

**Resolution Establishing Proficient Level Cut Score Standards for the New Jersey  
Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA): Mathematics and English Language Arts  
and the Alternate Assessments**

The following is an accessible version of the adoption materials related to the Resolution Establishing Proficient Level Cut Score Standards for the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA): Mathematics and English Language Arts and the Alternate Assessments. The materials consist of a [comment and response form](#) and the [resolution](#).

Additions to the resolution are indicated in **\*bold\***.

**State Board of Education  
Comment/Response Form**

This comment and response form contains comments from the April 5, 2023, meeting of the State Board of Education when the resolution was discussed.

**Topic:** Proposed New Proficiency Level Cut Score Standards for the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment Mathematics and English Language Arts

**Meeting Date:** May 3, 2023

**Level:** Adoption

**Division:** Teaching and Learning Services

**Completed by:** Office of Assessments

**Summary of Comments and Agency Responses:**

The following is a summary of the comments received from State Board of Education (State Board) members and the Department's responses. Each commenter is identified at the end of the comment by a letter that corresponds to the following list:

- A. Kathy Goldenberg, President  
State Board of Education
  - B. Andrew J. Mulvihill, Vice President  
State Board of Education
  - C. Arcelio Aponte, Member  
State Board of Education
  - D. Mary Beth Berry, Member  
State Board of Education
  - E. Elaine Bobrove, Member  
State Board of Education
  - F. Dr. Ronald K. Butcher, Member  
State Board of Education
  - G. Jack Fornaro, Member  
State Board of Education
  - H. Dr. Nedd James Johnson, Member  
State Board of Education
  - I. Dr. Joseph Ricca, Jr., Member  
State Board of Education
  - J. Sylvia Sylvia-Cioffi, Member  
State Board of Education
1. **Comment:** The commenter asked the Department to explain how the proposed cut score of 725 for the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA) equates to the 450 SAT Evidence Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) cut score and how the 750 NJGPA cut score equates to the 570 SAT EBRW cut score. **(B)**  
**Response:** The Department contracted with New Meridian Corporation and HumRRO, a

psychometric support company, to conduct an alignment study. The Department acquired student data for the proposed alternate assessments from 2017 through 2019 from College Board. This data was used for a comparison study to see how the student had scored on the State assessment (e.g., New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA)) compared to how the student scored on the alternate assessments (e.g., SAT, ACT, Accuplacer, etc.).

2. **Comment:** The commenter asked the Department to confirm if the comparison of scores examined precisely how a particular student performed on one assessment versus the other. **(B)**  
**Response:** Yes, scores from students who took both the NJSLA and an alternative assessment were linked and then the assessment vendors evaluated the strength of the relationship between two scores. The vendors then processed the data (student performance on each of the assessments) and transformed the scores on the NJSLA to the same scale as the alternative pathway assessment.

3. **Comment:** The commenter stated that a previous Department presentation indicated that the average SAT score for Evidence Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) was 538 for students who took the SAT. The commenter acknowledged that not all students take SAT and indicated that 538 for SAT EBRW appears to be an achievable score. The commenter also stated that the average for SAT math was 532. The commenter further stated that the average SAT scores (EBRW and mathematics) provided some level of confidence that students can achieve the 750-cut score on the NJGPA. **(C)**

**Response:** A shift to optional testing at the higher educational level began in 2021. Students are still taking exams (e.g., SAT) for the purpose of bolstering their chances for admission or when applying to competitive college and universities. This can partially account for the higher average SAT score that was presented as part of the [School Performance Reports](#) compared to the score presented in the alternate assessment alignment study results.

New Jersey's SAT report from College Board for 2022 indicates that 69 percent of students met the 480-benchmark score for SAT ERBW. While the average score was higher (i.e., approximately 530), more than 30 percent of students were unable to meet the 480-benchmark score.

4. **Comment:** The commenter asked the Department to repeat the name of the entity that performed the data analysis. **(J)**

**Response:** The Department contracted with New Meridian Corporation to conduct the data analysis and the company was supported in that work by HumRRO.

