



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PO Box 500
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

RICHARD J. CODEY
Acting Governor

LUCILLE E. DAVY
Acting Commissioner

December 20, 2005

TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons

FROM: Lucille E. Davy
Acting Commissioner

SUBJECT: 2005-2006 Interim Statewide Assessments for Grades 5, 6, and 7

As a follow-up to my recent announcement of our plans for a revision of New Jersey's assessment system, I am pleased to confirm an interim step whereby the state will administer standardized tests aligned to the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) in mathematics and language arts literacy for grades 5, 6, and 7 in the spring of 2006.

After consultation with content specialists and field educators, we have selected the Riverside Publishing Company's New Jersey Proficiency Assessments of State Standards (NJ PASS) as the instrument for the grades 5, 6, and 7 tests. Implementing this interim program will allow us to meet federal requirements under the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act, while allowing us adequate time to develop a broad vision for a new statewide assessment system and translate that vision into specific assessment policies and programs.

Here are the key elements of the interim grades 5-7 program for 2005-2006:

- **Schedule:** The tests will be administered during the period April 4 – April 13, 2006, with regular testing scheduled for April 4 (LAL Day 1), April 5 (LAL Day 2), and April 6 (mathematics), and make-up testing the following week. For districts that have a school break during the week of April 10, make-ups may be given the week of April 17, and no later than April 21. Grades 5-7 test booklets and answer folders will arrive in districts in late March, several days prior to the first testing date, in keeping with our standard practice. Riverside Publishing will be responsible for all shipping costs to and from the districts.

- Test Length: The LAL tests at each grade levels will consist of two sessions of approximately 100 and 70 minutes respectively, on separate days; the mathematics tests will consists of a single session of approximately 100 minutes per grade level. These estimates include time for distribution of materials to students, directions, breaks, and the like.
- Test Format: Because they were specifically designed to serve as “off-grade” assessments in New Jersey, NJ PASS is modeled on our existing New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) and Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA) programs. Therefore, the format of the interim assessments will be very similar to those, combining multiple choice items and constructed response items, all aligned to the CCCS. There will be one open-ended writing task at each grade level. Please note that these interim assessments will consist of items from Riverside Publishing’s secure pool of items field-tested in New Jersey but not previously used on any commercial form of NJ PASS. Thus, these will be newly constructed assessments.
- Training: As with our current testing programs, the department will offer training sessions for district and school test coordinators on all aspects of administering the interim grades 5-7 assessments. Most of these procedures will be familiar to district personnel who have experience with our other assessments. In any case, these training sessions will be designed to ensure that district personnel are fully informed about the necessary procedures for implementing these assessments. The dates for these training sessions, to be held in late January or early February 2006, will be announced shortly.
- Score Reporting: As with our current test programs, the department expects to release score reports, including scale scores and proficiency levels, by mid-June 2006. Individual student score reports and student labels will be printed and shipped to districts. All school and district summary reports, as well as student data files, will be made available electronically, through a secure, password-protected, web-based platform hosted by our vendor. This will represent a significant advance in the state’s effort to improve the promptness and accessibility of assessment score reporting.

In the coming weeks, the Office of Evaluation and Assessment will be providing more details about the above-referenced key elements and all other aspects of the interim assessments. Our lead coordinator for the interim grades 5-7 assessments is Ms. JoAnne Tubman, who may be reached at (609) 777-2087. The director of the Office of Evaluation and Assessment, Dr. Brian Robinson, may be reached at (609) 292-5180. We appreciate your continued patience as we seek to develop a statewide assessment program which provides maximum educational value to New Jersey’s schools, parents, and children.

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c: Members, State Board of Education
 Isaac Bryant
 Penelope Lattimer
 Assistant Commissioners
 Erika Leak
 Brian D. Robinson
 Timothy Peters
 JoAnne Tubman

Kathryn Forsyth
 County Superintendents
 NJ LEE Group
 Garden State Coalition of Schools