Glossary

Action Plan: a school plan that is based on student data, related to standards and designed to impact student performance.

Alignment: The process of strengthening the linkage between standards and assessment.

Anchor Task: A performance task that is given uniformly to all students that allows comparisons regarding the relative strengths and weaknesses of students' skills.

Assessment: The process of quantifying, describing, or gathering information about student performance. (Arter, Blum - Northwest Regional Laboratory)

Baseline Data: The data from both the New Standards Reference Exam and the Vermont Science Assessments will report on student performance in respect to Vermont's Standards. This is the **first time** schools will receive this information. Therefore, it is baseline. This baseline information will provide schools with information that will help them align their curriculum with the Standards.

Criterion-Referenced: This type of assessment compares a student's performance according to a description of the desired performance. For example: She typed 55 words per minute without errors when the criterion was 40 words a minute with no more than two errors. All standards-based assessments are criterion-referenced assessments, though not all criterion-referenced assessments are standards-based assessments. Criterion-referenced assessment is often contrasted with norm-referenced assessment.

Demographics: Characteristics of populations or groups such as gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, and English language proficiency. Demographics may also be used to refer to a student's feeder school, programs they have been enrolled in and mobilitiy.

Disaggregate Data: The process of analyzing student performance by demographic groups: males compared to females; low socio-economic to high socio-economic.

Distribution of Scores: A distribution is a way of summarizing a group or a set of scores. Distributions may be graphed to demonstrate visually the relations among the scores in the group or set. In such graphs, the horizontal axis is the

continuum on which individuals are measured; the vertical axis is the frequency (or number) of individuals earning any given score.

Equity: freedom from bias or favoritism.

Error Bar: a graphic illustration of the percentage of students scoring in a performance level including the standard error.

Indicators of Progress: Data or observations, collected in the interim, which show progress toward meeting the annual goals.

Learning Opportunities: Recommended practices to support all students in attaining the standards in *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities.* They address access, instruction, assessment, and connections, as well as best practices particular to the fields of knowledge. They are specific, represent areas that can be influenced by the teacher, and are supported by current research and best practices.

Mean Score: The arithmatic average of the scores.

Multiple Measures: Providing more than one way for students to demonstrate attainment of a standard. Students need to be provided with multiple opportunities to perform in relation to standards. Multiple opportunities to perform can apply to the assessment approach (open-ended vs. close-ended), format (constructed response vs. selected response), or context (on demand vs. over time; the setting; the purpose of the assessment).

Normal Curve Equivalents: Identifies the student's position on a standard normal curve (score of 1 – 100). Normal curve equivalent scores can be aggregated and averaged, compared from one subtest to another, used to compare one group to another (males to females) and can show gains.

Norm-Referenced: Tests designed to compare the performance of a student or group to another student or group. In the case of the Vermont Science Assessment, Vermont and each of Vermont's schools are compared to a national sample. If a school is at the 66th percentile, this means that its students performed better than 66% of the students in the national group.

Norm-Referenced Results: See percentiles, quartiles, stanines, normal curve equivalents (NCEs), and grade equivalents.

Objective Analysis: also called clusters or skills analysis; a student's performance on a group of related skills or objectives.

Percentile: the ranking of scores that refers to the percentage of people whose performance the student has equaled or surpassed.

Performance Gap: The difference between present performance and targeted performance.

Performance Target: The goal that a school sets for performance. For example, "sixty percent of the students will achieve the standard or achieve the standard with honors."

Portfolio: a collection of work that is assessed based upon an explicit set of criteria aligned with Vermont Standards and defined with examples of student work which define quality. The portfolio should reflect the student's best work.

Quartile: Quartiles divide scores into four equal groups. The lowest quartile consists of the lowest 25% of the scores of the norm group. The highest quartile represents the highest 25% of the scores of the norm group.

Scaled Scores: a score that permits the equating of test norms across different grade or age levels or that permits equating of different forms of a test at a given grade level or subtests within a test.

Standards-Based Assessment: Standards-based assessment is criterion-referenced assessment in which the criteria are taken directly from standards.

Standard-Based Reporting: standards-based assessments are reported by proficiency levels defining whether or not the student has attained the Standard. The publication, "A Pamphlet to Help School Board Members and School Administrators Understand the 1996 New Standards Reference Exam" provides a complete explanation on how the reporting levels were developed.

Standardized Assessment: A set of consistent procedures for developing, administering, and scoring an assessment. The goal is to ensure that all students are assessed under uniform conditions.

Stanine: Nine-point scales that allow the conversion of percentile ranks into nine larger units.