5. **Comment:** The commenter stated that a lot of the SAT data, college readiness benchmarks for the SAT, and State averages for the SAT had been discussed by the Assessment Committee and some of the discussion centering around the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020) average SAT and ACT performance, which was high. The commenter also stated that using the data from 2022 would be an anomaly as the students tested spent significant time outside of the classroom or not in the classroom full time but were being instructed in remote or hybrid environments. The commenter stated that 2024 was mentioned and asked how the class of 2024 factors into the data presented. **(A)**

**Response:** Students in the graduating classes of 2024 and 2025 will be affected by the decision regarding the NJGPA cut score. All data presented for the classes of 2024 or 2025 in the [presentation](#) are estimations based on student performance from the class of 2022. The estimations assume that the class of 2024's performance on the NJGPA will be similar to the class of 2022.

6. **Comment:** The commenter asked the Department to confirm that the projected percent of students meeting the threshold score on the alternate assessments for the graduating

classes of 2024 and 2025 is based on numbers from the years when students were unable to be in classrooms. (A)

**Response:** Yes, the estimations were based on the 2022 data.

7. **Comment:** The commenter stated that projecting data for the classes of 2024 and 2025 using the results from the spring 2022 administration may be flawed because the data being used to generate the projections are based on data from students who may not have been in school for two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The commenter also indicated that adjusting the cut score based upon the evidence provided may be an error. (B)

**Response:** The recommendation of 725 for the NJGPA cut score is based upon a review of the assessment's content and an evaluation of student performance on the NJSLA. New Meridian Corporation conducted this review prior to the administration of the NJGPA in the spring of 2022 NJGPA. The Department continues to recommend the 725 as the NJGPA cut score after a review of the spring 2022 data.
8. **Comment:** The commenters suggested that a decision to change the cut score for the NJGPA should wait until another year of testing has occurred so two years of data would be available. The commenters stated that this would enable State Board members to make a more informed decision regarding the NJGPA cut score. (B, C)

**Response:** Thousands of students will be negatively affected if the NJGPA cut score remains at 750 and then later determined to be more appropriate at 725.
9. **Comment:** The commenter expressed concern that the NJGPA will be a graduation requirement for students who took the assessment earlier this year because the suspension of the graduation assessment requirement due to the COVID-19 pandemic has ended. The commenter stated that even if the NJGPA does count for the class of 2024, the cut score could be reevaluated. (B)

**Response:** Through the resolution adopted on February 2, 2022, and the proposed resolution for the cut scores on the NJGPA and alternate assessments, the Department must monitor the impact of the tests and the proficient level cut scores on the proficiency rate and report any problems to the State Board.
10. **Comment:** The commenter stated that most students who took the NJGPA in 2022 were aware that it was not required for graduation, which may have been a factor in student effort since there were no real consequences for students. (C)

**Response:** Students participating in the NJGPA in March 2022 were not aware that it was a field test because the law suspending it as a graduation requirement for the class of 2023 was not signed until July 5, 2022.
11. **Comment:** The commenter expressed uncertainty regarding whether the State Board can have a dedicated two-year period rather than just a single year of data to examine whether to adjust the cut score for the NJGPA. (A)

**Response:** The Department must monitor the impact of the assessment and the proficient level cut score on the proficiency rate and report to the State Board any problems in addition to the results each year.
12. **Comment:** The commenter asked the Department to confirm that the NJGPA cut score of 750 was put forward by the State Board, but the Department had recommended a different cut score. (I)

**Response:** Yes. In February 2022, the Department recommended a cut score of 725 for the NJGPA. The State Board subsequently approved the cut score at 750.

