

ASSEMBLY, No. 3196

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 7, 2022

Sponsored by:

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District 28 (Essex)

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District 6 (Burlington and Camden)

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SYNOPSIS

Requires State Board of Education to institute passing score of 725 for New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment until 2025.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT concerning required graduation assessments for high
2 school students.

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4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

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7 1. The State Board of Education, in coordination with the
8 Commissioner of Education, shall require that the passing score on
9 the English language arts and mathematics components of the New
10 Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment created and administered
11 pursuant to P.L.1979, c.241 (C.18A:7C-1 et seq.) be set at 725 for
12 11th grade students expected to graduate as part of the 2023, 2024,
13 and 2025 classes.

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15 2. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire on
16 July 1, 2025.

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STATEMENT

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21 This bill instructs the State Board of Education, in coordination
22 with the Commissioner of Education, to require that the passing
23 score on the English language arts and mathematics components of
24 the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment be set at 725 for
25 11th grade students expected to graduate as part of the 2023, 2024,
26 and 2025 classes.

27 The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted students
28 throughout the State and led to a number of unique and pressing
29 challenges. With many school districts returning to in-person
30 learning, school officials are finding a significant drop in the
31 number of students who are performing on grade level in key
32 subject areas. For minority and economically disadvantaged
33 students, those losses are even greater given the challenges they
34 faced in acquiring learning devices, internet access, and in-person
35 assistance from teaching staff. It is estimated that as many as
36 400,000 students in New Jersey are not proficient in English
37 language arts and math. As a result, districts will need to provide
38 remedial instruction in many core academic subjects, aside from
39 those subjects tested on Statewide assessments, to ensure that
40 students are making sufficient progress towards graduation.

41 Further compounding student learning losses has been a
42 worsening of the student mental health crisis. Since the start of the
43 pandemic, hospitals have reported an increase in the number of
44 young people admitted to the emergency room with mental health
45 emergencies while more parents are finding that their child has
46 shown signs of a new or worsening mental health conditions such as
47 anxiety or depression. Experts believe this increase is attributable
48 to a number of factors including the implementation of social

1 distancing measures, the pivot to virtual learning, interruption of
2 mental health services, pandemic-related job losses, and the death
3 of a close relative from COVID-19.

4 Increasing the score of the New Jersey Graduation Assessment at
5 a time when many school districts are coping with widespread
6 learning loss and a student mental health crisis, complicates the task
7 of addressing some of the most severe impacts of the pandemic on
8 our students by leaving school districts less time to address the
9 urgent needs of their student populations. Some estimates suggest
10 that administering the assessment with the current passing score of
11 750 may result in failure rates of 50 percent or more. A failure rate
12 of this magnitude will not only cause further harm to our students,
13 but exacerbate current staffing shortages by requiring additional
14 staff to assist students with the portfolio appeals process as a result
15 of a failed test.

16 By requiring students to achieve a passing score of 725, the State
17 can ensure that its measurement of graduation readiness is realistic
18 and achievable while allowing school districts the time to focus on
19 their most pressing challenges.