



State of New Jersey

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Commissioner

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September 24, 2009

TO: District Superintendents
Charter School Leaders

FROM: Gerald J. Vernotica, Ed.D.
Assistant Commissioner
Division of Field Services

SUBJECT: Update on Mathematics Assessment – Grades 3 through 8
Use of Calculators

TOTAL PAGES: 3

DISTRIBUTE TO: **Principals**
District Test Coordinator
Staff as appropriate

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LUCILLE E. DAVY
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September 23, 2009

TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons

FROM: Lucille E. Davy
Commissioner

SUBJECT: Update on Mathematics Assessment – Grades 3 through 8

As part of our ongoing review of the statewide assessments of the *New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards* (CCCS), we have changed the existing practice on the use of calculators for the third through eighth grade math assessments. At this time, I am writing to advise you of the change because it may influence your district's current mathematics instruction.

Previously, our assessments have allowed the use of calculators in most parts of the tests. One result, however, of allowing the extensive use of calculators on the grades 3 and 4 mathematics test is that this practice has obscured our ability to measure with confidence students' grasp of foundational math skills in mathematics operations. As students develop mathematical proficiency through the grade levels, fluency continues to be important as additional emphasis is placed on problem solving and mathematical applications. Students with a degree of facility in mathematical operations are better able to progress to more cognitively demanding mathematics comprehension skills. Such higher order skills are essential to our vision of higher expectations for all New Jersey students in the 21st century and critical to the successful completion of our newly approved graduation requirements in mathematics.

For these reasons, we are modifying the calculator use policy for the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK), effective spring 2010, as follows:

- Calculators **will not** be permitted during the short constructed response (SCR) part of all NJASK assessments grades 3 – 8.
- In grades 3 and 4, calculators **will** be permitted on **one** of the five remaining parts. This part will include multiple choice and one extended constructed response (ECR) item.
- In grades 5 through 8, calculators **will** be permitted on **three** of the five remaining parts. These parts will include multiple choice and extended constructed response (ECR) items.
- The overall test design does take into account the additional time needed to complete each item under this revised calculator use policy; however, the overall test time has not significantly increased in any of the grade levels.

- The calculator use policy for the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) remains unchanged.

Students with disabilities may use calculators as an appropriate special education modification under the following circumstances:

- The Short Constructed Response (SCR) section of NJASK grades 3 through 8 will be non-calculator active for **all** students including students with disabilities.
- For the spring 2010 administration, special education students whose documented educational disability limits him or her from calculating mathematically may use a calculator on the non-calculator sections (with the exception of SCR as noted above) if the student uses a calculator or other manipulatives **during routine instruction**, except while the student is actually being taught to calculate.
- Students who are accommodated through the use of calculators must have the assessment administered to them in an alternative setting.
- IEPs developed prior to the issue date of this memo will not require an amendment in order for students to use calculators for the 2010 NJASK 3-8 administrations.
- Beginning with the May 2011 administration, the use of a calculator or other specific manipulatives as an instructional and assessment accommodation must be documented in the student's IEP or 504 plan. However, the Short Constructed Response (SCR) section as stated above will remain non-calculator active.

Our assessments continue to be aligned with the *New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards* and expect fluency with mathematical operations as well as conceptual understanding of mathematics. Math instruction should not be solely focused on either computational fluency or conceptual understanding. In order to prepare students for future success, both aspects of mathematical teaching must be addressed.

It remains our expectation that calculators will continue to be used appropriately in mathematics classroom instruction as required by CCCS and in support of the development of mathematical proficiency. The test booklets will be plainly marked to indicate where calculators may or may not be used, and these guidelines will be reflected in our training and ancillary materials as well.

If you have questions or comments about these matters, please feel free to contact Sandra Alberti, director, Office of Math and Science Education, at (609) 984-5322, or by e-mail at sandra.alberti@doe.state.nj.us; or Timothy Peters, director, Office of State Assessments, at (609) 984-7761 or by e-mail at timothy.peters@doe.state.nj.us.

LED/SA Calculator Policy assessment 09-10.doc

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