

**Resolution Establishing Proficient Level Cut Score Standards for
The New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA):
Mathematics and English Language Arts**

The following is the accessible version of the amended Resolution Establishing Proficient Level Cut Score Standards for the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA) in mathematics and English language arts. The adoption document includes two sections – [the comment and response form](#) and [the resolution](#).

State Board of Education

Resolution

Comment/Response Form

This comment and response form contains comments from the January 5, 2022, meeting of the State Board of Education (State Board) when the resolution was discussed.

Topic: Adoption of Cut Score Standards for the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics

Division: Teaching and Learning Services

Meeting Date: February 2, 2022

Completed by: Office of Assessments

Level: Adoption

Summary of Comments and Agency Responses

The following is a summary of the comments received from State Board of Education members and the Department of Education's (Department) responses. Each commenter is identified at the end of the comment by a letter, which corresponds to the following list:

- A. Kathy Goldenberg, President, State Board of Education
- B. Arcelio Aponte, Member, State Board of Education
- C. Mary Beth Berry, Member, State Board of Education
- D. Elaine Bobrove, Member, State Board of Education
- E. Dr. Ronald Butcher, Member, State Board of Education
- F. Dr. Nedd James Johnson, Member, State Board of Education
- G. Fatimah Burnam-Watkins, State Board of Education

1. **Comment:** The commenter asked for clarity around the key differences between the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA) and the New Jersey Student Graduation Proficiency Assessments (NJGPA), and the rationale behind the proposed cut score of 725. **(B)**

Response: The NJSLA focuses on a student's trajectory as on a continuum as the student moves throughout their academic career. "College and career ready" refers to the expected trajectory that students follow and the results of the NJSLA provide data points to determine if students are drifting from the expectation. However, the NJGPA is a final snapshot of how well students retained specific macro skills and abilities that they will require to be successful in post-secondary education.

The macro skills and abilities required for graduation have been determined to be the standards for English language arts (ELA) grade 10, Algebra 1, and Geometry. Previously, the cut score for graduation on the corresponding NJSLA assessments was 750 to match the expected trajectory students would be following. This score was

appropriate because the assessments were being provided at the end of the associated course the student was enrolled in. The proposed 725 cut score for the NJGPA takes into account the difference in the specificity of the items being utilized and the expected retention of material for one to six years after instruction.

2. **Comment:** The commenter asked when the Department will conduct its assessment to determine whether the proposed cut score for the NJGPA is appropriate. The commenter also asked when a change in the cut score would occur if it is determined that it is necessary. **(D)**

Response: The NJGPA cut score will be reviewed as part of the standards validation process, which will take place in February. The NJGPA will be administered to 11th grade students in March. The information obtained from the standards validation process and test administration will be reviewed with the assessment vendors. This information also will be shared with the New Jersey Technical Advisory Committee (NJ TAC) to obtain its feedback and recommendations. An update will be shared with the State Board in the summer of 2022.

3. **Comment:** The commenter asked if the NJGPA cut score could be changed for the following school year based on time constraints. **(D)**

Response: There will be an opportunity to determine possible changes to the cut score based on data analysis from the first administration of the NJGPA.

4. **Comment:** The commenter asked why the NJGPA cut score cannot be set at 750 instead of the proposed 725, with the subsequent review of the data as planned. **(C)**

Response: The Department followed industry-standard processes with the assessment vendors and the NJ TAC. After considering the performance level descriptors and the requirements for the design of the assessment, the recommended cut score was set at 725. Impact data will be available after the NJGPA's first administration and will be reviewed by the Department. The Department will analyze the data to ensure that the recommended cut score of 725 remains appropriate. It is not possible to determine the actual impact of a higher cut score without assessment data.

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As noted above, the cut score for graduation on the NJSLA assessments was 750 to match the expected trajectory students would be following. This score was appropriate because the assessments were being provided at the end of the associated course the student was enrolled in. The proposed 725 cut score for the NJGPA takes into account the difference in the specificity of the items being utilized and the expected retention of material for one to six years after instruction.

5. **Comment:** The commenter asked if field testing was completed for the NJGPA. **(A)**

Response: All items on the NJGPA are from the NJSLA item bank and are considered field tested with New Jersey students.

6. **Comment:** The commenter asked if an approved cut score for the NJGPA will be in effect for five years or if a revision can be made by the State Board at any point. **(G)**

Response: An approved cut score is in effect until it is changed by the State Board via a resolution.

7. **Comment:** The commenter expressed concern that the proposed cut score by which students would be able to graduate may be too low, and that some students who meet the cut score will not be ready for a career or college. Recognizing the additional pathways to graduation that are available to students and the social-emotional and other effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the commenter expressed concern that the recommended cut score for the NJGPA is not aligned to the “meets expectations” or “exceeds expectations” levels on the corresponding NJSLAs. **(A)**

Response: The NJSLA represents a continuum looking at students in grades three through nine for progress toward proficiency of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) and meeting college- and career-readiness standards. Separately, the NJGPA, which will be administered to students in the 11th grade, is intended to meet the State statutory requirements to ensure that students have achieved core competencies before they graduate. The NJSLA focuses on a student’s trajectory as on a continuum as the student moves throughout their academic career. “College and career ready” refers to the expected trajectory that students follow and the results of the NJSLA provide data points to determine if students are drifting from the expectation. However, the NJGPA is a final snapshot of how well students retained specific macro skills and abilities that they will require to be successful in post-secondary education.

