

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI-NR 2024-73

Friday, Aug. 2, 2024

Contact: DPI Media Line, (608) 266-3559, media.inquiries@dpi.wi.gov

Standard-setting process, Forward Exam improvements complete

Distinct reading assessment and student score to be available for first time

MADISON – Following an extensive process involving input and guidance from hundreds of educators across the state, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction announced today it has completed the standard-setting and benchmarking process for the Forward Exam. Student achievement results on the standardized assessment, released this fall, will reflect these updates.

“I am proud of the collaborative work and the feedback offered by our experts, our educators, during this long and intricate process in support of Wisconsin’s students,” State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly said. “These educators took the time over the summer to sit down and carefully examine a large amount of information to make informed decisions. I am grateful for their knowledge and recommendations based on past experiences, and I know the results of their work will help districts support students and improve outcomes.”

Recent revisions to [Wisconsin Academic Standards](#) for English language arts and mathematics and feedback from educators led to an update to the Forward Exam. This update to the test design was necessary to align to revised academic standards and was administered during the 2023-24 school year. For the first time, the Forward Exam includes a distinct reading assessment and corresponding student score. This data supports Wisconsin’s extensive efforts to improve educational outcomes and comprehension in reading. For more information on the changes to the Forward Exam test design, [view this DPI resource](#).

The update to the Forward test design also required the department to reestablish achievement benchmarks. In June 2024, a diverse group of 88 educators participated in a standard-setting meeting. This group included mathematics and reading specialists, classroom teachers, school principals, curriculum and instruction coordinators and specialists, interventionists, instructional coaches, gifted and advanced coordinators, and CESA staff. Those who took part in this meeting represented all areas of the state – representatives from all 12 of Wisconsin’s CESAs, the five largest school districts, private Choice schools,

(more)

and rural, suburban, and urban school districts. A similar process last took place in June 2016 after the previous Forward ELA and mathematics assessments were administered for the first time.

During the meeting, the group worked together to determine recommendations for achievement benchmarks based on actual Forward test questions. After multiple days of discussion, final recommendations were presented to the state superintendent. Dr. Underly, in collaboration with department staff, established final benchmarks in June. More information on the performance-level and standard-setting process [can be found in this DPI resource](#).

Earlier this year, [the DPI announced](#) that after extensive engagement with education partners, it has updated terminology used to describe performance levels on statewide standardized assessments. The updated terms (*Developing, Approaching, Meeting, and Advanced*) more accurately reflect what the terms describe, and promote student potential and growth. These terms will be used on student, school, district, and state secure and public reports for the Forward Exam, ACT and PreACT Secure. Additional information on performance level indicators [can be found in this DPI resource](#).

The [DPI's Office of Educational Accountability's webpage](#) contains other information and resources related to the Forward Exam and assessments.

###