



NJDOE News

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Fourth Graders Prepare to Take Elementary School Proficiency Assessment

Beginning next week, more than 100,000 fourth-grade students throughout New Jersey will participate in the third official administration of the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA). The test is designed to measure the skills and knowledge required under the state's rigorous academic standards.

The ESPA will be administered over five consecutive days. Since school districts schedule their spring recesses at different times, local school officials were allowed to choose four different starting dates: April 23, April 24, April 30 and May 1.

"New Jersey has tough academic standards designed to ensure that our students receive the highest quality education," said Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco. "I wish our fourth-grade students and their teachers well as they prepare for this important challenge."

ESPA testing will begin with the science portion, which will last for 1 hour, 16 minutes. The language arts literacy portion will be administered on day two for 1 hour, 20 minutes, and on day three for 1 hour, 50 minutes. Mathematics will be tested on day four for 1 hour, 7 minutes, and on day five for 57 minutes. All numbers reflect total administration time.

"We need to measure student performance at the elementary, middle and high school levels to ensure that students are receiving the knowledge and skills they need to be successful," said Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. "We continue to improve our testing program as school districts are improving their curricula in order to better prepare their students for the assessment. I believe that over time, student performance on the ESPA will continue to rise."

The ESPA science test consists of 17 multiple-choice and 4 open-ended questions. The math assessment consists of 38 multiple choice and 7 open-ended items; and the language arts literacy assessment consists of 11 multiple choice, 3 open-ended, 2 writing tasks and a field test component. The field test will vary from form to form.

The ESPA is not designed to promote students from one grade to the next. It is a diagnostic tool that tells teachers and parents if students are progressing adequately towards obtaining the skills and knowledge they will need as 11th graders to pass the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). Passing the HSPA will be a requirement for receiving a high school diploma.

Student scores will place them in one of three categories: advanced proficient, proficient and partially proficient. Students in the advanced proficient range will not need remedial help. Students in the partially proficient range must receive special instruction to improve identified areas of weakness, and students in the proficient range may or may not need remedial help.

In addition to the regular ESPA administration that begins next week, the current fourth graders will take the ESPA social studies test in October 2001 as fifth graders.

All public school students are required to take the ESPA, except for certain special education students and limited English proficient students whose learning disabilities or lack of fluency exempt them from the exam.

The Department of Education has developed guides for parents about the ESPA. The guides, along with sample test items, are available from the department's web site:

www.state.nj.us/education