Fall 2021 Start Strong Assessments

Start Strong Fall 2021 is intended to...

• Produce information that should be used as a standards-based complement to the resources used by educators in their classrooms to evaluate the needs of students.
• Be administered quickly and provide immediate results.
• Meet federal flexibility for the 2020-2021 school year associated with the administration of general English language arts (ELA)/mathematics/science assessment, including public reporting of school-level results disaggregated by subgroup.

Start Strong Fall 2021 is not intended to...

• Replace local standards-based benchmark assessments districts may already have in place.
• Replace the spring 2022 New Jersey Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA) statewide summative assessments.
• This is a one-time flexibility granted by the United States Department of Education (USED). It is expected that all eligible students will participate in the spring 2022 NJSLA statewide assessments.
Fall 2021 Start Strong: Overview

**Brief**
The test can be administered in a single class period (45–60 minutes). Administration set up and security procedures are similar to traditional state assessments, with some exceptions.

**Standards Aligned**
Aligned to the previous year’s academic standards to help educators understand the level of support students require for current grade-level instruction.

**Administered Across Content Areas**
English language arts (ELA) grades 4–10; Mathematics grades 4–8, Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II; and Science (6, 9 & 12).

**Flexibly Administered**
Seamless online delivery through the assessment administration platform. Provides immediate results.
Fall 2021 Start Strong: Test Design

Uses High-Quality Items and Passages
Uses released items that have gone through the rigorous development processes associated with the NJSLA.

Efficient Question Types
Computer scored, multiple-choice and technology-enhanced items allow for real-time feedback and shortened testing time.

Fast Scoring and Reporting
- Overall support levels with additional item-level reports that can be used to inform instruction.
- Dynamic and PDF reporting for item analysis, including the item image and student responses, by student and by item, as well as an Individual Student Report (ISR) for parents/guardians after the administration.

Comprehensive Support
In addition to help desk support, documentation will be available, including administration manuals and a report interpretation guides for teachers and district administrators, on the vendor site this summer.
Fall 2021 Start Strong Administration: Enhancements

Enhancements expected for the fall 2021 administration of Start Strong based on educator feedback and lessons learned during the fall 2020 Start Strong administration include:

- Expanded demographic data collection to mirror the NJSLA student group data (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity)
- Expanded reporting to provide additional details on the Individual Student Report (ISR), with information about the student’s score and what it means
- Integration of Start Strong assessment reports into the Parent Portal established for NJSLA
- Availability of additional support resources through the released assessment item bank
- Inclusion of the same accessibility features included in NJSLA assessments
Curriculum and Instructional Planning

Start Strong provides a data point to support curriculum and instructional planning.

**District Curriculum Directors**

- District-level curriculum planning (reconsideration of prerequisite concepts and skills)
- Evaluate scope and sequence based on distribution of student support needs
- Provide professional learning supports for differentiation and scaffolding based on student results

**Teachers**

- Engage in process of regularly monitoring student performance
- Establish a continuum of supports and interventions for students based on data
- Focus instructional planning time on analysis of data to enhance student engagement and learning
- Use results as one possible data point when setting Student Growth Objectives (SGOs)

**School Administrators**

- Develop or use existing problem-solving teams to provide data-driven decision making to promote positive student outcomes
- Allocate time and resources to instructional planning and PLCs
- Enhance intervention services (Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and Response to Intervention (RTI) framework)
Start Strong Student Reports: Supporting Conversations Between Parents/Guardians and Educators

• Individual Student Reports from the Start Strong assessments will provide parents and guardians with information on key areas in which students may need additional supports at the start of the school year.

• The reports provide a starting point for parents and guardians to have conversations with their students’ educators at the beginning of the school year.

• Early conversations about where students may need additional supports in the 2021-2022 school year will help parents and guardians monitor student progress throughout the school year, as their students receive instruction and academic supports.
Maximizing the Use of Reports

Start Strong reports provide both student-level and item level information. They should be used in conjunction with other data to work through a process for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data.

Using these reports together can provide an initial indication about:

- The overall level of support that students may need when compared against other local assessment data
- Performance on a particular standard
- Performance on specific item types
- Possible misconceptions through the ability to view the assessment items and individual student responses
Maximizing the Use of Reports, continued

Start Strong reports provide both student-level and item level information. They should be used in conjunction with other data to work through a process for collecting, analyzing and interpreting data.

Example planning questions:

- Do the data indicate common areas of strength or learning needs for our students?
- What *can* and *can’t* the data tell us about the needs of our students?
- What other data might we use to verify or validate the outcomes of the Start Strong data?
- What common formative assessment(s) might help us understand more about student learning needs in relation to this data?
- What do the data tell us about the need for differentiating classroom instruction?
Thank You!

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nj.gov/education

Office of Assessment webpage

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