

New Jersey Biology Competency Test

May 2015

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 Science. Most recently, the May 2015 NJBCT was administered between May 20 and May 23, 2015 to 103,594 students. For the 2015 administration, achieving proficiency on the NJBCT is not a graduation requirement.

The State Summary includes 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 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 level 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 who are coded Hispanic in addition to any other ethnic affiliations are reported in the Hispanic group as well. Students who did not have an ethnicity coded and students with multiple non-Hispanic ethnicities coded 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 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 no report is included for DFG O, which includes students who were served by the the Department of Corrections, the Department of Children & Families, and the Juvenile Justice Commission, and whose schools of record could not be identified. 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 Performance by Demographic Group Report

44.8% of all students who received a valid scale score scored at the Proficient level and 13.0% scored at the Advanced Proficient level. The mean scale score was 205.7.

12.1% of all current LEP students received a valid scale score at the Proficient level and 0.9% scored at the Advanced Proficient level. The mean scale score for current LEP students was 169.6.

As would be expected, former LEP students performed substantially better than the current LEP students. 30.3% of all former LEP students scored at the Proficient level while 5.0% scored at the Advanced Proficient level.

21.5% of all SE students who received a valid scale score scored at the Proficient level and 2.0% scored at the Advanced Proficient level. The mean scale score for SE students was 178.0.

12.6% of Female students scored Advanced Proficient and 46.6% scored Proficient compared to 13.3% and 43.2% of Male students scoring Advanced Proficient and Proficient, respectively.

The percentage of Partially Proficient students ranged from 66.8% for Black or African American students to 18.3% for Asian students.

3.5% of Economically Disadvantaged students scored Advanced Proficient and 32.5% scored Proficient compared to 17.1% and 50.3% 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 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.