

## NJDOE News

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### **DOE Releases 2006 Statewide Scoring Summaries**

Department of Education officials today released the statewide test score summaries for 2006.

The statewide summaries give an annual snapshot of how subgroups of students, as well as various student populations, are faring on the state standardized tests. This year's results cover grades 3-8, and 11. This is the first time grades 5, 6, and 7 were included in testing, therefore there is no trend information for these grades.

One of the key trends department officials noted were gains in the third- and fourth-grade math test across ethnic subgroups in both grades.

Last year, Hispanic and African-American students scored 72 percent and 66 percent proficient on the third-grade math test. This year, the percentage increased by 7 and 6 percent, respectively.

In 2004, the first year of the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge test for third-grade (NJASK3), 54 percent of African-American students and 63.5 percent of Hispanic students scored proficient or above.

"We've spent much of the past year emphasizing mathematics, particularly in the early grades," said Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy. "We are encouraged to see these scores climbing."

Similar trends are apparent in fourth-grade.

"In 1999, 30 percent of our African-American students scored proficient in mathematics in fourth-grade," Commissioner Davy said. "Seven years later, the percentage has doubled. While we still have much work to do, it is encouraging to see these scores moving in the right direction."

Department officials noted that the so-called "achievement gap" between Abbott and non-Abbott schools is closing. In 1999, only 32.8 percent of Abbott school students scored proficient or higher on the math test, compared to a non-Abbott percent of 68.2 percent - a gap of 35.4 percentage points.

By 2006, however, about 65 percent of Abbott students performed in the proficient or advanced proficient ranges, compared with a non-Abbott percentage of roughly 86, a gap of about 21 percent points.

Also, special education students in the elementary and middle school grades continued to show improvement in their test performance. Most notably in fourth grade math, nearly 60 percent of special education students scored proficient or above - a 20-point increase over the past three years.

However, DOE personnel noted special education score drop-offs in both the high school language arts literacy (LAL) and math tests. Last year, almost 50 percent of all special education students scored proficient or higher on the LAL test, compared to 32.5 percent this year. Also, roughly 65 percent of all special education students scored at, or above, proficient in math last year, compared to about 45 percent this year.

"This is an area of concern to the department and the Assessment and Special Education offices will be working together to try to identify and address the reasons behind this decline," said Dr. Jay Doolan, acting Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Educational Programs.

Among other findings in the summary:

- The department previously tested only the fourth- and eighth-grades, and officials would see a significant drop in achievement between those two grade levels. With testing now in grades 3 through 8, officials see the downward trend occurs between fifth- and sixth-grade, which, in most districts, marks the change from elementary school to middle school.
- This year, the Limited English Proficient (LEP) students are reported differently than in previous years. The

LEP reporting category now includes not only students who are currently enrolled in language programs, but also those that have exited language programs in the past two years. This change was made in order to more accurately reflect the effectiveness of LEP programs in our schools.

Department officials are continuing to work with school districts that saw unusual changes in results – both increases and decreases. As part of that work, the department has asked approximately 40 schools that saw unusual changes for more information on programs, curriculum, student demographics and test administration, among other things.

The review will allow DOE to identify the methods or practices that schools have put in place that have resulted in increased test scores. The reports from the districts are due in 45 days.

“We are committed to recognizing and sharing information about outstanding educational achievement by schools, teachers and administrators, and this dialogue helps us all highlight what works and what doesn’t,” said acting Assistant Commissioner Doolan.

The complete test score summaries can be found online here:

<http://www.nj.gov/njded/schools/achievement/2007/>

For more information, please contact the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.