13. **Comment:** The commenter asked the Department to confirm that the Department’s recommendation of 725 was based upon the recommendation from psychometricians in consideration of the normative profile of the assessment scores. The commenter also asked the recommendation of 725 as the cut score was criterion or normative based. **(I)**  
**Response:** The recommendation included considerations from both criterion and normative evaluations. A criterion referenced assessment is designed to measure a student’s academic performance against a specific set or standards or criteria, while a normative referenced assessment measures student performance against a representative group of students as opposed to specific standards.
14. **Comment:** The commenter stated it is important for State Board members to recognize that cut scores are created based on a scientific process to determine where students fall on the curve of demonstrated proficiency. The commenter asked if a decision to “just create a cut score” could possibly throw off the normative profile and result in an inaccurate picture based on the psychometrics behind the assessment. **(I)**  
**Response:** The Department agrees that establishing where students fall on a curve of demonstrated proficiency is one purpose of a cut score. The Department agrees that there would be effects on the results by making decisions about the cut score without the use of data.
15. **Comment:** The commenter asked whether the State Board’s decision to change the cut score outside of the recommendations provided by the individuals who created the test and created the bands of identification of proficiency had an impact on the student data. Acknowledging the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact. and the commenter asked if it was possible that the score is not fitting with where the curve is for student performance. **(I)**  
**Response:** The State Board’s decision to set the cut score at 750 could be a factor impacting the results. This was controlled for, to the extent possible, through conducting a standard setting activity on the 750-cut score after it was adopted by the State Board.
16. **Comment:** The commenter asked if the Department changed the NJGPA to align to a 750-cut score, so the test essentially was not the same assessment designed for a proposed cut score of 725. **(A)**  
**Response:** The assessment was the same, but the narrative descriptions (performance level descriptors) of students’ knowledge, skills, and abilities changed due to the difference between the proposed and approved cut scores for the NJGPA. The knowledge, skills, and abilities that the Department put forward at the 725-cut score were based on the evaluations and data obtained internally and from the vendor and the technical advisory committee. The narrative descriptions at the 725-cut score were deemed appropriate for a graduation-ready student. When the higher cut score was adopted, the Department reconducted the standards setting study so that an accurate representation of the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected by the State Board were translated to the NJGPA. The same performance data was used, but the reference point of the study changed based on the updated performance level descriptors.
17. **Comment:** The commenter acknowledged that the process is very complex with a lot that goes into the creation of standardized, normative- or criterion-referenced assessment, from item construction to administration to determining the baseline cut for proficiency. **(I)**  
**Response:** There are many steps to constructing a standardized Statewide assessment. Each step includes a series of quality control measures and evaluations to ensure the assessment remains true to the goal.
18. **Comment:** The commenter recalled that there was discussion regarding what was proficiency, including the levels of not proficient, meeting proficient, partially proficient,

proficient, and advanced proficient. The commenter asked for confirmation that the NJGPA was first introduced to the State Board in this manner. (A)

**Response:** The five categories mentioned by the commenter (i.e., performance levels) are for the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA) and not the NJGPA. The NJGPA has only two performance levels: graduation ready and not yet graduation ready. Part of the Department's presentation in 2022 illustrated the alignment of the proposed 725 cut score on the NJGPA to the NJSLA performance levels and their respective score ranges because the NJGPA was derived from the NJSLA. The data from the field test administration of the NJGPA, which was not previously available, will enable the State Board to make an informed decision on the adoption of a cut score for the NJGPA and the alternate assessments available to satisfy the graduation assessment requirement.

19. **Comment:** The commenter stated that the previous administration had field tested for two to three years when they were creating a new Statewide assessment. The commenter asked whether one year of field testing was enough for the NJGPA or if more time to conduct additional field testing was needed. (A)

**Response:** The industry standard for field testing is a single year, but that does not mean that the established cut scores cannot be revisited later. Conducting a standards validation a few years following the initial standard setting is generally appropriate as the more students have taken the assessment and there has been a progression in the implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS).

The United States Department of Education (USED) had indicated that waivers to conduct field testing will become much rarer because USED wants states to report assessment data annually. USED recommended the use of operational field tests where the results would be counted even when piloting the first year of an assessment. The Department appreciates the opportunity to present the results of the spring 2022 NJGPA administration along with a recommendation on the established cut score for the assessment, while not having students effected by the results.

