

**New Jersey**  
High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA)

**Part I: Policy Trends**

<b>Type of test</b>	Comprehensive standards-based
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>The purpose of the exam is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine prospective high school graduates’ mastery of selected content and overview foundation skills in math and literacy.</li> <li>• Encourage districts and schools to identify and serve students at risk of academic failure</li> <li>• Provide data to state policymakers on student attainment of state education goals to inform educational policy decisions</li> <li>• Provide schools with student academic diagnostic information</li> <li>• Increase alignment of local curriculum and programs of instruction with state education standards</li> <li>• Promote equity of opportunity across all student groups</li> <li>• Meet a state mandate</li> <li>• Satisfy high school graduation requirements</li> <li>• Serve federal accountability requirements</li> </ul>
<b>Major changes in exit exam policy since 2007-08 school year or any pending changes</b>	<p>The special review assessment (SRA) was replaced by the Alternate High School Assessment (AHSA) for the 2009-10 school year. Additionally, an outside vendor was hired to manage the alternate assessments instead of asking teachers to score them in their own schools as was done in previous years.</p> <p>Passing the biology test will be a graduation requirement for this year’s freshman class. Algebra I will be given another year and, while it will not yet be required for graduation, schools will be asked to provide intervention for students who are not proficient so that these students can continue their math courses successfully.</p>
<b>Status of state’s decision regarding the Common Core State Standards and impact of that decision on exit exam policies</b>	The state has adopted the Common Core State Standards in both English language arts and math. Exit exams will not be impacted until common assessments are developed.
<b>Test used by colleges or universities for undergraduate admission?</b>	Not yet, but it is part of New Jersey’s high school redesign plan to promote the goal that end-of-course tests for English III and Algebra II would become college placement tests.

<b>Year first administered</b>	<p>Students who were in 11<sup>th</sup> grade in 2002 were the first to take the HSPA.</p> <p>The HSPA replaced the High School Proficiency Test (HSPT11), which was first administered in 1983 and became a state graduation requirement for all public high school students who entered the 9<sup>th</sup> grade on or after September 1, 1991. The class of 2000 was the last required to pass the HSPT11.</p>
<b>Year diplomas first withheld</b>	<p>The class of 2003 was the first required to pass the HSPA to obtain a diploma.</p> <p>Under current planning, the last full administration of the HSPA is likely to be in March 2012; thus, the graduating class of 2014 is likely to be the first to satisfy state graduation testing requirements through competency tests. These plans are not yet final.</p>
<b>Subjects tested</b>	Language arts literacy, mathematics, and biology
<b>Types of questions</b>	Multiple choice; short constructed response; extended constructed response. The biology exam includes a performance test.
<b>Grade first administered</b>	11 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Grade(s) exam aligned to</b>	11 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Number of retakes allowed before end of grade 12</b>	<p>Two; students who are retained have additional opportunities</p> <p>At least one retest opportunity will be allowed for each end-of-course test. Final decision-making around these issues is pending.</p>
<b>Retakes after grade 12</b>	No limit on retest opportunities; students in adult high schools are also eligible to take the HSPA.
<b>Does the state have reciprocity with other states?</b>	No
<b>Exit exam used for No Child Left Behind?</b>	The results of the first administration of the HSPA in grade 11 in language arts literacy and math count for determining

