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Contact: Richard Vespucci
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Students Prepare for Social Studies Section of Elementary School Proficiency Assessment

[Attachments](#) (PDF)

More than 100,000 fifth-grade students from throughout New Jersey will participate next week in the first official administration of the social studies section of the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA). The test is designed to measure the skills and knowledge required by the state's academic standards.

The social studies exam will be administered on Tuesday, October 16, 2001. Students not present will be able to take a make-up exam on the following day. Actual testing time will be 88 minutes, not including the time needed for distributing and collecting test booklets, reading directions, and other administrative tasks.

"Next week's administration of the ESPA section in social studies starts a new chapter in our efforts to measure how well our students are meeting the Core Curriculum Content Standards," said Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. "Our statewide testing system is an important tool of accountability for students and school districts.

"It is important that we are able to measure in a substantive way what districts are teaching and students are learning," Commissioner Gagliardi said. "I believe that we have a quality assessment system in place that accomplishes that goal."

The ESPA social studies test consists of 45 multiple-choice and 3 open-ended questions. Sample test items are attached.

The ESPA is not designed to promote students from one grade to the next. It is a diagnostic tool that tells teachers and parents if students are progressing adequately towards mastering the skills and knowledge they will need as 11th graders to pass the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). This year's high school juniors will be the first who will be required to pass the new HSPA, which replaces the HSPT, in order to receive a high school diploma.

Student scores will place them in one of three categories: advanced proficient, proficient and partially proficient. Students in the advanced proficient range will not need remedial help. Students in the partially proficient range must receive special instruction to improve identified areas of weakness, and students in the proficient range may or may not need remedial help.

All public school students are required to take the ESPA, except for certain special education students and limited English proficient students whose learning disabilities or lack of fluency exempt them from the exam.

The Department of Education has developed guides for parents about the ESPA. The guides, along with sample test items, are available from the department's web site:

www.state.nj.us/education