



## FAQs about the New PEAKS Science Assessment

### **At what grades will the Spring 2021 Science Field Test be administered?**

The field test will be administered to students in grade 5, grade 8, and grade 10. The grade 5 field test will include items measuring standards for the 3–5 grade range; grade 8 will include items measuring standards for the 6–8 grade range; and grade 10 will include items measuring high school physical science and life science.

In addition, the items will collectively measure all three dimensions of the 2019 standards for the respective grade ranges (i.e., Science and Engineering Practices, Disciplinary Core Ideas, and Crosscutting Concepts).

### **Why are the grades tested being changed from 4, 8, and 10 to 5, 8, and 10?**

Based on the structure of the *K-12 Science Standards for Alaska* and on educator feedback, students in grade 5 – and not grade 4 – will be administered the PEAKS Science assessment. The *K-12 Science Standards for Alaska* are structured to include standards for grades kindergarten through fifth grade, middle school, and high school. Testing at fifth grade provides a natural break in content and pedagogy that align with the framework of the *K-12 Science Standards for Alaska*. Based on the recommendation of committees of Alaska educators, elementary students will be tested in grade 5, middle school students in grade 8, and grade 10 students will be assessed in high school physical science and life science.

### **What is a field test?**

A field test is a research study designed to gain information regarding how well questions are performing and whether or not the questions could be considered for use on future operational, summative assessments. The science grades 5, 8, and 10 field test includes test questions included in six different forms at each grade. All of the field test questions measure the *K-12 Science Standards for Alaska* and have been reviewed and approved by Alaska educators to be administered to Alaska students.

### **What is the purpose of the Spring 2021 Science Field Test, and why is it important for students to participate?**

The purpose of the field test is to collect information concerning the performance of newly developed items measuring the *K-12 Science Standards for Alaska*, adopted in 2019. By participating in the field test, Alaska students will have the opportunity to engage in new item types that show how the *K-12 Science Standards for Alaska* might be better assessed. More students participating in the field test will lead to more reliable results. The field test of the questions administered to Alaska students allows for information regarding, for example, whether or not a question is too difficult or too easy. The field test also provides information



regarding test administration, including information regarding the amount of time students need in order to answer a given set of questions. The results of the field test based on students in Alaska will help determine which collections of items should appear on future PEAKS Science Assessments.

### **Why did Alaska adopt new science standards?**

Alaska's previous science standards were 13 years old. Alaska educators agreed that advances have since taken place in the world of science and in our understanding of how students learn science effectively. The new standards align with national science standards and include Alaska specific content. Please visit the [K-12 Science Standards for Alaska webpage](#) for more information.

### **How much time is needed for students to take the field test?**

At grades 5, 8, and 10, each field test form consists of three parts, and the administration time of each part is approximately 35 minutes.

### **What role did Alaska educators have in the development of the items included in the field test forms?**

In January 2020, committees of Alaska educators participated in a review of the newly adopted *K-12 Science Standards for Alaska* in order to make recommendations regarding what standards should be assessed on the grade 5, grade 8, and grade 10 assessments, including recommendations for numbers of items to be included on each grade-level assessment.

In June 2020, the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) engaged a diverse group of Alaska educators from across the state to review all items to be field tested. Alaska educators will continue to be asked to be engaged in the new science assessment development process.

### **Are there resources that can help prepare students for the field test?**

Yes. The *K-12 Science Standards for Alaska*, that outline what students should know and be able to do, are posted on the [DEED Science Standards webpage](#). In addition, grade-range online tutorials designed to provide students with opportunities to practice item types are available. Sample items are also available on the [PEAKS webpage, Student Preparation Tab](#).

Will students receive results from the field test?

The field test results at grades 5, 8, and 10 will be included in a data file, which will consist of the form a student was administered, as well as their percent correct on that form. Please use caution when making student comparisons across the 6 field-test forms, as they are not exactly the same in terms of overall difficulty.