

2015 New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge Science Executive Summary

Grade 8

The New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge was administered for the first time for grade 4 in Spring 2009 and grade 8 in Spring 2008. The NJ ASK was initially designed to provide information about each student's achievement in the areas required by the NJ CCCS. The NJ ASK in Science, which is still based on the NJ CCCS, was administered to New Jersey 4th and 8th graders in Spring 2015. The results are to be used by schools and districts to identify strengths and weaknesses in their educational programs. It is anticipated that this process will lead to improved instruction, as progress is made toward the implementation of the new standards across all content areas and grade levels where they apply. The results may also be used, along with other indicators of student progress, to identify those students who may need instructional support in any of the content areas. This support, which could be in the form of individual or programmatic intervention, would be a means to address any identified knowledge or skill gaps.

The NJ ASK scores are reported as scale scores in each of the content areas. The scores range from 100-199 (Partially Proficient), 200-249 (Proficient), and 250-300 (Advanced Proficient). Note that 100 and 300 are a theoretical floor and ceiling, which may not actually be observed. The scores of students who are included in the Partially Proficient level are considered to be below the state minimum of proficiency and those students may be most in need of instructional support.

The NJ ASK 8 was administered on May 27 and May 28, 2015. Of the 103,893 students enrolled, 101,069 students received valid scale scores in Science.

The state summary data files contain the same type of information shown on the Performance by Demographic Group Reports. This executive summary includes state level performance results only. The number of students participating, the percent of students in each proficiency level, and the mean scale score are presented for each content area assessed. The percentages may not total to one hundred due to rounding. Likewise, the percentage of proficient students plus the percentage of advanced proficient students might differ slightly from the percentage of students at or above proficient shown in the executive summary.

Results are presented for total students statewide and by educational program and student demographic subgroups: general education, special education (SE), limited English proficient (LEP), gender, ethnicity, and economic status (disadvantaged vs. not disadvantaged). LEP is reported with two subcategories: current LEP and former LEP. Students with only one ethnic code are reported in the appropriate ethnic group. Students who are coded Hispanic in addition to any other ethnic affiliations are reported in the Hispanic group as well. Students who did not have an ethnicity coded and students with multiple non-Hispanic ethnicities coded are counted in the Other group.

Note that the enrollment is based on the number of students with scannable test documents, which were submitted for all students, including those who did not take the NJ ASK. Demographic information originates from the data collected on these documents. Following testing, school and district personnel were given an opportunity to review the demographic information they provided and correct any errors prior to reporting.

Highlights of the 2015 Grade 8 Assessment Results

57.7% of all students scored at the Proficient level and 19.3% scored at the Advanced Proficient level. The mean scale score was 220.7.

Special Education

- 41.3% of SE students scored at the Proficient level and 4.5% scored at the Advanced Proficient level.
- The mean scale score in Science for SE students was 196.5.

Current Limited English Proficient

- 31.8% of current LEP students scored at or above Proficient (30.7% Proficient and 1.1% Advanced Proficient).
- The mean scale score for current LEP students was 188.9.

Former Limited English Proficient

- 58.7% of former LEP students scored at or above Proficient (52.8% Proficient and 6.0% Advanced Proficient).

Gender

- 77.5% of Female students scored at or above Proficient (60.8% Proficient and 16.6% Advanced Proficient) compared to 76.6% of Male students scored at or above Proficient (54.7% Proficient and 21.9% Advanced Proficient).

Ethnicity

- The percentage of Partially Proficient students ranged from 43.8% of Black or African American students to 7.5% for Asian students (a gap of 36.3 % between lowest and highest achieving groups).

Economic Status

- 60.6% of Economically Disadvantaged students scored at or above Proficient.
85.8% of Non-Economically Disadvantaged students scored at or above Proficient.

Reporting Rules for State Summary

In order to safeguard student confidentiality, certain information is suppressed in the state summary files according to the following reporting rules:

- Data are not reported where the number of students with valid scale scores for a particular group is greater than zero but less than 11.
- Data are not reported for groups where over 90% of the students are Partially Proficient.
- Data are not reported where educational program or demographic groups are mutually exclusive (e.g., gender) and there are one or two students with a valid scale score in one of the groups (e.g., male).
- Data are not reported when it is otherwise possible to identify individual student performance.