

New Jersey Biology Competency Test

May 2011

Executive Summary

A statewide biology assessment, then known as the End of Course Biology Test (EOC), was administered for the first time in 2008. The assessment, now called the New Jersey Biology Competency Test (NJBCT), is administered to students who have completed one of the related high school biology courses. These courses include: Resource Center Biology, ESL Biology, General Biology, Life Science, Foundations in Biology, College Prep Biology, Honors Biology, Accelerated Biology, Advanced Placement Biology, and Integrated Biology. Most recently, the May 2011 NJBCT was administered between May 17 and May 20, 2011 to 105,233 students. For the 2011 administration, achieving proficiency on the NJBCT is not a graduation requirement.

The State Summary includes Cycle II Performance by Demographic Group reports for aggregations larger than school districts, and accompanying data files which include data at the district and school levels. The Cycle II Performance by Demographic Group reports show enrollment and performance data for various demographic groups within the state of New Jersey, within each District Factor Group (DFG), within the set of Special Needs Districts, and the set of Non-Special Needs Districts. The data files show similar data for various demographic groups within the state of New Jersey, within the set of Special Needs Districts, the set of Non-Special Needs Districts, and within each DFG, district and school.

Only students in grades 9 through 12 are reported. For each demographic group, the number of students participating, the percentage of students at each proficiency level, and the mean scale score are reported. NJBCT scores are reported as scale scores in each of the content areas. The scores range from 100-199 (Partially Proficient), 200-249 (Proficient), and 250-300 (Advanced Proficient). The scores of students at the Partially Proficient level are considered to be below the state minimum of proficiency.

Students are counted in the Total Students category only once, plus in all other categories that apply. The report groups students into Special Education and Limited English Proficient populations, and also groups them by gender, migrant status, ethnicity, and economic status. The demographic information originates from the data collected on the students' answer folders. This data is reviewed by the school districts prior to reporting, allowing them to correct any errors.

The Limited English Proficient population is broken out into two subpopulations: Current LEP and Former LEP. Students with only one ethnic code are reported in the appropriate ethnic group. Students with multiple ethnic codes or no ethnic code are counted in the Other group. Some students might not be included in a gender group because of incomplete data.

The performance data includes only students who received a scale score. The other students are tallied in the APA Students, Not Present and Void categories.

The Cycle II Performance by Demographic Group reports include different versions for different aggregations. The Special Needs report includes students enrolled in any one of the 31 Abbott districts. The Non-Special Needs report includes students in all other districts. The DFG reports are mutually exclusive. Most DFGs are a measure of the socioeconomic status of residents in each school district. A few special DFGs, such as O, R and V apply to schools that draw students from widespread areas. Note that a report for DFG O, which includes students in the the Department of Corrections, the Department of Children & Families, and the Juvenile Justice Commission, is not included in the state summary. Charter schools are grouped together in DFG R rather than in the DFG of the school district in which they are physically located. Vocational school districts have a DFG of V.

Highlights from the Statewide Cycle II Performance by Demographic Group Report

38.0% of all students who received a valid scale score scored at the Proficient level and 19.3% scored at the Advanced Proficient level. The mean scale score was 209.5.

11.0% of all current LEP students received a valid scale score at the Proficient level and 2.0% scored at the Advanced Proficient level. The mean scale score for current LEP students was 163.5.

As would be expected, former LEP students performed substantially better than the current LEP students. 21.6% of all former LEP students scored at the Proficient level while 3.7% scored at the Advanced Proficient level.

17.5% of all SE students who received a valid scale score scored at the Proficient level and 2.9% scored at the Advanced Proficient level. The mean scale score for SE students was 174.2.

18.6% of Female students scored Advanced Proficient and 39.3% scored Proficient compared to 20.0% and 36.8% of Male students scoring Advanced Proficient and Proficient, respectively.

The percentage of Partially Proficient students ranged from 71.9% for Black or African American students to 19.2% for Asian students.

5.0% of Economically Disadvantaged students scored Advanced Proficient and 26.4% scored Proficient compared to 24.4% and 42.2% of Non-Economically Disadvantaged students scoring Advanced Proficient and Proficient, respectively.

Reporting Rules for Data File

The accompanying data file contains the same type of information shown on the Cycle II Performance by Demographic Group reports. Please note that there may be small discrepancies between the file and the report due to adjustments made to the data after the reporting deadline. Also, in the suppressed version, certain information is not shown in the file according to the following reporting rules:

- Data is not reported where the number of students with valid scale scores for a particular group is greater than zero but less than 11.
- Data is not reported where program or demographic groups are mutually exclusive (e.g., gender) and there are one or two students with a valid scale score in one of the groups (e.g., male).
- Data is not reported when it is otherwise possible to identify an individual student's performance.