



NJDOE News

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For Release: March 3, 2000**

New Jersey Readies to Administer Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment

More than 90,000 eighth grade students will be tested next week to determine how well they are measuring up to the state's more rigorous academic standards.

The Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA), now in its second year, will be administered from March 6 through March 9. Students will be tested in three subject areas - mathematics, science and language arts literacy (reading and writing). The science portion of the examination will be given, for the first time ever, on Monday, March 6. The test will last 1 hour and 57 minutes. The math portion will be administered on March 7 and last 2 hours and 27 minutes. The language arts literacy portion will be spread over two days, March 8 and 9. Day one's test will take 2 hours and 12 minutes; day two's test, 2 hours and 7 minutes.

There will be 60 multiple choice and 4 open-ended questions on the science test. There will be 40 multiple choice and 8 open-ended questions on the math assessment and there will be 20 multiple choice, 4 open-ended, 2 writing tasks, and a revising editing passage on the language arts literacy exam.

"The new, more rigorous core curriculum content standards that were adopted in 1996 raised the academic bar for all our children," said Gov. Christine Todd Whitman. "A new millenium brings new challenges. A 20th century education will not give students the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in today's global economy. Higher standards are essential to prepare them for what awaits in college and the workplace."

Commissioner of Education David C. Hespe noted that the standards were established with input from more than a thousand people, including national experts and New Jersey educators.

"We are determined to produce public school graduates who are well prepared for the 21st century world of work," the commissioner said. "Our assessment program plays an important role in meeting that goal."

"The GEPA will provide an indication of how well eighth graders are measuring up to our new, higher standards," Hespe said. "It is a challenging test. The results will help schools and teachers identify those children who need additional assistance in a particular subject area."

Hespe emphasized that the GEPA is not a promotional test. Students do not have to pass the GEPA to proceed to the next grade. However, to graduate, students will have to pass the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) that will replace the current Grade 11 High School Proficiency Test (HSPT) in the 2001-2002 school year.

"The GEPA is a diagnostic tool that tells teachers and parents if students are mastering the knowledge and skills they will need to earn a high school diploma," Hespe said. The results of the GEPA, which replaced the Early Warning Test (EWT) that was last given in 1998, will be reported in June.

After listening to the concerns from parents, educators and children about the state assessment program Commissioner Hespe made several changes in the GEPA. These changes include shortening the test by 90 minutes, getting test results to the school districts in June and reviewing ways to get more test result information to school districts.

Parent's Guides answering frequently asked questions about the GEPA were distributed by the Department of Education to local school districts. In addition, the department has provided sample tests to all school districts, parents and citizens on the department's website: www.state.nj.us/education. The Parent's Guides also can be accessed at the website.

The Department of Education will also be administering a field test to eighth graders in the subject areas of visual and performing arts and social studies on Friday March 17, 2000. All schools with an eighth grade will have to administer one of the two tests as assigned by the department. Field tests allow the department to evaluate prospective future test questions. The exams do not count for the students and are much shorter than the regular GEPA tests.

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