



NJDOE News

For More Information Contact the Public Information Office:

**Tom Rosenthal
Richard Vespucci
Jon Zlock
609-292-1126**

For Release: February 24, 2003

Commissioner Librera Announces Name for New State Tests

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera today announced that New Jersey's new state tests for third and fourth graders will be known as the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge, or NJ ASK3 and NJ ASK 4.

The tests, now under development, are scheduled to be administered to approximately 105,000 third graders and 105,000 fourth graders on May 20-23, 2003, with makeup testing on May 27-30.

"Since our statewide testing system is expanding and evolving to meet new needs, it is appropriate that we have a new name to accompany our newest tests," Commissioner Librera said. "Local school officials, teachers, parents and interested citizens will grow more familiar with NJ ASK now and in the years to come.

"We use testing as a tool to measure how well students are gaining the knowledge and skills deemed necessary for success in life," Dr. Librera said. "We believe that we are using testing in New Jersey for the right reason -- to guarantee that our students are receiving a high quality education, regardless of who they are or where they live."

Through use of effective testing, local school officials can develop and implement activities to improve instruction, which will in turn help raise the level of student achievement.

Commissioner Librera said the new tests respond to a need on both the state and federal levels to assess knowledge and skills of elementary and middle school students. At the state level, Governor James E. McGreevey's 21-point plan for educational excellence has a special focus on programs to support and enhance early literacy. Through the Early Literacy Initiative, the state has set a goal to have every child reading at grade level by the end of the third grade. The new NJ ASK3 will help measure how well school districts across the state are achieving this goal.

At the federal level, the No Child Left Behind Act calls for annual testing of all public school students in grades three through eight, inclusive, in the content areas of reading and mathematics. NJ ASK3 and NJ ASK4 are the beginning of New Jersey's response to this requirement, with future assessments for students in grades five, six, and seven, to be developed in future years. New Jersey already has a test for eighth graders, the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment, which measures skills and knowledge for language arts literacy, mathematics, and science.

In January, the state entered into a contract with Educational Testing Service, to develop NJ ASK 3 and NJ ASK 4. ETS has set up an informational Web site to support the new tests. The site address is:

www.ets.org/njask