Utah Aspire Plus

Understanding Spring 2019 data

This document is designed to help schools and LEAs explain key components of Utah Aspire Plus data to parents and the community.

- **Utah Aspire Plus provides two main scores: Proficiency level scores and predictive ACT scores. These scores help inform instructional planning, practices, and policy decisions.**

    Proficiency level scores describe the degree of students' mastery of grade-level skills and knowledge relative to end-of-grade-level expectations. When included with other components of school accountability and student progress, student proficiency scores help schools capture an accurate picture of student achievement over the previous school year. These data provide useful information for self-reflection and evaluation at the LEA, school, teacher, and student levels.

    Predictive ACT score ranges indicate where students would likely score on the ACT based on their current assessment performance on Utah Aspire Plus. Predictive ACT score ranges facilitate a forward-looking focus that helps students, teachers, and parents identify areas of strength and weakness that can be directly impacted through intentional efforts related to student learning goals. The predictive ACT scores obtained from the 9th and 10th grade Utah Aspire Plus assessments are valuable tools for planning instructional targets for students as they continue their high school education and prepare to take the ACT in 11th grade. You can find additional information about Utah Aspire Plus scores and reports on the [Utah Aspire Plus Resource Center](#).

- **Predictive ACT scores are reported as a range rather than as a single score.**

    Many different variables affect the precision of predictive ACT scores. We cannot be certain that we have taken into account all possible factors that could affect a student's predicted ACT score. For this reason, we do not report a single predicted ACT score. Instead, we use statistical procedures that estimate predicted student ACT scores based on their performance on Utah Aspire Plus. This estimation produces a range of values that has a high probability of including the score a student would likely achieve. This range of values is known as a confidence interval and is used to create the predicted ACT score range. A predictive ACT score range tells you that if the student were to take the ACT the student's score would likely fall between the upper and lower bounds of the score range. For example, if a student's Utah Aspire Plus composite predictive score was 22 to 27 and if that student were to take the ACT, the student's score would most likely be between 22 and 27. To find out more about confidence intervals and predicted ACT scores visit the Utah State Board of Education's [Assessment and Accountability reporting resources page](#).

- **We expect that the predictive ACT score ranges will narrow after year three of Utah Aspire Plus administration**

    Utah Aspire Plus consists of questions from two different test banks – Utah test bank questions (approximately 50% of the test), and ACT Aspire test bank questions (approximately 50% of the test). Predictive ACT scores are calculated using a test score equating process that is based on known relationships between Utah Aspire Plus test question answering patterns and ACT question answering patterns. We anticipate that the predictive ACT score ranges will narrow and become more precise after year 2 and again after year 3 of administration of Utah Aspire Plus. This will occur because there will be more data that can be used to link performance on Utah Aspire Plus to performance on the ACT. The

more data that are available to define how performance on Utah Aspire Plus predicts ACT scores, the more precise the predictive score ranges can become.

- **Utah Aspire Plus Spring 2019 data establish a new baseline for student proficiency data for 9th and 10th grade students.**

Utah Aspire Plus is a new test that measures 9th and 10th grade students' end-of-grade-level proficiency on the Utah Core Standards in mathematics, English, reading and science. New proficiency level scores for Utah students were established through collaboration between Utah educators, psychometricians, and the Utah State Board of Education. The boundaries for each proficiency level, or cut scores, were recommended by Utah educators through a process known as standard setting. The standard setting process identified the score boundaries for the proficiency levels based upon the Proficiency Level Descriptors and their alignment with ACT College Readiness Benchmark scores. These score boundaries are different than the score boundaries used by SAGE. This means the proficiency scores for the two assessments should not be compared to draw conclusions about changes in student proficiency levels. Spring 2019 Utah Aspire Plus proficiency data should be considered a "benchmark year" as they establish a baseline set of data that can be used for future Utah Aspire Plus data comparisons. You can find more information on the Proficiency Level Descriptors and the proficiency cut scores on the Utah Aspire Plus Resource Center.

- **While direct comparison of proficiency levels between Spring 2019 Utah Aspire Plus and 2018 SAGE data are not appropriate, Utah Aspire Plus Spring 2019 test data can be used to calculate growth from 2018 to 2019.**

Growth is calculated differently than proficiency. Growth calculations use a "cohort" model which groups students who scored similarly on assessments in the previous year to create comparison groups (cohorts of like-performing students). These groups can be used to determine amount of growth that students attain from one year to the next relative to other students who had similar baseline achievement levels. Growth measures can be calculated regardless of the assessment taken, as long as the assessment was taken by all students in the "cohort" of like-performing students. To find out more about calculation of growth, please see the Student Growth Percentiles and Student Growth Target Explainer videos on the Utah State Board of Education Accountability webpage. You can also find information in the Utah Accountability Technical Manual.

- **The number of students who demonstrated proficiency on the Spring 2019 Utah Aspire Plus assessment is very similar to SAGE in mathematics, English, and reading. Fewer students demonstrated proficiency in science on Utah Aspire Plus than on SAGE.**

SAGE science test scores measured end-of-course achievement and provided proficiency level scores based on assessment in a specific content area (e.g., chemistry). In contrast, as an end-of-grade-level assessment, Utah Aspire Plus assesses student knowledge of the practices of science and the application of scientific thinking across all content areas. This represents a significant shift from the content-knowledge focus of SAGE science assessment. Proficiency levels on the Utah Aspire Plus science test align with the ACT science College Readiness benchmark score for students who are proficient in science. This means that students who are proficient in science on Utah Aspire Plus are on the correct trajectory to meet the ACT College Readiness benchmarks for science. You can find out more about ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks on ACT's score information page.