



NJDOE News

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USDOE Approves New Jersey Plan for Single Fourth Grade Exam

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera today announced that the United States Department of Education (USDOE) has approved New Jersey's plan to administer a single exam to all fourth-grade students in May.

The USDOE has approved the department's plan to administer the new NJ ASK4 (Assessment of Skills and Knowledge) in place of the former Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) as the state's official test to measure student achievement under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

"This is gratifying news," said Commissioner Librera. "Approval of our plan will give us the ability to use our new test as the basis for uninterrupted reporting of federally mandated student performance as required by the No Child Left Behind Act. It also saves us the time, expense and overall burden on schools and students of testing our fourth grade students more than once."

In January, the Department of Education hired Educational Testing Service (ETS) to develop new tests for third and fourth grade students. The tests, to be known as NJ ASK3 and NJ ASK4, will measure student proficiency in language arts literacy and math. They will serve the dual purpose of meeting federal requirements for assessing student achievement under NCLB and to meet state literacy requirements under Governor James E. McGreevey's Early Literacy Initiative.

NJ ASK 3 and NJ ASK 4 will be administered May 20-23, 2003.

Under NCLB, which was enacted last year, all states had to identify those skills needed to be successful in the 21st century and how those skills were measured. In New Jersey, the skills were identified in the Core Curriculum Content Standards, and the measurement was accomplished through the state's three achievement tests - the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA), and the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA).

The new NJ ASK4 will contain a number of "anchor" test items from previous ESPAs that will allow the subsequent reporting of scores and categorization of schools based on the scores to continue uninterrupted.

Dr. Librera said that New Jersey will use the test results to plan, develop and implement future programs and initiatives to improve teaching and learning in the primary grades for all students. The Department of Education will also seek ways to support and provide assistance to low-performing schools.

Progress on the new tests for third and fourth-graders can be tracked on a site created recently by ETS for the Department of Education:

www.ets.org/njask