



## NJDOE News

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### **State Board of Education Adopts New Standards for NJASK 3 and NJASK 4**

The State Board of Education today adopted a resolution setting new achievement standards in mathematics and language arts literacy for students taking the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) in grades three and four. The action mirrors similar action the board took to establish higher achievement standards for the NJ ASK after new tests were administered last year to students in grades 5-8.

“Setting these new standards is one part of our initiative to raise expectations for student achievement at all grade levels,” said Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy. “Governor Corzine has recognized our need to make a large-scale, coordinated commitment to prepare our students for the demands of the 21st century world in which they will be competing, and we can’t accomplish this critical goal without challenging many of our old assumptions about student and school performance.”

The new standards take effect with the redesigned NJ ASK tests in grades 3 and 4 that were first administered in May 2009. Features of the new language arts literacy assessments include more reading passages, new types of writing tasks, and more items overall. Features of the new math assessments include greater emphasis on numerical operations, additional constructed response items, and more test items overall.

Commissioner Davy said that establishing higher expectations for student achievement in the early grades will increase the likelihood of student success in middle school, high school and beyond. “By focusing on student learning in the elementary grades, we increase our ability to identify students in need of instructional support early in their academic careers, before they are in danger of not graduating,” she said.

Expert judging panels consisting of 65 New Jersey educators laid the groundwork for the new achievement standards by participating in a deliberative process held over several days last month. Teacher panels made recommendations to senior staff at the Department of Education, which reviewed them to assure articulation across grade levels and compatibility with state policy goals.

Under the new standards, students must attain at least 50 percent of the possible points to attain proficiency. Previously, the proficiency cut points represented between 40 and 45 percent at these grade levels.

Commissioner Davy noted that more students will start out in the partially proficient category, a common occurrence in the first year of a testing program. “Our experience with state-administered tests has been that as educators and students become more familiar with the higher expectations, they adjust accordingly, and student performance increases over time,” she said.

In addition to providing remedial help for students, typical responses by educators to the challenge of increased expectations include realigning local curricula to assure that students learn the required knowledge and skills, and creating professional development opportunities for teachers to learn new and effective classroom strategies to help their students learn.

NJ ASK 3 and 4 are part of New Jersey’s statewide assessment system. The other state tests are NJ ASK 5-8 and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). Students with severe cognitive disabilities are assessed through the Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA).

The state exams are closely aligned to New Jersey’s academic standards, known as the Core Curriculum Content Standards. The standards are statements of expectations about what students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school.

For more information about New Jersey’s statewide assessment system, visit:

<http://www.nj.gov/education/assessment/>

