



## Christie Administration Announces Strong Performance Results of First Administration of NJASK Assessments Largely Aligned to the Common Core

**For Immediate Release**

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**Trenton, NJ** – The New Jersey Department of Education today presented results on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) for the 2012-13 school year to the State Board of Education. For the first time this year, test questions in the majority of grades on the NJASK were aligned to the more rigorous Common Core State Standards. Even with these higher expectations, New Jersey students continued to perform at high levels overall.

Similar results on other recent national tests tell the same story – that New Jersey is doing well overall, but that we need to do more to close a persistent achievement gap for low-income and minority students.

"Today's results demonstrate that when you set a high bar, New Jersey teachers and students will meet it. The Common Core State Standards focus on critical thinking skills and challenge students to reason and apply their knowledge to the real world. While the NJASK cannot fully measure the shifts within the Common Core – which is why we're moving towards the new PARCC assessments in 2015 – we have begun a slow and thoughtful transition within the NJASK to align with the Common Core," said Commissioner Chris Cerf. "I'm encouraged by these results, especially as we've seen other states struggle with more abrupt changes in their assessments."

The Common Core State Standards were created by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCCSO) as an effort to raise state standards aligned to international benchmarks. To date, 45 states have adopted the state-driven initiative that lays out what children are expected to learn in math and English language literacy.

Since New Jersey adopted the Common Core in 2010, the state has taken three years to implement the new standards in order to give time for educators to adapt to the new standards. The NJASK has shifted to align with the Common Core on that timeline, as outlined below. Unlike many other states, the NJASK includes a writing section and has a number of questions that require "constructed responses" in math and ELA, as opposed to simply filling in multiple choice "bubbles."

By 2015, New Jersey will fully transition to far superior Common Core-aligned tests, called PARCC, the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers.

School year	NJASK tests aligned to Common Core
2012-13	ELA: 3-8 Math: 3-5
2013-14	ELA: 3-8 Math: 3-8

"Clearly, we are in a state of transition as we move toward new state standards," said Commissioner Cerf. "Still, our careful, deliberate transition over the past three years has led to stability, rather than upheaval, in student test scores."

Overall statewide performance stayed relatively constant – with only slight increases or decreases – on both the NJASK and HSPA from 2012 to 2013. See Table 1

		2011-12	2012-13
LAL	NJASK	65.9%	66.7%
	HSPA	92.7%	93.6%
Math	NJASK	75.3%	74.5%

	HSPA	83.3%	85.6%
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However, a significant achievement gap remains for low income and minority students.

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"While the vast majority of the state is doing well, it is morally unacceptable to stand by while allowing children to attend schools with such low overall achievement. We must do better," said Commissioner Cerf.

***Additional Assessments***

In the information provided to the State Board on Wednesday, Commissioner Cerf discussed results in other assessments not administered by the State of New Jersey that had been released in the previous months. Highlights include:

**SAT:**

- More students have been taking the SAT in recent years. In 2013, there were 71,125 seniors who took the SAT, as compared to 64,120 who took the SAT in 2009. Currently, approximately 75 percent of high school seniors take the college admission exam.
- SAT scores in New Jersey have increased slightly from 1,503 in 2012 to 1,512 in 2013 in reading, math and writing. This compares favorably with national results, where scores have dropped slightly from 1,477 in 2012 to 1,474 in 2013.

**Advanced Placement (AP):**

- The number of students who take Advanced Placement courses, which allow high school students to earn

college-level credits, has increased in recent years. In 2009, New Jersey had 38,703 students taking AP placement tests. By 2013 the number rose to 49,788. In addition, 73 percent of test takers earned a score of 3 or higher (a 3 is typically the minimum required to earn college credit).

- Minority students are taking AP courses in increasing numbers. Overall, the number of all New Jersey students taking AP courses increased 8 percent from last year to this year. However, the number of African-American students taking AP courses increased by 12 percent, and the number of Hispanic students increased by 24.3 percent.

**National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP):**

- New Jersey continues to outperform most states in the NAEP, dubbed "The Nation's Report Card" and the only accurate state-to-state comparison of educational progress. The NAEP is administered by the U.S. Department of Education.
- NAEP ranked New Jersey 2nd in the nation in fourth-grade reading; first in eighth-grade reading; 4th in fourth-grade math; and 2nd in eighth-grade math.

Results can be found online at the DOE's [Statewide Assessment Reports webpage](#).