20. **Comment:** The commenter asked if the SAT test is a norm-referenced exam. The commenter stated that the SAT was designed to determine that likelihood that a student would be successful in certain subjects at a certain period in time, but it was not designed as a criterion-referenced exam that is designed to determine whether a student passes. The commenter also stated that there is a difference between assessment, which provides a snapshot of a student at a moment in time, and an evaluation, which is when well-meaning individuals apply a standard or criterion to a score deciding which one is a good score and which one is a bad score.

The commenter agreed with the importance of holding New Jersey students to high standard. The commenter also stated that there are no validity or reliability studies to support that use of single high-stakes tests for this purpose. The commenter further stated that the assessments are a meaningful tool as part of an overall evaluation to determine whether a student is ready for graduation, but they are intended for their current use.

The commenter asked why high-end researchers, who have studied this issue and concluded that standardized high-stakes tests are not appropriate as a single qualifier for a student to graduate from high school, have not been brought in. The commenter also stated that the State Board members set a cut score that was different from the normative standard of 725. (F)

**Response:** Technical documents for the SAT indicate that the assessment is a norm-referenced assessment. Assessments are tools utilized for a purpose and different assessments serve different purposes. While the SAT was not designed to be a graduation assessment, it has been accepted as a marker of college readiness.

21. **Comment:** The commenter suggested that students be asked to take a second, different exam, similar to the use of midterms and final exams to determine the final grade for a college course. The commenter asked whether the State Board can ask students to take a second exam and combine the two scores together so there can be a better understanding of what the students are able to accomplish should they graduate and go on to college. **(G)**  
**Response:** The Department cannot restructure the NJGPA into two assessments for students to take over a period of time. N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-6 states that “the State graduation proficiency test shall be administered to all 11th grade pupils and to any 11th or 12th grade pupil who has previously failed to demonstrate mastery of State graduation proficiency standards on said test.” The Superior County Appellate Division decision from December 31, 2018, states that students must be administered a single grade 11 assessment.
22. **Comment:** The commenter stated that the administration of two tests would be costly and burdensome on school districts. The commenter also stated that in-depth conversations with experts in the field would be welcomed, recognizing that the SAT is different type of test. The commenter also stated that, based on the data being presented, the State Board is trying to make the best possible decision and welcomed any additional information and expertise. **(C)**  
**Response:** The Department acknowledges the commenter’s position.
23. **Comment:** The commenter stated that the State Board’s discussion about the 750-cut score and what it means for a student who is going on and succeeding in college has nothing to do with graduation from high school. The commenter also stated that there are other ways a student can graduate from high school. The commenter further stated that a low score on the NJGPA does not mean that a student cannot go to college since many colleges will take a student without test scores or a student can go to a community college to build up the skills they need to transfer to another institution. **(E)**  
**Response:** The Department contracted with New Meridian Corporation to conduct an alignment study between the NJGPA and the alternate assessments (i.e., SAT, ACT, Accuplacer, PSAT). Maintaining the NJGPA cut score at 750 would greatly increase the cut scores on the alternate assessments compared to the alternate assessment cut scores in place from 2016 through 2022. With the significant increase in cut scores, models using the 2022 performance data on the alternate assessments indicate there would be a 15 to 20 percent decrease in students meeting or exceeding the alternate assessment cut scores in mathematics and approximately a 30 percent decrease in students meeting or exceeding the alternate assessment cut scores in ELA.
24. **Comment:** The commenter stated that midterm and final exams happen in many schools throughout New Jersey, where teacher assess student progress in a cumulative fashion to determine where students end up at the end of the year. The commenter also stated that this is illustrative of the myriad of assessment opportunities that occur in schools, but they are a small subset of high-stakes standardized assessments. The commenter further stated that it is important to distinguish the NJGPA from tests like PSAT, SAT, and ACT, which are different.  
The commenter agreed that not all students in New Jersey who are eligible to take the SAT actually take it, which means that the data points are instructive, but do not the entire story of the human educational experience nor what students are capable of doing in the future.  
The commenter also recommended that State testing be removed to allow school districts to conduct their own assessment in the classroom but acknowledged that the change would need to be initiated at the legislative level. **([[K]] I)**

