

## LET THE STATE BOARD KNOW TESTS DON'T TEACH

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Last year, the New Jersey Department of Education (DOE) recommended reducing the number of required state tests for high school graduation to one end-of-course test of English Language Arts (ELA) and one of math. The State Board of Education disagreed with this recommendation. As a result, the DOE proposed regulations that required students to take two years of ELA tests and two years of math tests, passing ELA 10 and Algebra I to graduate. The test would be called the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment, or NJSLA, and would be similar in content and format to the PARCC tests.

On Dec. 31, 2018, the path of these proposed regulations became unclear when the New Jersey Supreme Court found that current graduation regulations were illegal, as they required students to pass ELA 10 and Algebra I tests, while state law requires students to pass a graduation assessment in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. The court created an agreement between the parties to a lawsuit on the requirements that allowed students currently in high school (through the Class of 2022) to follow the regulations that were in place in 2018 to graduate.

At the Sept. 4, 2019 State Board of Education meeting, the DOE proposed that starting with the Class of 2023, students would be required to take a 9<sup>th</sup> grade ELA and math test, and an 11<sup>th</sup> grade assessment to graduate. Some members of the board questioned this proposal, suggesting that students should take ELA and math assessments in both 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, as well as a high school graduation test in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. These board members suggested that administering fewer tests is tantamount to lowering standards with no guarantee that students are mastering curricula. In addition, they felt that without a 10<sup>th</sup> grade test, teachers won't know enough about student strengths and weaknesses.

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### WRITE A LETTER TO THE STATE BOARD MEMBERS URGING THEM TO REDUCE TESTING FOR STUDENTS

Please state that you are writing about N.J.A.C. 6A:8, Standards and Assessment.

Think about including the following points in your letter:

- The strength of curriculum standards, not the state test, is what determines student learning, and New Jersey's curriculum standards are among the highest in the nation. [You might want to add that the State Board heard this from Arthur VanderVeen from New Meridian when he presented to the them on Aug. 1, 2018.]
- Testing takes more than the two or three hours allotted for the test itself, and takes away from student learning, as student schedules are disrupted over a period of several days for a test.
- Teachers are constantly assessing student knowledge of standards and student learning. Not only do we give teacher-made tests, we ask questions, look at homework, and give other assignments to ensure students are learning content and mastering the curriculum standards.

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# State of New Jersey

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