	adequate yearly progress under NCLB.
	The end-of-course tests in language arts literacy, Algebra I, biology, and possibly others will serve the core NCLB accountability functions.
<b>Same cut score for graduation and NCLB?</b>	Yes
<b>Evaluations of state exit exam</b>	An evaluation was conducted in 2004 by Achieve, Inc. and is available at <a href="http://www.achieve.org">www.achieve.org</a> .
<b>State test contractor</b>	Measurement Incorporated in Durham, North Carolina
<b>Does the state provide students with alternate paths to graduation?</b>	<p>Yes. Students who fail one or both sections of the HSPA may go through the Alternate High School Assessment (AHSA) process that offers them an alternate way to demonstrate their mastery of the required skills.</p> <p>The alternate path is designed to allow students to be assessed in the state standards through a series of extended performance tasks (i.e., all constructed response) aligned to the state content standards. Student responses to these performance tasks are locally scored. The department is currently reviewing the SRA process to ensure its validity and rigor.</p> <p>Students who fail one or both sections of the HSPA are eligible to participate in the AHSA process, and most begin this alternate process automatically at the start of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade year. In addition, students who have met all other graduation requirements except passing the HSPA can either return to school at testing time the following year and retake the HSPA or pass the GED test. There is also the Thirty College Credit program, by which a student can be awarded a state-issued high school diploma for documented college credits earned. NJ also has adult high school programs in which a student can earn a local district high school diploma.</p> <p>These alternate paths will change under the new end-of-course exam requirements. The nature of and the administrative conditions for these alternate paths may change, but New Jersey will retain alternate paths for its end-of-course competency assessment requirements.</p>
<b>Alternate paths to graduation</b>	No. English language learners may demonstrate proficiency in

**specifically for English language learners**

the required content areas by completing the AHSA process, which is also available in Spanish and in three additional languages other than English. To be eligible for an AHSA in the native language, a student must have:

- a) Scored below the state-established cutoff on one of the state-approved English language tests
- b) Participated in a bilingual, English as a second language, or English language services program for two consecutive years or fewer before the HSPA testing, or
- c) Attended school in the U.S. for three consecutive years or fewer before the date of the HSPA.

English language learners who take the AHSA must also pass the English fluency test to receive a high school diploma.

There are accommodations for English language learners taking the exit exam, including additional time, the reading aloud of directions, and the use of translation dictionaries.

**Alternate paths to graduation specifically for students with disabilities**

Some students with disabilities are exempt from passing—but not from taking—the HSPA, based on their individualized education program (IEP). Students who are designated as “IEP-exempt from passing” must take the exempt portions of the test at least once, but their scores will not affect their graduation status. Students with severe cognitive disabilities take the alternate proficiency assessment (APA) instead of the HSPA and can earn a regular diploma if they fulfill all other requirements for graduation.

There are considerable accommodations for students with disabilities, including extra time, the reading aloud of directions and test items, use of assistive technology, the use of a scribe, and others. These are detailed in the state DOE manuals and on the DOE Web site.

The nature and administrative conditions for these alternate paths may change, but New Jersey will retain alternate paths for its end-of-course competency assessment requirements. The APA design would be adapted to reflect these policy changes.

**Who makes decisions on whether a student is eligible to use alternate paths?**

Failure to pass one or both content areas of the HSPA automatically triggers eligibility for the AHSA; decisions regarding ELL students and students with disabilities are made

<b>How are students identified as eligible for alternate paths to graduate?</b>	at the district level in accordance with demonstrated student need and IEP/504 plans.
<b>When calculating the graduation rate for adequate yearly progress (AYP) purposes, does the state count students taking alternate paths together with graduates who passed the high school exit exams?</b>	No application process is necessary. See above response.
<b>How many full-time equivalent staff in the state department of education are involved in implementing alternate paths?</b>	Cut scores and passing scores are established for all regular and alternate paths. The SRA results are communicated by the district to the county offices of education; the APA results are reported by the state to the districts, and through them to parents. There is no appeals process for students who fail to meet state proficiency standards; these students are served by retest opportunities and alternate paths.
<b>Types of assistance the state provides for all districts to raise <i>initial</i> pass rates for all students on the high school exit exam</b>	Yes
<b>Types of assistance or remediation the state provides for all districts to help students who have failed to pass the exit exam</b>	Two
<b>Does the state provide funding for remediation?</b>	The state offers technical assistance to teachers administering the exam, including online assistance and train-the-trainer workshops. The state also helps teachers prepare students for the exam, including online assistance, and provides exam preparation materials for students and teachers.
<b>Are districts mandated by law to provide remediation?</b>	The state provides targeted remediation programs for students.
	No
	Yes. State statute requires that appropriate remediation be provided to students who fail the test.

**Are students required to participate in remediation?**

Yes

**Part II: Student Performance**

At this time New Jersey is unable to verify or report initial or cumulative pass rates for the HSPA.