**Response:** Any adjustment of the high school graduation assessment requirement would require a change in State law.

25. **Comment:** The commenters stressed that the NJGPA is required by State law, which can be changed only by an act of the New Jersey Legislature. The commenters stated that Federal testing requirements do not include a high school graduation exam. (A, [[K]] I)

**Response:** The NJGPA is not utilized to satisfy the Federal assessment requirement under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The NJGPA solely satisfies the graduation assessment requirement under State law. The USED does not require a high school graduation assessment.

26. **Comment:** The commenter indicated a desire to continue to administer the NJGPA as a field test if the State Board decides to maintain the cut score at 750 while gathering more information. (I)

**Response:** Administering the NJGPA as a field test, which means it would not impact a students' ability to achieve a high school diploma, would require a change to State law.

27. **Comment:** The commenter asked the Department to confirm that the NJGPA is based on ELA 10, Algebra I, and Geometry and that those courses are required in New Jersey public schools. The commenter asked to be corrected if this was inaccurate. (A)

**Response:** N.J.A.C. 6A:8-1.3 defines "State graduation proficiency test" (i.e., NJGPA) as a "Statewide assessment that is aligned, at a minimum, to the NJSLs for ELA 10, Algebra I, and Geometry." The NJGPA is aligned to the NJSLs for ELA 10, Algebra I, and Geometry, as required. State graduation requirements related to coursework include at least 20 credits in ELA aligned to grade nine through 12 standards and at least 15 credits in mathematics, including Algebra I and Geometry, or the content equivalent for both, and a third year of mathematics that builds on the concepts and skills of algebra and geometry and that prepares students for college and 21st century careers.

28. **Comment:** The commenter stated that the State Board is revisiting the conversation that took place in 2022 when the decision was made to wait a year before moving away from a cut score of 750 so more evidence could be provided. The commenter also stated that, based on information presented by the Department, it appears that the 750-cut score had a significant, negative impact on students. The commenter further stated that, if the 2022 administration of the NJGPA had not been a field test, systems and alternative assessments would need to be examined to make students whole. The commenter added that data and evidence that the State Board asked for last year has been presented and the Department is recommending a cut score of 725 based on the impact that the 750-cut score is having on students and student performance. (H)

**Response:** The resolution adopted by the State Board on February 2, 2022, and P.L. 2022, c.60 require the Department to evaluate NJGPA results and present the State Board with a recommendation of whether to maintain the cut score at 750 or to modify it. Based on the data presented at the December 7, 2022, State Board meeting, as well as information presented on April 5, 2023, the Department recommends that the cut score for the NJGPA be modified to 725. The Department also recommends that the cut scores for all alternate assessments in the second pathway to graduation be modified to the values determined in the alignment study to correspond to a 725 on the NJGPA.

29. **Comment:** The commenter stated that students can take the PSAT, which is one of the alternative assessments, before taking ELA 10. The commenter also stated that this could explain why there is a marked difference based on the 25-point difference between the two cut scores being evaluated for the NJGPA. (A)



**Response:** The alignment study accounted for this difference in grade level when the student was taking the assessment by utilizing student-level data to compare students who took both the PSAT and the NJGPA and to evaluate the score they received on each assessment.

- 30. Comment:** The commenter expressed a desire to bring experts and appropriate members of the Legislature to hearings and meetings with the intention of changing State law, which the commenter indicated is the problem. The commenter also stated that the State Board, if in agreement, should go on record as recommending that the law requiring the high school graduation assessment be repealed. **(F)**

**Response:** The Department acknowledges the commenter's position.

- 31. Comment:** The commenter stated that when students go to college and are unable to meet the standards in mathematics, science, and ELA, they must take non-matriculated courses to elevate themselves to meet the standards expected by the university. The commenter also stated that most students who enter college before meeting the college standards drop out and pay for college courses but do not receive credit for them. **(G)**

**Response:** The Department acknowledges the commenter's position.

- 32. Comment:** The commenter stated that the NJGPA is too valuable. The commenter also stated that the discussion focused on the end of a student's formal education, potentially, and questioned whether the State Board has a responsibility to make sure they achieve a certain bar. The commenter further stated that testing provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate what they know and to get help if they do not know something.

