

**Background**

In 2026, at the request of DEED, NWEA prepared the Student Performance by Content Standard and Item Type report. This report unpacked the most missed standards and item types from the 2025 AK STAR assessment administration. This infographic synthesizes that report.

**Areas of Need**

**ALASKA READING ANCHOR STANDARD 2**

**Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key and supporting details and ideas** This is the most challenging standard for Alaska students across all grades in both literary texts (stories, dramas, poetry) and informational texts (historical, scientific, and technical texts; literary non-fiction)



**SUMMARIZING**

Students may struggle to decide which details to include in or leave out from a summary. To summarize well, students must build skill in differentiating between topics and details in both literary and informational text. Students may struggle to decide which details to include or leave out of a summary, as well as the difference between summarizing vs. retelling of a story.



**THEME**

Theme is very challenging for readers of all levels and ages because themes are rarely stated directly in a literary text (fables are a notable exception). A theme is an author's comment on an important topic. Students can frequently understand the events of a literary text without being able to identify its theme.



**AUTHOR'S PURPOSE**

Irony and satire can make determining author's purpose very difficult for students. This is especially difficult for struggling readers and ELL's.

**Resources**

**Standards and Vocabulary Alignment**

- Ensure district curriculum is aligned with **Assessment blueprint**
- Reviewing **Achievement Level Descriptors** periodically for each standard being taught to support educators understanding of proficiency at that standard
- Use Science of Reading-aligned vocabulary instructional strategies: **Resource Depot: Vocabulary Instruction**

**Assessment Support**

- Exposing students to the assessment platform through the grade level videos for the student tutorial multiple times annually will help be more comfortable with the item types and tools
- Utilizing AK STAR practice tests as interventions, formative assessments, or extensions

## FOCUSING ON THE TYPES OF QUESTIONS WE ASK

Findings from NWEA on most difficult item types  
for students on AK STAR

**ELA  
GRADES 3-9**

### Areas of Need

After reading the passage, a student wants to find out more about the invention of the first hot-air balloon. The student finds some books at a local library. Read the title of each book and determine whether the book is **likely** or **unlikely** to be helpful for completing the assignment. Each book has only one correct answer.

Book	Likely to Be Helpful	Unlikely to Be Helpful
<i>The Greatest Accomplishments of Marie Antoinette: A Queen</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>A Traveler's Guide to Versailles</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>The Montgolfier Brothers and Their Successful Experiment</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Flying High: The History of Aviation</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Science Projects for Beginners: A How-To Guide</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### Example of a multi-select question

Read the letter and then place the correct punctuation mark in the blank.

Dear Grandma,

Thank you for the art supply set that you sent me. I painted all afternoon with the watercolors. I am sending you one of the pictures I made.

Love

Kristin

#### Example of drag and drop question

### MULTIPLE-CHOICE / MULTI-SELECT

Multiple-choice items in which students need to select multiple responses are challenging for students. This item type asks students to pick at least two correct answers from a range of five or more answer choices. Students likely do not have as much experience with this item type as they do with a traditional multiple-choice item, which only has one correct answer. Adding responses can add complexity to a question.

### DRAG AND DROP / CLICK AND POP

A Drag and Drop (or Click and Pop) item asks a student to manipulate item components; e.g., they may be asked to drag answer choices into a table. There are typically more than two components for students to manipulate. As with a Multiple-Choice Multiple-Select item, this adds complexity. Additionally, students will not have had as much exposure to this item type as they would a traditional multiple-choice item.

For both of these item types, students may benefit from more practice and exposure to similar items. Students may use the AK STAR Practice Tests if greater familiarity is desired.

### Supports

- Educators can review item types in the [Educator Guide](#) pages 11-16
- Embed Multiple-Choice / Multiple-Select questions in classroom formative assessments
- Give students repeated opportunities to practice with the [AK STAR student practice test](#), especially for Drag and Drop / Click and Pop items.
- Explore and apply the resources and action steps at [Resource Depot: AK STAR & MAP Assessments](#)

[More Resources](#)



[NWEA Study](#)