Previously, the cut score for graduation on the corresponding NJSLA assessments was 750 to match the expected trajectory students would be following. This score was appropriate because the assessments were being provided at the end of the associated course the student was enrolled in. The proposed 725 cut score for the NJGPA takes into account the difference in the specificity of the items being utilized and the expected retention of material for one to six years after instruction.

8. **Comment:** The commenter asked for confirmation that the items on the assessment vary in complexity and difficulty, and that individual scores will be sent to students and not only an indication of pass or fail. **(D)**

Response: Yes, the items on the test forms vary in complexity. The report that will be generated will indicate either graduation ready or not graduation ready. NJGPA individual student reports will also include the scale score.

9. **Comment:** The commenter asked how many years the assessment must be administered to obtain baseline data. **(A)**

Response: In general, three years of data are required to establish a trend. For the purposes of standard validation process and establishing the cut score, typically live data from the administration is used to set the starting point.

10. **Comment:** The commenter asked for clarification of the purpose of the standards validation process for the NJGPA. (A)

Response: Through the standards validation process, New Jersey educators will come together and look at the different performance expectations and further define the 725 cut score within the assessment’s parameters. Through this process, New Jersey educators evaluate the items on the NJGPA through the lens of the performance level descriptors (PLDs) to validate the conversion of the written PLDs into the proposed cut score of 725. The educators will be instructed to place a bookmark where they see the point of alignment between item difficulty and PLD language. Through robust discussion of the “bookmark placements,” as the process is called, members will build shared understanding of the item difficulty level that represents “graduation ready” knowledge, skills, and abilities.

This information will be used in conjunction with the live assessment administration data, which will then be brought to the NJ TAC for discussion. This information also would be brought to the State Board with a recommendation for adjustments, if needed.

11. **Comment:** The commenter asked what types of constituents the Department has worked with in terms of the NJGPA’s development. (A)

Response: The items that will be placed on the NJGPA come from the NJSLA item pool. During the development of the NJSLA item pool, New Jersey educators serve on the various assessment development committees and support the Department with assessment development activities such as item reviews, passage reviews, and other parts of the assessment development cycle. The Statewide assessments are reviewed with New Jersey educators. The Department will also be assembling another panel of New Jersey educators specifically for the NJGPA standards validation process, which will take place in February 2022. The NJ TAC also supports the Department in ensuring the technical requirements for a valid and reliable assessment are met. Furthermore, the Department works with its assessment developer, New Meridian, for content development and data analysis.

12. **Comment:** The commenter stated that the State Board should rely on the input of the experts who determined the 725 cut score to be the most appropriate cut score for the NJGPA. (E)

Response: The Department thanks the commenter for the support.

13. **Comment:** The commenter stated that the resolution does not emphasize the Department’s future analysis of the cut score or a subsequent presentation to State Board about the cut score and any possible change resulting from the first administration of the NJGPA. The commenter suggested an amendment to the resolution to include a statement that the Department will provide to the State Board in the summer an overview of the outcomes of the NJGPA and updated recommendations to enable the State Board to determine if an adjustment to the cut score is needed. (B)

Response: The State Board approved a motion to table the resolution until the following month and to amend the resolution to include a statement that the Department will present to the State Board. By the September 2022 meeting, an overview of the outcomes

of the NJGPA and updated recommendations to enable the State Board to determine if an adjustment to the cut score is needed. Accordingly, the resolution has been amended to include a clause stating that “the Department will present to the State Board, by the September meeting of 2022, an analysis from the first administration of the NJGPA test for the board’s review of the herein approved cut score. Following the said review, the Department will recommend to either maintain or modify said cut score.”

- 14. Comment:** The commenter expressed concern that tabling the resolution’s adoption could delay the notification to school districts regarding the established NJGPA cut score.
(F)

Response: If the resolution is adopted by the State Board at its February 2, 2022, meeting, the Department will have time to communicate the established cut score prior to the NJGPA’s administration.



Amended Resolution

A Resolution Establishing Proficient Level Cut Score Standards for The New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA): Mathematics and English Language Arts

Whereas, according to N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-1, the Commissioner of Education with the approval of the State Board of Education shall establish a program of standards for graduation from secondary school, an such a program shall include, but not be limited to the development of a Statewide test in reading, writing and computational skills to be administered to all secondary school pupils as provided herein, and clear and explicit Statewide levels of proficiency in reading, writing and computational skills to be demonstrated as a minimum requirement for high school graduation; and

Whereas, according to N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-6, the State graduation proficiency test shall be administered to all 11th grade pupils and to any 11th or 12th grade pupil who has previously failed to demonstrate mastery of State graduation proficiency standards on said test; and

Whereas, the establishment of cut scores was completed for the State graduation proficiency test, called the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA), in accordance with industry best practices in large-scale assessment to determine the assessments' validity and the theoretically appropriate performance level cut scores; and

Whereas, the State Board [approves] **acknowledges** the Department's selection of the respective NJGPA proficient level cut scores; and

Whereas, the Department will present to the State Board, by the September meeting of 2022, an analysis from the first administration of the NJGPA test for the board's review of the herein approved cut score. Following the said review, the Department will recommend to either maintain or modify said cut score; and

Whereas, the Department will monitor the impact of these tests and proficient level cut scores on the proficiency rates and will report any problems with the same to the State Board; now therefore be it

Resolved, that the New Jersey State Board of Education hereby approves the following proficient level cut scores, effective February 2, 2022:

NJGPA Graduation Ready Cut Scores

ELA	Mathematics
[[725]] 750	[[725]] 750