



NJDOE News

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Commissioner Librera Outlines Proposal to End SRA

Note: Call-in news conference with Commissioner Librera on this topic at 3:00 p.m. today. Reporters only, please. Contact DOE/PIO at 609-292-1126 for access information.

The alternative math and literacy assessments administered to students who do not pass the New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) would be phased out over a three-year period beginning in 2008 under a proposal presented to the State Board of Education today by Commissioner of Education William L. Librera.

Changes in code and regulation that would be required to end the Special Review Assessment (SRA) must be approved by the State Board.

"The SRA was a good idea at its inception and it did help many people who had legitimate difficulties with standardized tests graduate from high school, but now the number of students using this alternate route process has gotten completely out of hand," Commissioner Librera said. "It is just not working. It's time to get rid of it and refocus our efforts on helping our kids pass this test."

Currently, the HSPA is administered to all eleventh graders in the spring. Students who do not achieve proficiency re-take the test in the fall of their senior year and, if necessary, take it again in the spring of that year. Students deemed to be at risk of never passing the test are enrolled in the SRA program, in which they complete alternative assignments meant to allow them to demonstrate that they have mastered the material they have been taught.

"But today, in our Abbott districts, about 50 percent of the seniors graduate via the SRA. The idea that half of the kids in these high schools are incapable of passing this test is both unbelievable and completely unacceptable. The easy availability of the SRA cheapens the value of a high school diploma in this state, and by lowering standards and expectations, it cheats students out of a high school education," Commissioner Librera said.

Under the proposal presented today, the state will revise the testing schedule to move the first administration of the HSPA to the fall of the eleventh grade year.

"This would give everyone an additional crack at passing the test, and would also allow us to identify students who need extra help much earlier in the process," Commissioner Librera said. "Of course, some students are still going to require different approaches in order to satisfy their graduation requirements in math and literacy, and this plan includes a number of strategies for assisting students felt to be at risk."

Those strategies include:

- The use of research-based predictive methods to identify students who could have trouble with HSPA as early as the eighth grade.
- More extensive use of practice tests which are readily available but only used sporadically by a few New Jersey districts.
- Increased opportunities for support and assistance for students, particularly in mathematics.
- Additional professional development opportunities for key district and school staff to better prepare students to pass the HSPA.

An appeal process will be developed for students not passing the HSPA in any of the four administrations of the test during the high school careers or as a "returning student" in the fall semester following their senior years.

Under the phase-out plan, the final administration of the SRA for literacy will occur in 2008. "This is going to affect students entering the ninth grade this fall, so we have to get moving to make sure our students are prepared," said Commissioner Librera.

The final administration of the SRA for mathematics will occur in 2011, affecting the students who will be in the

seventh grade in September. The reason for the delay is to give the state and the districts the additional time necessary to establish the changes in mathematics teaching and curriculum that are expected to be recommended by the Math Task Force later this year.

Attached are:

[Commissioner Librera's proposal presented to the Board of Education today](#)

[A January 14, 2005, memo to the Board from the Commissioner concerning the SRA](#)

[2004 SRA Survey data](#)