



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: September 25, 2020
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads
Route To: Principals, District Test Coordinators, District Technology Coordinators, School Test Coordinators, School Counselors
From: Diana M. Pasculli, Acting Assistant Commissioner
Division of Academics and Performance

Start Strong Assessments Now Available for Fall 2020

The New Jersey Department of Education's (NJDOE's) Office of Assessments is pleased to announce that the suite of Start Strong snapshot assessments and related resources are being made available on the [Office of Assessments webpage](#). These supports are available to all New Jersey school districts **at no cost as an optional resource** to be used for in-class feedback and support.

As shared in the [Fall 2020 Academic and Instructional Supports Broadcast memo](#), these assessment tools can provide educators with an early indication of the level of support students may need for this year. Districts that administer these assessments are encouraged to share the results with students, families, and educators. The information should be used in conjunction with other measures to identify some potential gaps in students' understanding of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS).

Start Strong Assessment Overview

Start Strong assessments are based on prior-year academic standards. They are available in:

- English language arts (ELA) grades 4-10;
- Mathematics grades 4-8, Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II; and
- Science grades 6, 9, and 12.

Testing Window

Each Start Strong assessment is designed to be administered in approximately 45-60 minutes to an entire class or grade level and will provide immediate results. The ELA, mathematics, and science assessments can be administered at any time, remotely or in-person, from their release on **September 28, 2020 until December 14, 2020**.

Accommodations

The Start Strong assessments will have a subset of the accommodations that are available in the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA). The assessments will be available in English, Spanish (Math and Science only), and Text to Speech (TTS). There is no paper accommodation available during student registration. Paper PDFs will be available to download and print from PearsonAccess^{next} and must be locally transcribed into TestNav.

Guidance and Training

Tutorials, customer support, administration guides, score interpretation guides, and other helpful resources can be accessed through the [NJSLA Resource Center](#). Additionally, the Office of Assessments will hold office hours to gather feedback and answer questions on how to use the resources. Users can find more information about these opportunities on the [Office of Assessments website](#).

Student Registration

Student registration will consist of a simplified version of the normal summative assessment registration process, with a streamlined Student Registration/Personal Needs Profile (SR/PNP) using [PearsonAccess^{next}](#). Teachers may create sessions at the classroom level, generate testing tickets, and provide login information for students to take the assessment at home or in the classroom. Students will access the assessments online with the teacher-provided usernames and passwords. Guidance for devices, operating systems, and browsers needed to take the assessments will be posted on the [NJSLA Resource Center](#).

Additional Supports and Information

In addition to Start Strong assessments, the NJDOE is providing Dynamic Learning Maps ([DLM Instructionally Embedded \(IE\) assessments](#)) for students with the most significant intellectual disabilities who participate in the DLM assessment program, and for English language learners who participate in the [WIDA remote screener for English Language Learner \(ELL\) identification](#). The NJDOE is also offering related curriculum, instruction, and professional learning supports that can be found in the [Fall Academic and Instructional Supports Broadcast memo](#).

Statewide Assessment Program

The assessment supports provided for Fall 2020 are not replacements for New Jersey's statewide summative assessment program, which includes the NJSLA, the DLM assessments, the ACCESS for ELLs assessments, and the related federal and state reporting and accountability requirements. The assessment tools discussed above, designed to be brief and flexibly administered, are not intended to meet the strict uniform administration standards required to support federal or state accountability, reporting requirements, or comparisons between student populations across the state.

The NJDOE will continue to closely monitor developments related to the COVID-19 pandemic and will keep school administrators and educators apprised of new information regarding statewide assessments.

Contact Information

For questions on the Start Strong assessments and resources, please contact the NJDOE Office of Assessments at assessment@doe.nj.gov.

c: Members, State Board of Education
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NJDOE Staff
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools
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