



# Wyoming Department of Education

Jim Rose, Interim Director

2300 Capitol Avenue, 2nd Floor Hathaway

Cheyenne, WY 82002

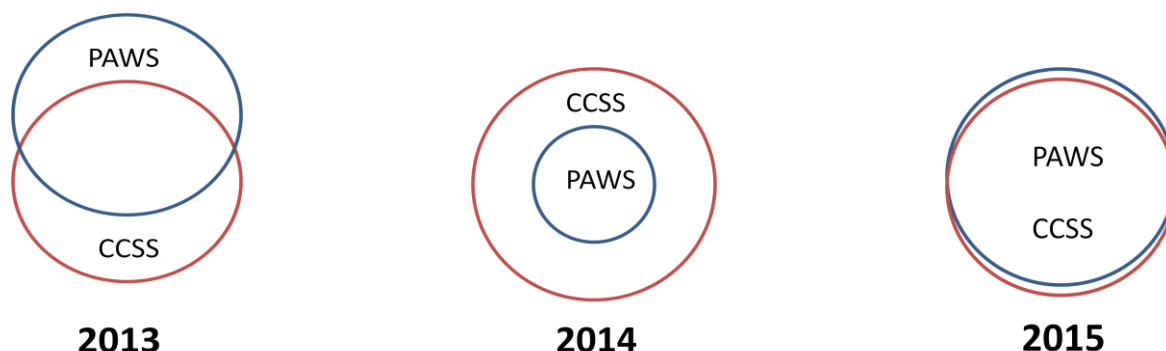
Phone: 307-777-7675 Fax: 307-777-6234 Website: [edu.wyoming.gov](http://edu.wyoming.gov)

## State Assessment and the Transition to Smarter Balanced

The state assessment system has undergone significant changes in the past two years as a result of statutory changes in school accountability as well as adoption of new content standards, which are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts and mathematics.

Per 2012 statute, the Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students (PAWS) was changed to eliminate grade 11 and to eliminate constructed response items. The writing component was separated from PAWS in 2012, and it is now administered in late spring, two weeks after the PAWS window is concluded. Known as the Student Assessment of Writing Skills (SAWS), this assessment must provide trend data and specifically address writing as a response to literary and informational text.

WDE staff have worked with the test vendor (Educational Testing Service, or ETS) to design test blueprints and write test items to ensure the PAWS is aligned to the state's adopted standards, as required under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The WDE sought input from the Wyoming Curriculum Directors Association as it developed a two year transition plan for the PAWS to fully cover the Wyoming standards by 2015. The transition plan is depicted graphically below.



The 2012 PAWS likely had some alignment with the new standards, but once the CCSS were adopted, WDE intentionally selected 2013 operational items from the item bank which cover CCSS whenever possible. Depending on the grade and subject, alignment on the 2013 test varies. Test blueprints for 2014 were designed so that all of the items on the test will address the new standards, but not all of the new standards will be assessed. The transition plan will ensure Wyoming has a fully aligned PAWS in 2015, with all of the standards assessed.

The content shift in 2014 is major and warrants a standard-setting. This means that new cut scores will be established, defining what students need to know and be able to do to earn scores in each of the four performance levels (advanced, proficient, basic, below basic). Since the

CCSS are more rigorous than the 2008 standards, WDE expects that there will be an overall decline in proficiency rates in 2014. If the WDE administers the PAWS instead of a Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test in 2015, the 2014 cuts will be re-visited and potentially adjusted following the 2015 administration. It's important to note that 2015 is the first year of implementation for the SBAC, and while the WDE contract with ETS covers test development for 2015, it does not cover test administration in 2015. The SBAC assessments in English language arts and mathematics will be fully aligned to the CCSS, and they will establish common cut scores across all participating states so that results are comparable.

At the high school level, statute requires standardized measures of college and career readiness in grades 9 - 11. In 2013, the ACT Plus Writing replaced the grade 11 PAWS, and EXPLORE and PLAN were instituted in grades 9 and 10, respectively. In grade 12, individual students have the option of taking the COMPASS, so districts/schools must offer seniors the opportunity to take it at least once.

Under ESEA, states are required to test students in English language arts/reading and mathematics once a year in grades 3 – 8 and in one grade at high school. Since the ACT Plus Writing replaced the PAWS at grade 11, it was necessary to establish cut scores for the four performance levels. Working with the Legislature's consultants from Center for Assessment, the WDE established cut scores for the reading, math, and science subtests of the ACT that are comparable to the grade 11 PAWS performance levels. These cut scores are presented in the table below:

<b>ACT Cut Scores and Proficiency Levels, 2013</b>			
	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Science</b>
<b>Basic</b>	11	13	14
<b>Proficient</b>	15	16	20
<b>Advanced</b>	24	24	25

These cut scores are inarguably low, but WDE will conduct a standard-setting meeting in 2014 to establish new cut scores. In this way, performance in 2013 will be roughly comparable to 2012, but the expectations for student performance in high school will be raised in 2014, consistent with raising the expectations/cut scores for students in grades 3 – 8 on PAWS.