

## NJDOE News

**For More Information Contact the Public Information Office:**  
**Tom Rosenthal**  
**Rich Vespucci**  
**609-292-1126**

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### **State Board of Education Sets Standards for High School Exam**

The State Board of Education today set the proficiency standards for New Jersey's new high school graduation test. The exam, known as the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), measures student attainment of the Core Curriculum Content Standards in language arts literacy and mathematics.

The test is administered to public school students in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Demonstrating proficiency in each content area is a requirement for graduation and receiving a high school diploma.

"Setting standards to mark levels of proficiency is a necessary function for all tests," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "I am confident that these standards provide us with an accurate picture of student performance on the HSPA. They set the bar for student performance and will guide local efforts to give all students the opportunities to obtain the knowledge and skills they need in order to succeed after high school."

Dr. Librera thanked the teachers, supervisors and administrators for contributing their time and expertise to the standard-setting process. "Many educators throughout New Jersey worked closely with Department of Education staff and representatives of our testing contractor, Measurement Incorporated, to set the standards adopted today," Dr. Librera said.

The HSPA is given in two sections, language arts literacy and mathematics, and is scored on a scale ranging from 100 to 300. The state board set score standards of 200 for the proficient level and 250 for the advanced proficient level of performance. Under the standards set today, students must achieve a minimum score of 200 on each section of the test in order to receive a high school diploma.

High school juniors participated in the inaugural administration of the HSPA in March 2002. Based on the standards adopted today, 86.9 percent of the students statewide passed the language arts literacy section and 73.1 percent passed the mathematics section. Students who did not achieve passing scores on one or both of the sections will have additional opportunities to take the exam this fall and in spring 2003.

District-by-district results on the HSPA are currently being verified and will be part of an annual statewide summary of all state exams that will be released in early 2003.

[See attachment for a description of test items for each section of the HSPA.](#)

The HSPA is one of three state exams administered to public school students. The other two state tests are the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) and the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA).

The exams are used to measure how well students are meeting the state's academic standards as described in the Core Curriculum Content Standards. The standards are statements of expectation that describe the knowledge and skills students must possess by the time they graduate from high school.

The Department of Education has made a commitment to expand its testing program to include students in grades 3-8. The department is seeking a contractor to help develop a test for third graders that may be administered for the first time as early as the spring of 2003.

The planned expansion of the testing program underscores the state's commitment to meet new federal testing requirements as called for in the No Child Left Behind Act, and to meet the pledge by Governor James E. McGreevey to have all students reading at grade level by the time they leave third grade.

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