New Jersey
Student Learning Standards

Fall 2022
Administration Policies

Contents

What Are the Start Strong Assessments?

Pursuant to Commissioner's regulatory authority, the Start Strong assessments are part of the overall Statewide assessment programs. The Start Strong assessment is a valuable tool for teachers, parents, and schools as results are provided in real-time. The identification of the most appropriate level of supports students need in mathematics and English language arts based on priority New Jersey Student Learning Standards from the prior academic year is not only informative but essential.

The Start Strong assessments:

- Are based on a subset of prioritized prior-year academic standards.
- Must be taken by students in English Language Arts (ELA) grades 4–10; Mathematics grades 4–8; Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II courses; and Science grades 6, 9, and 12*.
- Use the same online systems, PearsonAccess^next (PAN) and TestNav, as the NJSLA.
- Are limited to a testing time of no more than 60 minutes per content area.
- Will provide same-day results.
- Are available in English and Spanish, plus a full array of accommodated versions.

*Students who are newly arrived English Language Learners (ELLs), and who enrolled in United States schools after June 1 of the prior school year, may be exempted from taking the Start Strong in ELA, but must still test in math and science.

Students with the most significant intellectual disabilities who will take the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessments according to their Individualized Education Program (IEP) are also exempt from taking the Start Strong.

Changes from Start Strong Fall 2020

- The Start Strong assessments were offered as an optional classroom tool in fall 2020. In fall 2021 Start Strong was administered to satisfy federal assessment requirements for spring 2022. For fall 2022 Start Strong is now part of the assessment program and the results of these tests should be used by local education agencies to address individual or program-based curriculum strengths and areas for opportunities for improvement.
- Test Coordinators are responsible for printing testing tickets, as it is done for the NJSLA.
- The Start Strong offers accommodations similar to those offered in the NJSLA/NJGPA.
- At the end of the administration, Test Coordinators should apply Not Tested Codes and Void Test Score Codes to student records, if appropriate.
- The science items that appear in Start Strong are available in the Digital Item Library after the testing window ends.
- A report which shows the distribution of support levels across a school, district, or specified group will be available in PearsonAccess^next after the testing window.
- Individual Student Reports will be posted to PearsonAccess^next after the testing window closes. They will also be made available electronically in the Parent Portal, and printed copies will be shipped to districts as well.

Differences between Start Strong and NJSLA

- Each Start Strong assessment consists of just one unit. A student may take up to two content areas of Start Strong in a single day.
- There are no open-ended test items. All test items are machine-scorable, which allows for same-day score reporting.
- There is a single Test Administrator script provided.
- A student's test status in PAN will automatically change to Resume if the student exits the test prematurely. This allows the student to log in again without intervention from the Test Administrator.
- Headphones are not required for use on the ELA tests. However, headphones may be used as an accessibility feature, or testing accommodation as per the student's IEP or Section 504 plan. Math tools are not required for the math tests.
- The mathematics reference sheets for Start Strong differ from those used for the NJSLA because they align to academic content from the previous school year. To avoid confusion, these mathematics reference sheets are titled "Start Strong Fall Administration" to distinguish them from the ones that are used for NJSLA. Students should not use the NJSLA mathematics reference sheets for the Start Strong assessments. The titles will also match the name of the corresponding Start Strong assessment (e.g., the "Grade 7 Assessment Reference Sheet" will be used by students taking the Grade 7 Mathematics Start Strong assessment).
- Regular print test booklets are printed locally for students who have an accommodation for paper-based testing. There are no printed answer documents. Students testing on paper must indicate their responses in the printed test booklet. A Test Administrator (TA) will need to transcribe the responses into TestNav. Therefore, the student must be assigned to an online test session in PAN with the form group set as Transcription English or Transcription Spanish. This must occur before test sessions are prepared and started. Even though test booklets are non-secure, they must be securely destroyed after the student's responses are transcribed. Please find more information in the Paper-Based Testing User Guide at the New Jersey Assessments Resource Center, located under **Start Strong.**
- Students using the screen reader form have been provided with a tactile graphics booklet in the past for NJSLA-Math and Science. For Start Strong, there are no tactile graphics booklets, but these students may be given a braille test kit, which includes the tactile graphics embedded in the test booklets.
- No physical test materials are automatically shipped for Start Strong. Test coordinators may place orders in PAN for braille and large print test kits.
- Test administrators may have access to on-demand and dynamic score reports for their students, as long as a Reporting Group has been set up for them in PAN. Districts must create reporting groups to enable educators to view the reports of groups of students assigned to teachers for instructional purposes, immediately after the students complete the assignment. See the Reporting Groups Guidance for instructions on how to create Reporting Groups at the New Jersey Assessments Resource Center, located under **Start Strong**.

