



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: December 20, 2018
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads, Administrators of Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities
Route To: District Test Coordinators
From: Linda P. Eno, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner
Division of Academics and Performance

New Jersey Student Learning Assessment for Science (NJSLA-S) Updates

Following a successful 2017-18 field test of the NJSLA-S, the 2018-19 school year will be the first operational assessment. There will be full reporting of results following the 2019 administration, and in turn, the state is required to report the results to the U.S. Department of Education to fulfill the science requirements mandated by the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*. As the 2018-19 administration will be a baseline year, and the NJDOE has not historically used baseline results for monitoring purposes, the 2018-19 results not be used in the 2018-19 Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC). QSAC will instead use science assessment data from 2016-17 for monitoring purposes.

Changes to Grade Five Assessment Timing

Based on data received from the field test and feedback from districts, unit times for the grade five assessment will be extended. The 2018 field test data from the NJSLA-S assessment revealed that the majority of students would benefit from more time. To provide ample time for students to adequately complete the assessment and demonstrate their level of proficiency in the science standards and practices, the spring 2019 operational administration of the grade five NJSLA-S will be extended by 15 minutes per unit. The revised unit times bring the total testing time for grade five to three hours, which is in line with the [unit times](#) for the mathematics and English language arts (ELA) assessments.

Test Administration

The NJSLA-S can be administered in a minimum of two days, with a maximum of two units being administered per day. The Spring 2019 NJSLA-S will be administered during the testing window shown below. Please see the [NJSLA-S key dates memo](#) for more information. The timing for each of the grade-level assessments is shown in Table 1, below. Districts can administer up to two units per day for each student, so students could complete testing in science in just two days.

Testing Window for NJSLA-S Spring 2019 Administration

Computer-Based Tests: May 6 - June 7, 2019

Paper-Based Tests: May 6 - May 17, 2019

Table 1: NJSLA-S Assessment Time

	Number of units	Time per unit	Total testing time
Grade 5 assessment	4	45 minutes	3 hours
Grade 8 assessment	4	45 minutes	3 hours
Grade 11 assessment	4	60 minutes	4 hours

Test Blueprint

The following is the test blueprint for the NJSLA-S. A test blueprint is a document that reflects the content of an assessment. The NJSLA-S will assess students on their ability to utilize the Science and Engineering Practices (SEP) within the context of the Disciplinary Core Ideas (DCI) to explain phenomena. The assessment is designed to assess these skills in two parts: the Performance Based Assessment (PBA) and the Machine Scorable Assessment (MSA). The PBA will always contain one critical response item, which is an open-ended item that will require the student to synthesize their own response, and between two and four additional Technology Enhanced Items (TEI). The MSA section will contain a mixture of TEI and multiple-choice items.

The items will be focused on the standards of the grade band for which the assessment is developed:

- The grade five assessment will contain questions on the standards from grades three to five;
- The grade eight assessment will focus on all middle school standards; and
- The grade 11 assessment will contain questions from all high school standards.

Students will be presented several phenomena and will be asked multiple questions related to each. The alignment of each item will be to one DCI, one SEP and one Crosscutting Concept (CCC). This will allow the Department to provide more detailed data back to the student, school, district, and parent.

Given the number of DCI, SEP and CCC combinations, it is not practical to report on each one individually. Instead, the assessment will report on groups. For DCI, the focus will be on Physical Science Life Science, and Earth and Space Science, while the SEP will be combined into Investigating Practices, Sensemaking Practices and Critiquing Practices. The CCC will not be directly reported on but are integrated into each of the items.

Table 2: Reporting Groups for the Science and Engineering Practices (SEP)

Investigating Practices	Sensemaking Practices	Critiquing Practices
1. Asking Questions and Defining Problems	1. Developing and Using Models	1. Engaging in Argument from Evidence
2. Planning and Carrying Out Investigation	2. Analyzing and Interpreting Data	2. Obtaining, Evaluating, and Communication of Information
3. Using Mathematical and Computational Thinking	3. Constructing Explanations and Designing Solutions	

Table 3: Test Blueprint-Targeted Number of Items Per Test

Reporting Groups	Grade 5: PBA	Grade 5: MSA	Grade 8: PBA	Grade 8: MSA	Grade 11: PBA	Grade 11: MSA
Physical Science: Investigating	1-2	3-5	1-2	4-7	1-2	4-8
Physical Science: Sensemaking	1-2	3-5	1-2	4-7	1-2	4-8
Physical Science: Critiquing	1-2	3-5	1-2	4-7	1-2	4-8
Total Items for Physical Science	3-5	11-13	3-5	14-18	3-5	15-21
Life Science: Investigating	1-2	3-5	1-2	4-7	1-2	4-8
Life Science: Sensemaking	1-2	3-5	1-2	4-7	1-2	4-8
Life Science: Critiquing	1-2	3-5	1-2	4-7	1-2	4-8
Total Items for Life Science	3-5	11-13	3-5	14-18	3-5	15-21
Earth & Space Science: Investigating	1-2	3-5	1-2	4-7	1-2	4-8
Earth & Space Science: Sensemaking	1-2	3-5	1-2	4-7	1-2	4-8
Earth & Space Science: Critiquing	1-2	3-5	1-2	4-7	1-2	4-8
Total Items for Earth & Space Science	3-5	11-13	3-5	14-18	3-5	15-21

Practice Tests

Practice tests are currently available at the [NJSLA-S website](#), with updated versions available by February 15, 2019. Either version will be helpful to familiarize staff and students with the NJSLA-S and the testing platform. During the test, students will encounter item types like those commonly found in the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments for ELA and math, such as drag and drop and multi-select. *Parent, Student and Teacher Information Guides*, which provide helpful information about the NJSLA-S, will be made available by February 1, 2019 via the [NJSLA-S website](#). Hard copies of these guides will also be shipped to districts and schools, based on their student registration for NJSLA-S, and will arrive in districts during the first full week of February 2019.

Contact Information

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