The commenter also stated that the State Board can call the assessment high stakes, but students should be allowed to take it anyway. The commenter further stated that teachers afterward can provide students with remediation to help them achieve the bar. The commenter further stated that students are smart and capable and will achieve when they are held to a higher level. The commenter also stated that, if there are things students do not know, the education system needs to be examined to determine what is going wrong. **(D)**

**Response:** The results of all Statewide assessments are provided to school districts as quickly as possible following the administration to enable school districts to begin the process of reviewing the data and implementing supports for students. The Statewide assessment system includes assessments in both ELA and mathematics in grades three through eight and once in high school. This is in addition to the State graduation assessment requirement (i.e., the NJGPA).

- 33. Comment:** The commenter asked if the alignment study follows students who go to college to see how many need remediation in the first semester of their freshman year. The commenter stated that it would be interesting know how many students who achieved scores of 725 and 750 enrolled in college coursework without having to make up coursework that was missed in high school. **(J)**

**Response:** The alignment study was a direct comparison of performance on the different assessments but did not track whether students require remediation in college. The College Board's college readiness benchmark study indicates that students who meet or exceed the benchmark score on the SAT have a 75 percent chance to earn at least a "C" or better in first-semester, credit-bearing courses related to the subject area.

- 34. Comment:** The commenter indicated having read that county colleges are not as keen to require remediation courses anymore. **(A)**

**Response:** The Department would welcome the articles and to continue the discussion regarding supporting New Jersey students attending post-secondary education.

35. **Comment:** The commenter stated that some students are graduating, taking the Accuplacer to determine if they are ready to take college-level mathematics and college-level ELA courses, but are not receiving scores that enable placement in credit-bearing, college-level courses. The commenter also stated that the remediation should be taking place in high school. The commenter questioned whether students think they are ready for college based on their NJGPA results. **(D)**  
**Response:** Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-6.1, the purpose of the New Jersey graduation assessment requirement is to measure the basic skills all students must possess to function politically, economically, and socially in a democratic society.
36. **Comment:** The commenter stated that some State Board members think that the proposed cut score of 725 is considered lowering the standards and, if that happens, then the diploma will not mean as much as it should. The commenter also stated the former High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) was determined by a previous administration to be not rigorous enough, so a much more rigorous assessment was created.  
The commenter stated that 77 percent of students at Essex County College in 2015 had to take at least one remedial course. The commenter also stated that the percentage dropped to 46 percent by 2019 after a more rigorous test was in place. **(B)**  
**Response:** New Jersey’s standards are important, and the 725-cut score represents the right standards while the 750-cut score highlights the highest level of what New Jersey students may know and be able to do. The Department supports the State Board’s high expectations for New Jersey students and emphasizes the importance of relying on the experts who recommended the 725-cut score for the State Board’s consideration.  
When reviewing data related to student participation in remedial college courses, it is important to note that, over time, fewer students have been attending New Jersey’s community colleges. Additionally, there are many programs and initiatives available in New Jersey to support free tuition for students who meet particular criteria.  
It is also important to avoid conflating the 725-cut score that was recommended and proposed by teams of experts with the goal of students attaining a score of 750. It is the Department’s responsibility to share the adverse impacts the 750-cut score will have directly on students. While New Jersey educators will rise to the occasion and support students in whatever ways are needed, the 750-cut score may cause students to miss opportunities to take their chosen elective courses because they may need to be replaced with a course that ensures the students can complete the portfolio appeals process.
37. **Comment:** The commenter asked who proposed the 750-cut score. **(J)**  
**Response:** The Department proposed a cut score of 725 for the NJGPA in January 2022. The State Board members determined that the NJGPA cut score would be set at 750 in February 2022.
38. **Comment:** The commenter expressed the understanding that the current cut score for the NJGPA is 750 and that the Department is recommending the change to 725. **(B)**  
**Response:** Based on the data from the spring 2022 field test administration of the NJGPA, the Department is again recommending the cut score be set at 725.
39. **Comment:** The commenter asked for confirmation that, prior to the NJGPA, a student was required to have achieved 750 on the Algebra I assessment and the ELA 10 assessment. The commenter also referred to the 725-cut score on the Geometry assessment but stated that the Geometry assessment was not a requirement. The commenter asked for clarification on whether students were required to achieve a 750 on the Algebra I assessment and the ELA 10 assessment, or if students could use the score on any of the assessments to meet the requirement (e.g., Geometry, Algebra I, ELA 10, and ELA 11). **(B)**

