



NJDOE News

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Eighth Graders Prepare for State Exam

More than 92,000 eighth-grade students throughout New Jersey will participate next week in the third official administration of the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA). The test is designed to measure how well students are meeting the state's rigorous academic standards.

GEPA testing will be conducted between March 12 and March 15. Students will be tested in three areas - science, mathematics and language arts literacy.

"The people of New Jersey have demanded that we raise the level of student performance and set high academic standards for our children," said Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco. "The eighth-grade test is a vital tool to measure how well students are obtaining the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in life."

GEPA testing begins on March 12 with the science portion, which will last for 1 hour, 57 minutes. The math portion will be given for 2 hours, 27 minutes on

March 13. The language arts (reading and writing) will be given over two days on

March 14 and 15. Test times for day one vary between 1 hour, 52 minutes and 2 hours, 12 minutes, depending on the field test section. Test time for day two is 2 hours, 7 minutes. All numbers reflect total administration time.

"Setting high standards of achievement presents a formidable challenge for students, as well as the education community," said Acting Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. "Over the past two years, many school districts have made adjustments to their curricula in order to better prepare students for the assessment. I believe student performance on the GEPA will continue to improve in the years to come, just as it has done in our previous state tests."

The GEPA science test consists of 60 multiple-choice and four open-ended questions. The math assessment consists of 40 multiple-choice and eight open-ended items; and the language arts literacy assessment consists of 20 multiple-choice, four open-ended items, two writing tasks and a revise/edit passage.

The GEPA 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 is 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 GEPA administration next week, eighth graders must participate in a mandatory field test in social studies on March 23. Field tests allow the Department of Education to evaluate prospective test questions for future exams. The tests do not count for the students and are much shorter than the regular GEPA tests.

All students are required to take the GEPA, 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 GEPA. The guides, along with sample test items, are available from the department's web site:

www.state.nj.us/education