Test Coordinator Responsibilities

- Review this document and the Start Strong user guides.
- Authorize school staff to serve as TAs and train them on the following:
    - How to properly administer the Start Strong.
    - What to do in case of testing irregularities.
    - How to get technology support.
- Sign a *Start Strong Administration Agreement* and collect signed copies from TAs.
- Register students, assign them to test sessions, and prepare the test sessions.
- Set up Reporting Groups and assign appropriate user roles in PAN so teachers can view student scores and reports.
- Establish the testing schedule and the break policy.
- Arrange for appropriate testing locations.
- Print testing tickets from PAN.
- Print test booklets (for paper-based testers) and/or order accommodated test materials (if needed) from PAN.
- Keep testing materials in locked storage when Start Strong tests are not being administered.
- Distribute materials to TAs and collect materials from them after testing each day.
- Establish a chain-of-custody system that includes a tracking log to account for the following materials throughout testing:
    - Student testing tickets.
    - Scratch paper written on by students.
    - Mathematics reference sheets and/or science periodic tables written on by students.
    - Test booklets printed from PAN.
    - Vendor-supplied braille and large print materials.
    - Any accommodated responses captured on paper or with an electronic device.
- Supervise transcription of student responses from paper-based tests into TestNav.
- After testing, securely destroy the trackable materials specified above, in addition to any reports or documents used in administering the Start Strong assessment that contain personally identifiable student information, such as student rosters. Unlike NJSLA, no Start Strong test materials are to be returned to MI or Pearson.
- Clean up test sessions and student records in PAN. Apply Not Tested Codes and/or Void Test Score Codes if needed.
- Complete *Start Strong Testing Irregularity* and/or *Start Strong Post-Test Certification Forms*. These can be found at the New Jersey Assessments Resource Center, located under **Start Strong**.

Test Administrator Responsibilities

1. Receive training in administering tests properly.

- Sign a *Start Strong Administration Agreement.*
- Review this document and the Start Strong user guides.
- Attend any training session(s) led by the School Test Coordinator (STC).
- Understand how to administer accessibility features and accommodations, if applicable.

2. Administer all tests according to appropriate protocols.

- Provide no more than 60 minutes for completion of a unit, except for students with the extended time accommodation.
- Remove or cover any classroom displays that provide information related to the content being assessed or to test-taking strategies.
- Provide students with all required test materials listed in the user guide.
- Prevent the use of prohibited materials during testing, which include the following:
  - Any personal electronic equipment not related to testing (e.g., cell phones, smart watches, iPods®, eBooks, electronic pens, etc.).
  - Classroom resources such as books, posters, models, displays, or teaching aids that define, explain, illustrate terminology or concepts, or otherwise could provide assistance during testing.
  - Mathematical formulas, number lines, and conversion tables other than the Start Strong mathematics reference sheets.
  - Any tool or manipulative not approved for statewide testing in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 plan, or as part of the accommodations identified for English Language Learners.
- In general, if the item in question may help the student answer a test question or copy test questions, it is prohibited.
- Note that tests may be voided for students who use cell phones or other prohibited electronic devices during testing, even after a student turns in his or her test materials, or during a break.

