



NJDOE News

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For Immediate Release: May 19, 2010

More High School Students Passing the HSPA or AHSA; DOE Pledges Additional Opportunities for Students to Meet Diploma Requirements

The New Jersey Department of Education today released preliminary results showing that thousands of students who had previously failed the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), have successfully passed required assessment tests, demonstrating they had mastered the basic skills needed to earn a high school diploma. On their third try, 1,864 students, or 16.3 percent, passed the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) for Mathematics, administered in March, while 9,598, or 83.7 percent, failed. In the Language Arts section of the HSPA, 1,531 students, or 29.9 percent, passed the test on their third try, while 3,596 or 70.1 percent, failed.

Students who fail the HSPA three times may take the Alternative High School Assessment (AHSA) to earn a diploma. In January, about 10 percent of the students who took the Language Arts part of the AHSA passed it, while about 34 percent of the students passed the Mathematics portion of the test.

All AHSA exams are evaluated by two scorers. When scorers disagree, answers are checked by a third scorer. During the past few weeks, 3,015 AHSA Mathematics scores, and 1,915 AHSA Language Arts scores were rechecked. As a result, the number of students who passed the Language Arts section of the AHSA increased from 426 to 643. The percentage of students who passed the Language Arts section of the exam administered in January increased from 10 percent to 15 percent. The number of students passing the Mathematics section of the January AHSA increased from 3,242 to 3,530, or from 34 percent to 37 percent.

Students had their second chance to pass the AHSA in April. Results will be available in June. Students will have a third chance to pass the AHSA in the summer.

In previous years, students who failed the HSPA took an examination called the Special Review Assessment. On average, more than 96 percent of the students passed the SRA. Deputy Education Commissioner Willa Spicer said the State Board of Education was concerned about the lack of state oversight of the SRA process.

"We are going to do everything we can to help these students pass the AHSA examination," Deputy Commissioner Spicer said today at the regular monthly meeting of the State Board of Education. The state will offer special remediation programs over the summer. Students who have other evidence of literacy or math proficiency will be permitted to appeal to the state Department of Education. The Department will consider evidence they present that they can read, write and do mathematics at the level required for a New Jersey diploma. Guidelines for the appeals process will be distributed to the local districts tomorrow, Deputy Commissioner Spicer said.

But the Department of Education has no plans to revert to the old method of scoring the test, with the students' teachers evaluating the results.

"We must preserve the integrity of a New Jersey diploma," she said. "Students must show that they have mastered basic skills before they graduate."