 2 Range of Scale Scores	AIS Threshold	Level 3 Range of Scale Scores
Grade 3 ELA	291-319	299	320-357
Grade 3 Math	285-313	293	314-339
Grade 4 ELA	287-319	296	320-342
Grade 4 Math	283-313	284	314-340
Grade 5 ELA	289-319	297	320-345
Grade 5 Math	294-318	289 (Level 1)	319-345
Grade 6 ELA	283-319	297	320-337
Grade 6 Math	284-317	289	318-339
Grade 7 ELA	287-317	301	318-346
Grade 7 Math	293-321	290 (Level 1)	322-347
Grade 8 ELA	284-315	302	316-342
Grade 8 Math	287-321	293	322-348

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