



NJDOE News

NEW JERSEY EDUCATION COMMISSIONER RELEASES STATEWIDE AVERAGES ON NEW PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENTS

Tougher Curriculum Content and Test Methods Set Base Line For Future Assessment For 4th and 8th Graders **New Education Advocacy Group Launched**

(Trenton, NJ - September 21, 1999) - New Jersey Education Commissioner David Hespe announced today the statewide average results of new, more rigorous proficiency tests taken last Spring by all 4th and 8th grade students throughout New Jersey. The results will be used as the base line against which future achievements will be measured.

Almost 250,000 4th and 8th graders for the first time took a new battery of tests to measure their proficiency in meeting the more demanding new Core Curriculum Content Standards mandated by the State Board of Education.

"Previous assessments served their purposes," says Commissioner Hespe. "But they can no longer serve as a basis of comparison on student achievement. Previous content and assessments are no longer rigorous enough to fulfill the mandate of the Legislature and the State Board of Education that we prepare students for the much tougher demands of college and the workplace in the 21st century.

"These base line scores must be considered the first in a new generation of assessments aimed at measuring students' proficiency in the more demanding Core Curriculum Content Standards."

The academic subject areas covered on the test are Math, Language Arts Literacy and Science for 4th graders and Math and Language Arts Literacy for 8th graders. Ultimately by 2002, the test will assess knowledge in Math, Science, Language Arts Literacy, Social Studies, Visual and Performing Arts, Health and Physical Education and World Languages. The assessments are linked directly to Core Curriculum Content Standards in these subjects. The assessments differ significantly from previous statewide assessments in both difficulty and form. The new test requires students to solve complex problems and communicate what they know.

"Let us not forget the real purpose of these assessments," continues Commissioner Hespe. "The test results are not an end in themselves, as they have too often been portrayed. These tests are, first and foremost, a diagnostic tool to help teachers pinpoint students' individual needs so they can help them to higher levels of achievement."

For 8th grade students, the statewide average test results in Mathematics showed that 38% were partially proficient, 43% were proficient and 19% were advanced proficient. In Language Arts Literacy, 22% were partially proficient, 71% were proficient and 7% were advanced proficient.

For 4th grade students, the statewide average test results in Mathematics showed that 40% were partially proficient, 44% proficient, and 16% were advanced proficient. Fourth grade Language Arts Literacy results were 59% partially proficient, 41% proficient and less than 1% advanced proficient. Results in Science at this grade level were 14% partially proficient, 52% proficient and 34% advanced proficient.

Commissioner Hespe also announced that the State Department of Education has submitted the detailed test results to all districts to be checked for accuracy. The districts are scheduled to return these results, after a detailed review, by early October. The Department of Education will then, in the winter, make public the New Jersey School Report Card, a detailed statistical profile of every school and every school district in the state.

As part of the Department of Education's response to the assessment results, Hespe detailed a 9-part plan to assist local school districts in implementing the new curriculum and assessment program. The Department of Education will:

1. Provide a comprehensive curriculum framework for all subjects covered by the new tests.

2. Provide record levels of state aid to local districts. For fiscal 2000, the state will provide \$5.3 billion in aid to local schools, which average 43.2% of local budgets.
3. Approve teacher and administrator training to meet the elements of the tougher criteria as part of the professional development requirement of 100 hours in five years.
4. Continue to work with all groups within the educational community to identify whatever adjustments are necessary to assure that statewide assessment programs are time-efficient and relevant.
5. Continue a five-year, \$250 million technology enhancement program to vastly expand categorical aid for equipment, connectivity and professional development.
6. Continue to increase state assistance in the 30 Abbott districts to support school reform and early childhood education.
7. Assist local districts in communicating with parents and communities about the test results and how parents can help children do better in school.
8. Expand the Families Achieving New Standards (FANS) program from Math and Science this year to World Languages and Language Arts Literacy next year, and then Social Studies and Visual and Performing Arts.
9. Encourage and support the launch of a new statewide alliance of the business community, educators and community-based organizations called New Jersey United for Higher School Standards, its purpose is two-fold: to help us better communicate a complete understanding of the new tests and their role in building better schools... and to assist parents in accessing programs that will help their children reach higher levels of proficiency. The co-chairs of New Jersey United for Higher School Standards are Arthur Ryan, Chairman and CEO of The Prudential Insurance Company of America, and Alfred Cade, Chairman of the New Jersey Commission of Higher Education.

"As a parent and corporate leader I understand the value of a high quality education," says Art Ryan, Chairman and CEO of Prudential and New Jersey United Co-chair. "All children must be prepared for the future. By raising New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards we are helping our children enter tomorrow's workforce with a true competitive edge that will serve them well."

"We who lead our system of colleges and universities have charged these institutions with preparing students for the steadily rising challenges of tough, global competition," says Al Cade, Chairman of the Commission on Higher Education and New Jersey United Co-chair. "New Jersey's future prosperity depends on an ever more rigorous curriculum and assessments in New Jersey's public schools."

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(NOTE: [A copy of Commissioner Hespe's remarks is attached.](#))