**Response:** Under the previous graduation assessment requirement, a student could satisfy the State high school graduation assessment requirement by achieving a passing score for ELA and mathematics separately on any one of the NJSLA high school end-of-course assessments, which also included ELA 9 and Algebra II in addition to those mentioned by the commenter.

40. **Comment:** The commenter asked for confirmation that the cut score for ELA 10 previously was 750 and that there were other ways for a student to satisfy the graduation assessment requirement by taking other tests and achieving a 725. **(B)**

**Response:** Yes, students taking the ELA 10 assessment at the end of 10th grade were required to achieve a cut score of 750 on that assessment. The 750-cut score was appropriate because the ELA 10 assessment was designed to be administered when the students were immersed in the ELA 10 standards. The initial recommendation of a 725-cut score for the NJGPA took into consideration that students are no longer immersed in ELA 10 standards when they take the NJGPA in 11th grade even though the graduation assessment is aligned to ELA 10 standards.

41. **Comment:** The commenter suggested that problems can arise when people arbitrarily choose a number that is not aligned to the psychometrics as the cut score for a high-stakes standardized assessment. The commenter stated that the conversation about the Department asking for the cut score to be lowered is not how the commenter sees it. The commenter also stated that it seemed as if the Department was providing an opportunity for State Board members to align the cut score to what the psychometricians recommended initially last year. The commenter also stated the importance of acknowledging that the State Board members decided, against the advice of experts, to change the cut score to raise rigor and thought there would be no unintended, adverse consequences to doing so. **(I)**

**Response:** The Department acknowledges that the commenter’s statements are accurate.

42. **Comment:** The commenter requested clarification on the terminology associated with the 725 and 750 cut scores. The commenter recalled hearing that 725 is “partially met expectations” and 750 is “met expectations,” and that 725 represents basic skills and 750 represents college and career ready. The commenter also indicated not wanting students in New Jersey to be just good enough by having basic skills. The commenter asked what 725 and 750 would equate to if using “partially met expectations” and “met expectations” categories. **(D)**

**Response:** The NJSLA and the NJGPA are not aligned as they are different assessments for different purposes. The NJSLA utilizes five performance levels, while the NJGPA has only two (i.e., graduation ready and not yet graduation ready). The NJSLA is a measure of college and career readiness with a very high level of expectation evidenced by the percentage of students who achieved the “met expectations” performance level, which ranged from 40 to 63 percent in ELA and 15 to 55 percent in mathematics across grades from 2015 through 2022. The NJGPA is a graduation assessment used to determine if a student has acquired the basic skills needed to function politically, economically, and socially in a democratic society.

Looking at the continuum of the NJSLA, there are different points in time that mark growth, but the two assessments should be kept separate. A 725 score on the NJSLA is not the same as a 725 score on the NJGPA.

