



NJDOE News

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DOE Provides Summary Information on Summer Institute HSPA Results

The New Jersey Department of Education (DOE) today released the a summary of the HSPA (High School Proficiency Assessment) results of the students who participated in the summer learning pilot program, part of the department's efforts to seek positive alternatives to Special Review Assessment (SRA), the current alternative method of earning a diploma in New Jersey.

The pilot program offered approximately 250 soon-to-be-seniors who had failed to achieve proficiency on one or both parts of the HSPA in March the opportunity to receive five weeks of intensive tutoring, followed by a re-test in August. The summer institutes were held in Englewood, Vineland, Jersey City, Franklin Township (Somerset) and Hillside.

"The increasing number of students graduating via the SRA is a source of great concern. In our Abbott districts, fully half the students get their diplomas that way, and that is unacceptable," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera, who conceived of and developed the pilot program along with other DOE officials.

"We wanted to see if an intensive period of individualized tutoring and support would make a difference in retesting. Clearly, it did," the Commissioner said.

Here is a summary of the test results:

- Of the 137 summer institute students who took the language arts portion of the test, 74.5 percent achieved proficiency. Of the 215 students who took the math portion of the test, 35.8 percent achieved proficiency. In order to graduate, students must demonstrate proficiency in both areas.
- Of the 17 students who took only the only language arts portion of the test, 14 achieved proficiency. Forty-eight of the 95 students who took only the math part of the test achieved proficiency.
- Of the remaining 120 students who took both parts of the test, 90 - 75 percent - achieved proficiency in either both parts or one part. Twenty-six students passed both parts of the test; 64 students passed one of the two parts.
- Specific proficiency rates achieved at the five sites ranged from 68.4 percent to 86.4 percent in language arts and from 21.4 percent to 54.3 percent in math.

Summer institute students who did not achieve proficiency on one or both of the tests will take the HSPA for the third time in October.

Commissioner Librera said the summer institute test results were encouraging.

"Eighty-eight more students will be graduating from high school next June after passing HSPA as a result of this program, and that's a victory for everyone," he said. "Students who may have missed achieving proficiency by just a few points are much better prepared to get over the hump in October. We still have work to do in analyzing the all of the details connected to these outcomes, and we need to spend time reviewing what we did this year and how we can improve the program next year. On the whole, it was a clear success," he said.

"We were very pleased with the commitment of the districts, the teachers, the students and their families, all of whom volunteered to be a part of this effort, and I would like to thank all of them for working with us this summer," the Commissioner said. "These are well-run, diverse districts, where teachers care about teaching and families know the importance of active involvement in their children's education. I visited all the sites, and I don't think you will find one teacher or student involved in the summer institute programs who would not tell you it was a valuable experience."

Librera said that since the summer institute test results influenced the individual students' 2004-2005 academic year schedules, the results had to be sent to the districts as soon as possible by the testing contractor, and the individual students' scores were mailed to the districts yesterday.

The Commissioner said a full analysis and discussion of the impact of the program will be presented at his regular media availability at the next meeting of the State Board of Education on Wednesday, October 6.

"Because it is important to understand that this is a work in progress. This over-reliance on the SRA didn't develop overnight, and the problem is not going to be solved by one pilot program in one summer. We need to raise standards and expectations, not lower them, and the results of the 2004 summer institute program will assist us in doing that," Librera said.