



NJDOE News

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For Release: May 16, 2003

Third- and Fourth-Grade Students Prepare for First Administration of NJ ASK Exam

NJ ASK (New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge) will be administered to third- and fourth-grade public school students beginning on Tuesday, May 20, 2003. Next week marks the first administration of the exam, which was created to respond to state and federal priorities to measure student performance in the early grades.

NJ ASK 3 and NJ ASK 4 will be administered in two content areas: language arts literacy and mathematics. Approximately 105,000 third grade students will take the test on May 20, 21 and 22. An equal number of fourth graders will take the test on May 20, 21, 22, and 23. Students who are unable to take the test on any of these scheduled days will have opportunities to take make-up exams from May 27-30.

The new tests are designed to assess how well students are learning the knowledge and skills called for by the state's academic standards, the Core Curriculum Content Standards. They were first proposed early last year by Commissioner of Education William L. Librera, shortly after he took office. Dr. Librera noted that the state needed to develop a test of third graders as part of a new Early Literacy Initiative started by Gov. James E. McGreevey. The initiative has set the goal to have all students reading at grade level by the end of third grade. The initiative is based on a body of educational research indicating that students enjoy greater success throughout their lives if they can read at grade level by the end of the third grade.

In addition to meeting state Early Literacy goals, NJ ASK 3 and NJ ASK 4 will serve as part of New Jersey's response to the federal No Child Left Behind Act, which requires all states to administer exams in reading and math to public schools students from grades 3 through 8, inclusive. Since New Jersey already has an eighth grade test (the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment), the remaining grades for future test development will be grades five, six, and seven. The federal law requires states to use tests as a way of determining the performance level of schools.

NJ ASK 4 replaces the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) as the state's test for fourth graders. The federal Department of Education has approved NJ ASK 4 as the replacement test for ESPA.

NJ ASK testing begins on May 20 in the area of language arts literacy for third and fourth graders. Test administration time will be approximately 75 minutes each for third graders and fourth graders.

Testing continues on May 21 in language arts literacy for both grades. Test administration time will be 100 minutes for each grade.

Testing concludes on May 22 for third graders in the area of mathematics. Test administration time will be 83 minutes. Testing continues for fourth graders in the area of mathematics. Test administration time will be 62 minutes.

Testing concludes on May 23 for fourth graders in the area of mathematics. Test administration time will be 52 minutes.

The tests for both grades will consist of a variety of multiple choice items, open-ended items, and writing tasks.

The Department of Education recently distributed a parent, student, and teacher information manual for NJ ASK 3 and NJ ASK 4 to school districts. The manual, published in English and Spanish, describes the test, contains suggestions for preparing students to take the test, and includes sample test items for parents and students to review.

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