



NJDOE News

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DOE Announces Changes in AYP Calculation Methods

The US Department of Education has approved New Jersey's requests to recalculate the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) proficiency targets and to establish a statistically sound method of calculating Safe Harbor for the tests in the elementary and middle school grade spans, Education Commissioner Lucille E. Davy announced today.

"These changes were necessary because of the redesign of our grade 5-8 tests this year," Commissioner Davy explained. "The new tests measure higher order skills. In addition, the standards for proficiency were raised, which means that students have to answer more questions correctly in order to be deemed proficient. It would have been extremely difficult to compare 2007 to 2008 in a fair and equitable manner without these adjustments to our federal workbook. We needed a new system that would have more appropriate targets while recognizing progress.

"We know our schools continue to work diligently to improve student achievement under the *No Child Left Behind Act* and we approached the task of resetting the targets very carefully to ensure that progress that schools make towards those goals is acknowledged," the Commissioner said.

Information on schools' AYP status was provided to the districts today. Because there is a 30-day appeal period on the calculations, the individual district and school results will be publicly reported by the department on or about December 3.

Statewide results show that of the 2210 New Jersey schools in which tests were administered this spring, 70.8 percent (1564 schools) made AYP. Sixty-six fewer schools made AYP this year than last year.

"While there is a small decrease in the number of schools that made AYP this year, in most schools, the results demonstrate that student performance is improving," Commissioner Davy said. "New Jersey educators are working hard to ensure that all students are learning the skills they will need in order to compete in the global economy of the 21st century. It is very important for everyone to understand that New Jersey's expectations on these tests are now higher than many other states.

"We are very proud of the school system that we have and we are proud that our students are measuring up to those expectations. Our state's results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests - the only test that accurately compares state-by-state performance levels - confirm our improvement in student achievement and in closing the achievement gap, particularly at the 4th grade level," the Commissioner said.

Here is a link to a chart that shows the differences in the number of possible points obtainable on the 2007 and 2008 tests and the changes in the percentage of items that a student would have to answer correctly in order to be deemed "proficient" and "advanced proficient" on both tests.

<http://www.nj.gov/education/sboe/meetings/2008/july/public/Table%201%20NJ%20ASK%20SS.xls>

Here are the revised AYP proficiency targets approved by the USED. These numbers represent the percentage of the students in every subgroup who must achieve proficiency or above in order for the school or district to meet the AYP target:

Language Arts Literacy Targets

	Elementary: Grades 3-5		Middle: Grades 6-8	
School	Original	New Target	Original	New Target

Years	Target		Target	
2008-2010	82	73	76	72
2011-2013	91	86	87	86
2014	100	100	100	100

Mathematics Targets

	Elementary: Grades 3-5		Middle: Grades 6-8	
School Years	Original Target	New Target	Original Target	New Target
2008-2010	73	69	62	61
2011-2013	85	84	79	80
2014	100	100	100	100

New Jersey's high school test has not changed so the state will continued to use the proficiency targets established in 2004.

Schools that do not meet the proficiency targets can also make AYP under the Safe Harbor criteria, which is a 10% decrease in the number of students who scored partially proficient over the previous year.

When DOE implemented the new grade 5-8 tests this year, new cut scores that demanded a higher level of mastery of the material than the 2007 tests essentially changed the definition of "proficient" and "advanced proficient."

"We felt it would be wrong to penalize schools that were making progress just because we changed the cut scores for proficiency," Commissioner Davy said. "So for this year only for grades 5-8, we proposed an alternative method that statistically linked the scores on the new test to the scores on the old test, and used those linked scores to calculate Safe Harbor."

The Commissioner noted that it will only be necessary to use this procedure for grades 5-8 for one year, since next year the new tests will have been administered in 2008 and 2009. However, since the state will be implementing new tests in grades 3 and 4 next year, the department will need to use this calculation procedure next year for those grades.

A copy of the proposal approved by USED can be obtained by clicking here <http://www.nj.gov/education/title1/accountability/targets.pdf>.

A copy of the Commissioner's letter to Chief School Administrators explaining the changes can be obtained by clicking here <http://www.nj.gov/education/title1/accountability/110308comltr.pdf>.

To obtain a list of sample questions from the new grade 5-8 tests, click here. <http://www.nj.gov/education/title1/accountability/SampleItems2008NJASKTests.pdf>