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New High School Graduation Test to Be Given for First Time in 2001-02 School Year; Fifth and Eighth Graders to Be Tested for First Time in Social Studies

The new High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) will be administered as the graduation test of record to the state's eleventh-grade students for the first time in March 2002. The eleventh graders will have three opportunities to pass the HSPA to meet the graduation requirement. Students who do not pass the HSPA next March will have additional opportunities to be retested in the fall of 2002 and the spring of 2003. The HSPA will initially be administered in the subject areas of language arts literacy and mathematics. Additional subject areas will be phased in over the next several years.

Also, the state's fifth- and eighth-grade students will, for the first time, take a test in social studies. Fifth graders will take the exam in October of 2001, while the eighth graders will take the test in the spring of 2002. Both fourth- and eighth-grade students will continue to test in language arts literacy, science and math — the eighth graders in March of 2002 and the fourth graders in May 2002.

"I believe that our state's system of assessments is the most important measure of accountability in our schools," said Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. "We have worked very hard to craft rigorous academic standards that reflect what students ought to know and be able to do at the fourth-, eighth- and eleventh-grade levels, and we have worked diligently to link a rigorous system of assessments to our standards.

"I believe that this system of standards and assessments will provide our children with a world-class education that will prepare them for successful futures in college and the working world." In the 2001-02 school year, the Department of Education will also for the first time disaggregate testing data. This will allow school districts to compare test performance within several demographic groups. The state will disaggregate data by race, gender, limited English proficient, special education and socio-economic group. The United States Department of Education requires that this information be produced. The data will allow school districts to analyze student performance so that curriculum and programs can be introduced that are designed to address deficiencies.

"This information will be a great help to school districts," said Jay Doolan, acting assistant commissioner for Academic and Career Standards. "For the first time, gaps in performance within individual demographic groups can be addressed using hard data."

The new HSPA will be administered on March 5-7, 2002 for high school juniors. The HSPT will be administered from October 2-4 for any retained juniors, seniors, adult high school, or returning students who still need to pass one or more sections of the HSPT 11.

The eighth-grade test (GEPA) will be administered from March 11-15, 2002 and the fourth-grade test (ESPA) will be administered from April 29-May 3, 2002. The social studies test for fifth graders will be given on October 16, 2001.