



August 14, 2024

BIE Unified Assessment FAQ 2024

Background

For the BIE unified assessments administered for ELA and Math during spring 2024, there are score reporting changes that were implemented that impact the reporting of performance level information. Specifically, in an effort to better align performance from the ELA and Math tests to other BIE assessments, performance is now reported on four levels instead of five. A narrative document explains the rationale behind this transition. This document was developed to answer questions related to interpretation of 2024 results in relation to historical data.

Are the 2024 BIE unified assessments less rigorous now than they have been?

No. They are created to be as close to identical in terms of make-up and difficulty as have historically in place. While they do have some new content that helps enhance cultural sensitivity, they are strictly built to established blueprints that denote what standards are incorporated, what and how many items are included and by what item types. They are also targeted to match historical statistical targets. So, the difficulty and rigor of the 2024 assessments aligns directly to what has been in place for BIE over the recent past.

How do the 2024 performance levels compare to previous performance levels?

2024 performance levels have transitioned to report scores according to four levels instead of what has been in place within the PARCC/New Meridian reporting framework with five performance levels. This transition is part of an overall shift to have the BIE unified

assessments in ELA and Math better reflect the needs of the BIE students it supports. In addition to integrating culturally sensitive content into the existing assessments, there had also been a desire to align the performance level reporting with the other BIE assessments (report four performance levels instead of five).

To do this meant having to combine two existing performance levels. And given accountability requirements necessitate that there be a level above the proficient level, it was decided it made the most practical sense to combine levels 4 and 5 as the new fourth performance level. This decision was made based on additional information reviewed from other former PARCC states who have made similar transitions, where evidence based on research concluded the level of rigor demonstrated at the level 3 PARCC cut score (725) was shown to also be directly related to career and college readiness. In other words, the performance level description of proficient is appropriate at the level where students earning a scale score of 725 or above can justifiably be considered to have met expectations and on track with respect to career and college readiness. While the new designation does mean a lower score is required to meet expectations, it has been well known that the overall rigor of these assessments is quite high. So, this change can be viewed as a correction of sorts that still preserves the original specified intention of what it means to be considered proficient in relation to being on track.

What this means from a score interpretation standpoint is that for 2024, level 3 is now the marker for Met Expectations moving forward and aligns with what previously had been designated as Approaching. So, with the change to the level 3 cut score being the new proficiency designation, this likely will result in more students being designated as meeting expectations compared to previous years and is an expected outcome.

To evaluate trend from 2024 in relation to the PARCC/New Meridian five level system for historical comparisons, one can compare the Exceeded Expectation (level 4) results as a rough estimate. Keep in mind that this level now contains all students earning scores at or above 750.

Were educators involved in the process of the changes to the reporting of adjusted performance levels?

Yes! Panels of BIE educators were directly involved in reviewing and advising on the performance level descriptions and how they aligned within the four-level reporting system. Final performance level descriptions out of these meetings are part of the 2024 score reporting. BIE leadership always encourages educator participation in the assessment creation domain as a valuable learning opportunity. There are many such opportunities available each year. Recruitment letters are posted on the official BIE website: <https://www.bie.edu/landing-page/assessments-and-accountability>

Do scale scores from this year's assessments compare to previous year's scale scores?

Yes. As noted above, in no way do the adjustments made to performance level designations reflect a change in the rigor of the assessments, which are directly comparable to what has been in place. Performance based on scale scores are still directly comparable across administrations (e.g., average scale scores for a given grade and subject). Any scale score across the reporting range reflects the same level of ability now as it has previously, within the same grade and subject.

Do student scale scores compare across grade levels?

Not in a strict sense. The BIE unified assessments are not vertically scaled (built to a shared scale across grades). Each grade level assessment is created with content aligned with that level's standards and expectations. So, scale scores are not directly comparable across the levels, even within the same subject area. However, there is some alignment in that the score reporting system is made consistent so that performance levels do reflect similar reference points. But again, this is within the context of the specific grade level.

What if I have questions about these or other BIE assessments?

There are several points of contact that are available, to include the official BIE website (<https://www.bie.edu/landing-page/assessments-and-accountability>), email (biecentraloffice@bie.edu), or phone (202-208-4896).