3. Focus full attention on the testing environment at all times during testing.

- Monitor the testing process by continually moving about the room in a way that does not disturb students or attract attention. A test administrator may not view student responses, except if necessary to administer certain accommodations.
- Ensure that students are supervised during testing, including during breaks.

4. Ensure that students do not participate in any form of cheating, such as:

- Looking at notes, textbooks, or other teaching materials.
- Sharing test questions with other students.
- Consulting other students, school staff, or anyone else during testing.
- Viewing the content of other students' tests.

5. Do not provide unauthorized assistance to a student that could impact their answers. Examples of unauthorized assistance include, but are not limited to:

- Providing answers to a student.
- Indicating that a question was answered incorrectly or left blank.
- Spelling words, defining words, or providing synonyms.
- Offering verbal or non-verbal hints, clues, or cues.
- Altering, explaining, simplifying, or paraphrasing any test question, stimulus, prompt, or answer option.
- Suggesting that a student check their work, or review or reconsider a response to a question.

6. Follow proper procedures for providing accessibility features or accommodations.

- Ensure that students are only provided accommodations that are listed specifically for use during statewide testing in an approved Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 plan, or as part of the accommodations identified for English Language Learners.
- Follow guidelines on proper administration of accommodations or accessibility features as prescribed in the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA) and New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA) Accessibility Features and Accommodations (AF&A) Manual, Tenth Edition (available at the New Jersey Assessments Resource Center, located under **Educator Resources > Test Administration Resources**).

7. During testing, read the Script for Administering the NJ Start Strong Assessment aloud to students. The standalone script is available at the New Jersey Assessments Resource Center, located under **Start Strong.**

8. Return all test materials to the Test Coordinator after testing each day.

Testing Environment

The testing environment is defined as the location in which students are actively testing (e.g., classroom, computer lab). The Test Coordinator must do the following:

- Establish procedures to maintain a quiet testing environment throughout testing, so students can work comfortably and without disruption.
- Choose testing locations with good lighting and ventilation, comfortable room temperatures, and a clock.
- Provide comfortable chairs and tables at an appropriate height, with sufficient room for approved testing devices and materials.
- Confirm that each student will have adequate workspace and be sufficiently separated from other students to support a secure testing environment.
- Check that all needed materials and equipment are available and in good and working condition.

Other considerations:

- Some students may finish testing before others, and the expectations for what those students may do must be established in advance of the testing day. District policy may allow the TA to either dismiss the student (if feasible) or to permit the student to silently read an approved recreational book. Subject matter of recreational books must be unrelated to content being assessed.
- Unauthorized visitors are prohibited from entering the testing environment. Unauthorized visitors may include parents/guardians, school board members, reporters, and school staff who are not authorized to serve as Test Administrators or proctors.
- The "Testing—Please Do Not Disturb" sign must be posted on the outside of the room door (available at the New Jersey Assessments Resource Center, located under **Start Strong**).
- Classroom resources such as books, posters, models, displays, or teaching aids that define, explain, or illustrate terminology or concepts, or otherwise provide unauthorized assistance during testing, should be removed or covered. If the material in question may help the student answer a test question, or copy test questions, it is not allowed in the testing environment.

To maintain a secure computer-based testing environment, the following ideal configurations for seating students are recommended:

- Seat students in every other seat.
- Arrange monitors back-to-back.
- Seat students back-to-back.
- Seat students in a semicircle.
- Seat students in widely spaced rows or in every other row.

If an ideal seating configuration is not possible, physical and visual barriers between testing devices should be used to prevent students from viewing other testing devices. Schools may already have one or more of the following materials available that can be adapted for this purpose:

- Card stock (e.g., manila folders) that can be taped to the sides of monitors.
- Flattened cardboard boxes that can be cut, folded, and taped to form a visual barrier between testing devices.
- Tri-fold display boards (such as those used for science project exhibits) that can stand freely between testing devices.
- Cardboard carrels.
- Privacy screens that narrow the viewing angle of a computer monitor so that it is visible only to someone sitting directly in front of it may be used. Schools that have privacy screens available should affix them to monitors prior to the beginning of testing and ensure that students are seated so that they cannot view the monitor of the student seated in the row in front of them.

