



March 3, 2023

Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan
Acting Commissioner Department of Education
200 Riverview Plaza
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Dear Acting Commissioner Allen-McMillan,

As the New Jersey Department of Education prepares for the second administration of the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA), we write to request information on two pressing issues connected to this new test.

As you know, last February, shortly before the NJGPA was administered for the first time, the State Board of Education adopted a "A Resolution Establishing Proficient Level Cut Score Standards for The New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA): Mathematics and English Language Arts." That resolution rejected the recommendation of the Department's Assessment experts, vendors, and the New Jersey Technical Advisory Committee and set the passing score for the NJGPA at 750 instead of the recommended benchmark of 725.

The resolution, adopted on February 2, 2022, included the following paragraph:

"Whereas, the Department will present to the State Board, by the September meeting of 2022, an analysis from the first administration of the NJGPA test for the board's review of the herein approved cut score. Following the said review, the Department will recommend to either maintain or modify said cut score;"

Accordingly, we request the following information:

- Was such a review of the approved cut score presented to the State Board?
- Is that review available to the public?
- Did the Department "recommend to either maintain or modify said cut score?"

Moreover, last year the NJ Legislature overwhelmingly passed and Governor Murphy signed A3196/S2349 requiring that the NJGPA be administered "as a field test for 11th grade students expected to graduate as part of the class of 2023" and, further, that "the State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education shall use the results of the test to assist in the development of State graduation proficiency tests for future graduating classes." This legislation underscored

the public interest in the Department's review of NJGPA results and the State Board's action in raising the "cut score."

New Jersey is one of just eight states that currently requires "exit testing" for high school diplomas. Accordingly, the NJGPA is a "high stakes" exam for high school students, and the validity of the passing score is a matter of significant public consequence. The results of last year's NJGPA administration emphasize those consequences as statewide passing rates, based on the higher cut score, were just 39% for English Language Arts and 50% for math. Education Law Center estimates that the higher cut score reduced passing rates by 15-20% on each section of the test.

Finally, and particularly in light of the large number of students who, based on their NJGPA results, will likely need to take and pass additional "substitute competency tests" in order to receive their diplomas, we would like to know why the Department and the State Board have not posted passing scores on the alternative tests. For well over a year, the Department's website [page](#) outlining "High School Graduation Assessment Requirements" for the Classes of 2023–2025 has listed the names of nearly two dozen alternative tests that may be used to satisfy the graduation assessment requirement without passing scores, instead promising: "Cut scores forthcoming following New Jersey State Board of Education Approval."

Why have such scores not been posted to date, and when will they be available to students, families, schools and districts?

We appreciate your timely attention to these requests. Thank you.

Sincerely,



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