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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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Schools Get a Fast Start on the Alaska Measures of Progress

JUNEAU -- After the first week of testing, 25.6% of students already had completed the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP), Alaska's new language arts and math assessments for students in grades 3-10. Another 9% had completed at least one section of the assessments. The five-week testing window runs from March 30 to May 1. About 73,245 students are expected to be tested.

"I am very pleased with how things went during this first week of testing," said Alaska Education Commissioner Mike Hanley. "The school districts and the department have worked very hard to get students ready and, obviously, that hard work paid off."

The computer-based tests provide built-in tools for students to use while they take the test, such as a highlighter, calculator, or sticky note. Students also can listen to the test directions being read aloud on the computer. Further tools are available for students with a demonstrated need. Paper tests are available if computer-based tests aren't feasible.

"Overall, kids seem to be adjusting to the test smoothly," said Theresa Hamilton, the technology integration facilitator for the Bering Strait School District, which serves students in 15 communities in Northwest Alaska. Younger students said that testing is more fun on a computer than on paper, she said. Some middle school students had mixed reactions to the test but they didn't want to go back to a paper test next year, Hamilton said.

In the first two days of testing there were some connectivity issues at a few schools but they were resolved quickly, said Kristen Mashiana, coordinator of assessment for the Bering Strait School District. "By day three we seem to have worked out the kinks," she said.

Students adapted smoothly to the computer-based tests, said Robert Boyle, superintendent of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District. "We find students almost eager to test."

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Principals and teachers in Metlakatla said testing went smoothly with few glitches, said Eugene Avey, superintendent of the Annette Island School District. The older the student, the more easily he or she adjusted to the computer-based test, he said. Students varied in preferring a paper test or a computer-based test.

“Anchorage is thrilled about how the first week of AMP testing has progressed,” said Jane Stuart, director of assessment and evaluation for the Anchorage School District. “Our technology performance has been outstanding and the support plans utilized are efficient for school staff. Students and staff are overwhelmingly positive about the new testing experience. We are excited to continue testing the next grade-levels.”

Starting this year, Alaska reduced the number of its grade 3-10 language arts and math assessments from three to two, and reduced the total number of test questions. Districts can break down each assessment into four sections and give one section a day of 15 to 25 questions. The tests are untimed but many students will complete each test in 2 to 3 hours.

“The AMP tests are specifically designed for Alaska and our English and math standards. More than 900 Alaska educators reviewed the test questions to be sure they adequately measure Alaska’s standards and are appropriate for Alaskan students,” Commissioner Hanley said.

Students’ AMP scores do not affect graduation, classroom grades, or grade promotion. Instead, the tests help identify students who need additional support to improve their learning. Students don’t pass or fail the tests. Rather, their score places them in one of four levels of achievement.

For parent information on the Alaska Measures of Progress, see <http://education.alaska.gov/akparentscommunity/#c3gtabs-statetest>

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