Guidelines for Scheduling, Testing Time, and Make-Up Testing

Guidelines for Scheduling

All tests, including make-up testing, must be completed during the testing window. Start Strong may be scheduled at any time on regular school days during the students' normal school hours. Refer to the New Jersey Assessments Resource Center, under **Start Strong**, for the dates of the testing window. Districts are encouraged to start testing as soon as possible to ensure completion of the assessment. Schools may use their discretion in deciding which content areas are scheduled on what days. Contact your District Test Coordinator (DTC) or STC if you have any questions about your specific testing dates.

After-hours testing is available for alternative high school programs and adult high schools. For testing outside the hours of 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays, the DTC must contact NJDOE to request a Delivery Schedule Override.

Testing Time

The testing time is the same for all tests, in all content areas. Students may be given up to 60 minutes to complete a test. Each student is expected to complete each Start Strong test in a single sitting (i.e., all at once), with limited exceptions due to illness during testing. If a student starts a test and leaves the testing environment (e.g., due to illness or family emergency) without finishing that test, they may be allowed to complete that test on a different day. TAs must note the exact place in the unit where the student stopped and the amount of time remaining. Students are not allowed to alter any previously entered or written responses. They must pick up exactly where they left off.

Students may be allowed an extended time accommodation beyond the testing time, up to the end of the school day, to complete a test **only** if this accommodation is listed in their IEP or 504 plan or identified in advance for English language learners. It is highly recommended that these students be

scheduled to test in a separate setting. A student may be on a different testing schedule from other students because of this accommodation, as long as testing is completed within the testing window.

Make-Up Testing

Students who are not tested on the regular administration date should participate in make-up testing. Make-up tests must be scheduled within the testing window. Every attempt should be made to administer make-up tests to students who were absent during the originally scheduled testing session.

STCs should advise TAs that the same test security and administration protocols must be in place for make-up tests as for the tests administered on the regularly scheduled days. When establishing a testing schedule, STCs should identify specific make-up testing days.

Break Policy

STCs must determine and discuss procedures for breaks with TAs prior to testing day. If administering two tests back-to-back, a scheduled break is highly recommended between tests. During the break, students are permitted to go to the restroom, stretch, and get a drink, if needed. For breaks during testing, there should not be conversations among students, and students are not permitted to use electronic devices, play games, or engage in activities that may violate the validity of the test. Students must be supervised at all times during breaks.

TAs are responsible for ensuring that students are not able to see content on other students' testing devices or test materials.

Restroom breaks during a test: During a testing session, individual restroom breaks may be provided at the discretion of the TA. It is recommended that no more than one student at a time be allowed to use the restroom and that students be supervised. Testing time may not be adjusted for restroom breaks, and students should be encouraged to use the restroom prior to the beginning of the testing session.

Classroom stretch break during a test: At the discretion of the TA, a classroom may take one "stand-and-stretch" break of up to three minutes during testing, and the TA may adjust testing time by no more than three minutes.

Frequent breaks: Frequent breaks may be offered as an administration consideration for any student. Administrative considerations must be identified for the student in the Student Registration/Personal Needs Profile (SR/PNP); refer to the *NJSLA/NJGPA AFA Manual* for additional information. TAs should not "stop the clock" for students with frequent breaks. For students with disabilities or English Language Learners who may require frequent breaks, it is highly recommended that schools consider the extended time accommodation.

Test Administration Integrity

The content of the Start Strong assessment is not secure. After the administration of the Start Strong, teachers are encouraged to review test items in an effort to better understand the concepts in which students may require additional support. However, in order to provide a useful picture of a student's ability, it is important to maintain the integrity of the test administration. Students need the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities without undue influence.

