



# Understanding the Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students

## Overview of the PAWS

Since 2005, the Proficiency and Assessments for Wyoming Students (PAWS) has served as Wyoming's official state assessment for reading, writing, and mathematics. Grades 3-8 and 11 are assessed each year in reading, writing and mathematics. A science assessment was added in 2008 for grades 4, 8 and 11.

## Purpose of the PAWS

The primary purpose of the PAWS is to assess student performance against the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards. The assessment serves as a tool to promote school, district and state development as it relates to the teaching of standards of the Wyoming state curriculum, as well as the requirements set out by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The results are used by a wide variety of stakeholders, including policymakers who determine how well students are performing individually, how well schools are performing, and how the state as a whole is performing.

## Who Takes the PAWS?

Students in grades 3-8 and 11 take the PAWS each year. All students attending Colorado public schools must take the PAWS; there are no exemptions for public school students to avoid taking the

PAWS. Accommodations are made for students with a disability an individualized education plan (IEP), or non-native speaking ability (i.e., English Language Learners or ELLs). A modified version of the PAWS, the PAWS-ALT, is the state assessment for students with learning disabilities who cannot be accommodated by modifications to the PAWS.

## What is a Passing Score?

The state uses the levels Advanced, Proficient, Basic and Below Basic to assess student performance levels on the PAWS. Students must receive a "proficient" score in order to meet grade level standards. Students are also given raw and scale scores for their performance.

## Understanding the PAWS

PAWS are standards based exams. It is constructed around specific instructional goals in such a way that teachers may understand, interpret and develop methods to suit the specific learning needs of their students based on test results. The test uses three methods for testing, selected-response, constructed-response, and free-response (for the writing portion of the test).

## Understanding the PAWS ALT

The PAWS ALT is an alternative assessment designed to assess student performance against the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards, for students who meet criteria and cannot be accommodated by the PAWS. The PAWS –ALT requires a Portfolio of Student Work (PSW) and Student Performance Events (SPE) to be submitted. Rather than a test, the contents of these documents are used to evaluate student performance against standards.

### **Get Your Child Ready for the PAWS**

PAWS Tutoring Programs start with a free academic assessment with an Academic Director. Our flagship PAWS Tutoring Program is available for \$179.99/month which includes regular one-on-one tutoring, academic mentorship, bi-monthly progress reports, learning profiles, and parental conference calls. To learn more visit [SchoolTutoring.com](http://SchoolTutoring.com).