



2010-11 NJ ASK AND HSPA Overall School Performance Assessments Show Slight Improvement

Results Demonstrate the Need for Reforms to Address Significant and Persistent Achievement Gap in New Jersey

For Immediate Release

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Trenton, NJ – The Department of Education today presented results on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) for the 2010-11 school year. While overall performance continued to hold steady or improve slightly in nearly all grades and subjects, a persistent achievement gap remains for economically disadvantaged, African American, and Hispanic students. These results demonstrate the need to fully enact Governor Christie’s bold reform agenda to ensure that every student receives a quality education and the opportunity to succeed regardless of zip code.

“We approach these results today with both confidence and humility. Overall, New Jersey students continue to perform at extremely high levels overall, and with few exceptions the statewide numbers continue to inch upwards,” said Acting Commissioner Cerf. “However, we have a persistent achievement gap that leaves our economically disadvantaged, African American, and Hispanic students far behind their peers. It is a disgraceful legacy in New Jersey that leaves tens of thousands of students behind each year – and has for decades. We must be honest with ourselves and our communities about this achievement gap, and be impatient and relentless in doing everything we can to close it once and for all.”

Overall statewide performance stayed statistically constant or increased slightly on both the NJ ASK and HSPA in 2010-11 in both math and language arts literacy (LAL). See Table 1.

Table 1: Percentage of students proficient or above over the past two years			
		2010-11	2009-10
Math	NJ ASK	75.5%	73.1%
	HSPA	75.2%	74.1%
LAL	NJ ASK	66.5%	66.6%
	HSPA	89.6%	87.1%

These trends persist over time. Figures 1 and 2 show the percentage of students proficient or advanced over the past several years. Note that changes in assessments in grades 3 and 4 in 2008-09 and changes in assessments for grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 in 2007-08 mean that longitudinal comparisons in those grades cannot accurately be compared over time. As seen in the charts below, these changes account for the slight overall dip in NJ ASK scores in these two years as represented by the dotted line.

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Despite these overall results, a significant achievement gap remains for both low income and minority students.

As seen in Figures 3 and 4, on the NJ ASK, economically disadvantaged students score 31 percentage points lower than their peers in LAL and 24 percentage points below their peers in math. Both of these achievement gaps have persisted over time.

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This trend is consistent as well for Hispanic and African American students. As seen in figures 5 and 6, on the NJ ASK, Hispanic students score 27 percentage points below their peers and African American students score 33 percentage points below their peers in LAL. In math, Hispanic students score 20 percentage points below their peers, and African American students score 31 percentage points below their peers.

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These results have significant consequences for students later in life. On average, a college graduate will earn

\$1 million more than a high school graduate over a lifetime. Between 1998 and 2008, the job market has drastically shifted in favor of those with a college degree. During that time period, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 10 million jobs were created for those with a college degree, while 600,000 jobs were lost that did not require a high school degree. Lastly, high school dropouts are 47 times more likely to be incarcerated in their lifetime than a college graduate.

“This achievement gap is the most significant issue that we face in education as a state,” said Acting Commissioner Cerf. “Without a quality education, we are not providing tens of thousands of students the chance they need to succeed in life. During the past year, we have begun to put in place a number of reforms that will not only help our lowest-performing students, but that will help all New Jersey students continuously improve. Education reform is not a zero sum game. We can all improve to make sure every child is truly ready for the demands of the 21st century.”

Through its No Child Left Behind Waiver application (<http://www.nj.gov/education/grants/nclb/waiver/>), the NJDOE has outlined a plan in the following three areas:

- Full implementation of the Common Core State Standards that began this year and will include K-8 math and English language arts by 2013.
- Development of a new accountability system and the development of 7 regional achievement centers that will focus on the state’s persistently lowest-performing schools.
- Creation of a more fair, consistent, and learning-centered teacher evaluation system that will help all teachers, regardless of experience, continuously improve their practice. Eleven districts are currently piloting and helping to develop the new evaluation system, with full implementation planned for 2013-14.

In addition, the NJDOE has begun a major push to reduce bureaucratic regulations and red tape that prevents districts and schools from focusing on student achievement. The Education Transformation Task Force completed its interim report in September

(<http://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/552011/approved/20110912a.html>) with a final report expected soon.

Lastly, the Christie Administration is currently pursuing legislation that would ensure that every student in New Jersey has an outstanding teacher, and to increase choice for underserved students.

Students take the NJ ASK in grades 3 through 8 in both LAL and math. The scoring scale for all grade tests is 100-300. Students achieving a score of 200 are deemed proficient; students achieving a score of 250 or greater are deemed advanced proficient. Students take the HSPA in 11th grade, with three opportunities to pass the test.

Assessment results can be found at the link below:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/schools/achievement/2012/>