



# The SRA : Alternative Approaches to Meeting New Jersey's High School Assessment Requirements

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# The Context: A Reminder

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- Passing the HSPA is a graduation requirement; the SRA is available to students in their senior year who have not yet demonstrated proficiency on one or both content areas of the HSPA;
- The Special Review Assessment (SRA) is state developed but locally administered and scored, in untimed settings over several weeks or months, consisting entirely of extended, open-ended items called Performance Assessment Tasks (PAT), in LAL and math;
- In recent years, 13,000-16,000 students have achieved their diploma via the SRA, most of them general ed students;
- In some schools a majority of seniors graduate via the SRA; and
- As a result, the SRA has long been criticized as a “backdoor” to a High School diploma.

## Previously . . .

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- The DOE had proposed eliminating the SRA;
- State Board approved a resolution to phase out SRA *but* . . .
- Board still wants an alternate mechanism for satisfying high school testing requirement.

# What This Means . . .

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- What we want is really an *improved* alternate HS assessment vehicle – i.e., an improved or enhanced SRA:
  - Must restore validity and credibility of process;
  - Must assure integrity of diplomas achieved through alternate means.



# What This Might Look Like

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- Establish specific SRA administration windows
- Have state test vendor assign and distribute performance tasks;
- Have state vendor organize and supervise scoring by NJ teachers in regional scoring centers;
- Continue availability of translated PATs in Spanish and 2-3 other languages;
- Require districts that are heavy “users” of SRA to submit a plan for reducing their reliance on it;
- Implement enhanced alternate high school assessment program in 2009-2010 or as soon as possible;
- Rename program to reflect these changes: e.g., Alternate High School Assessment.

# Keep in Mind . . .

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- SRA PATs are performance assessments, aligned to CCCS, and requiring critical thinking skills;
- SRA PATs are compatible with NJDOE move toward wider use of performance assessment in state system overall;
- The SRA PATs are not “easy”; it is the local scoring and administration, with reduced security and technical validity, that has been the source of criticism;
- SRA PATs are themselves of high quality and rigor equivalent to HSPA test items.



# Advantages of SRA Recommendation

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- Enhanced SRA still requires active effort by student to demonstrate proficiency on state CCCS;
- Preserves HSPA “second chance”;
- Focus remains on districts to improve student learning;
- Equivalence of HSPA and SRA enhanced – thus maintaining standard for graduation;
- Little additional administrative burden on NJDOE, compared to other options.



# Implications of High School Redesign

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- New Jersey's high school redesign initiative will transform secondary education in New Jersey, raising the rigor of both the curriculum standards and the statewide assessments.
- For high school assessment, this means a transition from the integrated content model of the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) to an end-of-course testing model.
- The evolution of the HSPA into an end-of-course high school assessment program would, even in the absence of controversy, inevitably transform the SRA into a different, more demanding alternate high school assessment program.
- Thus, this "enhanced" SRA (or alternate high school assessment) would be transitional, necessarily evolving to support the next generation of high school assessments in NJ.

## Discussion/Next Steps

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- For fuller presentation, see accompanying discussion paper - *Standards and Expectations: Alternative Approaches to Meeting New Jersey's High School Assessment Requirements*
- *Questions?*