43. **Comment:** The commenter asked if the Department is saying that being college and career ready is the same thing as having basic skills. The commenter added that an individual needs basic skills to be successful in life and those are college- and career-ready skills. The commenter also asked if it is true that basic skills is not defined by statute. **(B)**

**Response:** The college and career ready terminology was established by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium for the purpose of having common language across all states taking the same assessment, which was based on the Common Core State Standards. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-6.1, the purpose of the New Jersey graduation assessment requirement is to measure the basic skills all students must possess to function politically, economically, and socially in a democratic society. A cut score of 725 is based on what teams of experts have put forward and what the Department maintains is the most appropriate cut score based on the purpose of the assessment.

44. **Comment:** The commenter suggested that a study be conducted to determine what the Asian community in a particular school district is doing to achieve proficiency so the methods can be applied to other school districts throughout the State. **(G)**

**Response:** The Department acknowledges the commenter's position.

45. **Comment:** The commenter stated that subgroup data is reviewed by the State Board at the appropriate time when the Department provides it. **(A)**

**Response:** The Department acknowledges the commenter's position.



State of New Jersey  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Adoption Resolution  
May 3, 2023

**A Resolution Establishing Proficient Level Cut Score Standards for the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA): Mathematics and English Language Arts  
\*and the Alternate Assessments\***

**Whereas**, according to N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-1, the Acting Commissioner of Education with the approval of the State Board of Education shall establish a program of standards for graduation from secondary school, an such a program shall include, but not be limited to the development of a Statewide test in reading, writing and computational skills to be administered to all secondary school pupils as provided herein, and clear and explicit Statewide levels of proficiency in reading, writing and computational skills to be demonstrated as a minimum requirement for high school graduation; and

**Whereas**, according to N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-6, the State graduation proficiency test shall be administered to all 11th grade pupils and to any 11th or 12th grade pupil who has previously failed to demonstrate mastery of State graduation proficiency standards on said test; and

**Whereas**, the establishment of cut scores was completed for the State graduation proficiency test, called the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA), in accordance with industry best practices in large-scale assessment to determine the assessments' validity and the theoretically appropriate performance level cut scores; and

**\*Whereas, an alignment study was conducted between the state assessments and the assessments proposed for use as an alternate to the NJGPA, to establish equivalent performance level cut scores; and\***

**Whereas**, the State Board acknowledges the Department's selection of the respective NJGPA **\*and assessments listed as alternate graduation assessments proficient level cut scores\***; and

**Whereas**, the Department will monitor the impact of these tests and proficient level cut scores on the proficiency rates and will report any problems with the same to the State Board; now therefore be it

**Resolved**, that the New Jersey State Board of Education hereby approves the following proficient level cut scores, effective May 3, 2023:

**NJGPA Graduation Ready Cut Scores**

ELA	Mathematics
725	725

**\*Alternate ELA Graduation Assessments Cut Scores\***

*(Note: Entire table below is new.)*

Alternate Assessment	Cut Score
ACT Reading	17
Accuplacer WritePlacer	5

<b>Accuplacer WritePlacer English Second Language</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PSAT10 Evidence Based Reading and Writing (EBRW)</b>	<b>420</b>
<b>PSAT10 Reading</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>PSAT/NMSQT EBRW</b>	<b>420</b>
<b>PSAT/NMSQT Reading</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>SAT EBRW</b>	<b>450</b>
<b>SAT Reading</b>	<b>23</b>

**\*Alternate Mathematics Graduation Assessments Cut Scores\***

*(Note: Entire table below is new.)*

<b>Alternate Assessment</b>	<b>Cut Score</b>
<b>ACT Math</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Accuplacer Elementary Algebra</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Accuplacer Next-Generation QAS</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>PSAT10 Math Section or PSAT/NMSQT Math Section</b>	<b>420</b>
<b>PSAT10 Math or PSAT/NMSQT Math</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>SAT Math Section (post 10/1/15)</b>	<b>440</b>
<b>SAT Math Test</b>	<b>22</b>

---

Angelica Allen-McMillan, Ed.D., Acting Commissioner  
Acting Secretary, N.J. State Board of Education

---

Kathy Goldenberg, President  
N.J. State Board of Education