



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: September 9, 2020  
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads  
Route To: Principals, Guidance Counselors, Instructional Coaches, District Test Coordinators, Assistant Superintendents of Curriculum and Instruction  
From: Diana Pasculli, Acting Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Academics and Performance

## Department Announces Fall 2020 Academic and Instructional Supports

In June 2020, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) published [The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#) to provide guidance – based on stakeholder engagement and research – to school districts in the development of plans for the 2020-2021 school year. In the *Continuity of Learning* section, the guidance document recommended that districts focus on building the capacity necessary to deliver highly effective instruction in different environments and preparing to address any learning gaps that might prevent students from successfully engaging with grade-level New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS). Today, the NJDOE is announcing the suite of academic and instructional supports, including professional learning, curriculum and instruction, and assessment tools, designed to help districts adhere to that recommendation during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic closed schools to in-person instruction last spring, the Office of Professional Learning has provided various resources for remote instruction. For example, [NJTV Learning Live](#) offered a series of hour-long instructional videos for students across grade levels and content areas taught by New Jersey educators. In addition, during the late summer, the NJDOE hosted its second statewide Equity Conference, featuring educators from across the state who shared resources, content, and best practices with respect to a myriad of equity-focused issues, including those issues brought to light during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the Office of Professional Learning collaborated with educators across the state to develop [virtual professional learning sessions](#) on topics such as blended learning, meeting learner needs, and social emotional wellness for both students and teachers. Additional virtual professional learning sessions will be released in the coming. Sessions will be varied to support elementary, middle and high school levels.

### Curriculum and Instruction Tools

In Spring 2020, the Office of Standards identified [Teacher Resources for Remote Instruction](#) which include technology tools and digital resources across content areas. Throughout the summer, the NJDOE collaborated with educators to identify prerequisite concepts and skills in English language arts and mathematics as a way to provide supports based on the New Jersey Student Learning Standards addressed in the [English Language Arts and Mathematics Instructional Units](#). These supports are designed to help educators:

- Determine the type of individualized instruction and supports needed at the start of a unit;
- Focus on the conceptual understandings and skills students need to successfully engage with grade level standards in English language arts and mathematics;
- Identify learning gaps and determine students' readiness for the concepts to be covered in each unit; and
- Implement formative practices that target specific conceptual understandings and skills.

Today the NJDOE is releasing [Unit 1 Prerequisite Concepts and Skills](#) in English language arts and mathematics. We will continue to post the units as they are completed.

For questions regarding the English language arts units, please contact [EnglishLanguageArts@doe.nj.gov](mailto:EnglishLanguageArts@doe.nj.gov) and for questions regarding the mathematics units, please contact [Mathematics@doe.nj.gov](mailto:Mathematics@doe.nj.gov).

### **Assessment Supports**

The NJDOE's Office of Assessments has developed snapshot assessments and additional supports that will provide educators with an initial indication of the level of support students may need to inform instruction for the 2020-2021 school year. The suite of supports will be available to New Jersey school districts at no cost and is intended to provide an optional resource for in-class feedback and support.

The snapshot assessments are intentionally brief, designed to maximize instructional time and quickly provide critical data to teachers and school leaders. These assessments provide schools and districts the flexibility to address students' unique needs at the beginning of the school year. Because these tools are different than New Jersey's traditional state assessments, extensive guidance regarding the appropriate use of these resources will be provided.

The Start Strong snapshot assessments:

- Are based on prior-year academic standards;
- Available in English language arts (ELA) grades 4-10, Mathematics grades 4-8, Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II, and in Science grades 6, 9, and 12;
- Can be administered in approximately 45-60 minutes;
- Will provide immediate results; and
- Available in English, Spanish, and Text to Speech (TTS).

These assessments produce classroom-level information as a standards-based complement to the resources used locally to evaluate the needs of students. They provide an initial indication of some conceptual or skill gaps that might exist in a student's understanding of the NJSLS and the level of support students may need to inform instruction. The information provided by these assessments are only one piece of the puzzle used to holistically understand a student's academic performance. They should only be used with other supporting evidence (assignments, homework, etc.) when drawing conclusions about a student's overall academic performance without these assessments.

The assessments are designed to be administered flexibly (remotely, in-person, etc.) to accommodate the wide variation in school reopening plans. Additionally, the NJDOE is providing Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Instructionally Embedded (IE) assessments for students with the most significant intellectual disabilities who traditionally participate in the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessment program, and the [WIDA remote screener for English Language Learner \(ELL\) identification](#).

More information and resources are available on the [NJDOE Assessments webpage](#) and additional guidance pertaining to the assessments will be released in upcoming Broadcasts.

### **Contact Information**

- For questions regarding DLM, ELA, Mathematics, and Science snapshot assessments and resources, please contact the NJDOE Office of Assessments at [assessment@doe.nj.gov](mailto:assessment@doe.nj.gov).
- For questions regarding the WIDA remote screener, please reach out to the NJDOE's Office of Supplemental Educational Programs at [ELL@doe.nj.gov](mailto:ELL@doe.nj.gov).

### **Mentor Training Videos Available**

To support New Jersey public school districts in meeting requirements for teacher mentor training, the New Jersey Department of Education has developed Mentor Training Videos. This year, more than ever before, mentoring and induction are critical for the development of new and novice teachers. In accordance with [N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-5.1](#) all school districts must have a district mentoring program to provide support to nontenured teachers, including all novice provisional teachers. Mentoring must include an induction to the teaching profession and the school district community through differentiated supports.

The Mentor Training Videos are optional and intended to be foundational training for new mentors or those in need of a refresher. The videos address required topics for mentors, help districts begin the process of training mentors, and supplement the training the district provides.

Mentor Training Videos can be found at the following links:

- [New Jersey Department of Education Mentor Training Part 1 of 3](#)
- [New Jersey Department of Education Mentor Training Part 2 of 3](#)
- [New Jersey Department of Education Mentor Training Part 3 of 3](#)

### **Contact Information**

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