

Assessments: How Will We Know What Students Know?

The adoption of student performance standards will change the way students are tested and evaluated. Teams of educators will be addressing new ways of assessing students in light of these standards in the months and years ahead. However, we already know that traditional multiple choice tests alone will not be sufficient to measure how well students have mastered the Alaska student performance standards.

Instead, assessment might focus on how well students write. It might examine students' work collected over time that shows how well they have learned and used important skills. The key feature of the new assessment program will be its close tie to the statewide standards.

The following questions are examples of the kinds of work students will be expected to perform to demonstrate their abilities.

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

We all have good times that stand out in our memories. In the next 50 minutes, write a narrative about one of your pleasant memories. You will be graded on content, organization, sentence structure, word choice, voice and mechanics.

Thus, the student is assessed not on what he or she knows about writing, but on how well he or she can actually write. This same question could be asked at all three benchmarks.

MATHEMATICS

Find an approximate linear relationship between the world swimming record for the 50-meter freestyle and the year, using the appropriate resources and technology.

This is a sample question for the third benchmark.

SCIENCE

The number of kernels that do not pop varies with different brands of microwave popcorn. Design an investigation to determine which of three brands of microwave popcorn pops best. Be certain to describe each of the following:

- *everything you will do in your investigation*
- *the kinds of data you will collect*
- *how you will analyze the data to determine which brand of popcorn pops best*

This sample question for the third benchmark was used in Kentucky's student assessment.