Start Strong Administration Agreement

Before testing begins, all DTCs, STCs, Technology Coordinators, TAs, proctors, or any authorized observers must complete the *Start Strong Administration Agreement* found at the [New Jersey Assessments Resource Center](#), located under **Start Strong**, and keep a copy for their records. Authorized observers may include the principal, monitors from the NJDOE Office of Assessments, monitors from the district, and other NJDOE-authorized observers. STCs should collect the forms for their schools and submit them to the DTC. Districts must retain signed forms for three years. Do not submit these forms to PAN.

Testing Irregularities

Any action that compromises score validity is prohibited. These may be classified as testing irregularities and must be reported on a *Start Strong Testing Irregularity Form*. STCs must discuss potential testing irregularities with TAs during training. Examples:

- Testing Environment Irregularities
    - Displaying any resource (e.g., posters, models, displays, teaching aids) that defines, explains, or illustrates terminology or concepts, or otherwise provides assistance during testing.
    - Allowing preventable disruptions such as talking, noises, or excessive student movement around the classroom.
    - Allowing unauthorized visitors in the testing environment, such as parents/guardians, school board members, reporters, and school staff who are not authorized to serve as Test Administrators or proctors.
- Test Administration Irregularities
    - Failing to follow test administration directions.
    - Allowing more than 60 minutes of testing time for students who do not have an accommodation for extended time.
    - Failing to provide a student with a documented accommodation or providing a student with an accommodation that is not documented and, therefore, is not appropriate.
    - Student taking the wrong test; if the student completes the wrong test, the DTC must immediately contact the NJDOE Program Coordinator for directions to void the test and assign a new one.
- Electronic Devices Irregularities
    - Anyone using a prohibited handheld electronic device (e.g., cell phone, smart watch, etc.) in the testing environment.
    Exception: Test Coordinators, Technology Coordinators, Test Administrators, and proctors are permitted to use cell phones in the testing environment only in cases of emergencies or when timely administration assistance is needed.

- Test Supervision Irregularities
  - Coaching students during testing, including giving nonverbal cues, hints, suggestions, or paraphrasing or explaining any test items.
  - Allowing cheating of any kind.
  - Engaging in activities during testing that prevent proper student supervision (e.g., grading papers, reading a book, etc.).
  - Leaving students unattended without a TA for any period of time while students are testing; proctors must be supervised by a TA at all times.
- Test Materials Irregularities
  - Losing a student testing ticket or failing to keep control of usernames and passwords.
  - Losing a test booklet or mathematics human reader script, or leaving them unattended.
  - Reading or viewing tests, unless needed to do so to administer an accessibility feature or accommodation.
  - Removing test booklets or mathematics human reader scripts from locked storage for any purpose other than administering the test.
  - Providing unauthorized persons with access to the test.

Procedures to report a testing irregularity:

- Report the incident to the STC immediately. The STC should then contact the DTC immediately.
- The DTC should contact the NJDOE Program Coordinator immediately.
- The DTC or STC should complete the *Start Strong Testing Irregularity Form* to document the incident. The DTC uploads the completed form to PearsonAccess[next] within five school days. To do so:
  - Log in to PearsonAccess[next].
  - Select the administration from the drop-down menu at the top of the screen (**New Jersey > Start Strong > Start Strong 2022–2023**).
  - Go to **Support > Support Requests > Select Tasks > Create/Edit Requests > Start.**
  - Select your Organization and Category, i.e., "Form – Testing Irregularity" in the drop-down boxes.
  - Fill in the "Title" and "Question/Concern" fields.
  - Attach the form by clicking the "Choose Files" button and selecting your form; then, click the blue "Create" button.
- Also, email the Support Request ID (i.e., confirmation number) from PAN to the NJDOE Program Coordinator. Do not include student names or other personal information in the email.

Post-Test Certification Form

- After testing has finished, and test materials have been securely destroyed or recycled as appropriate, the Principal and STC must sign a *Start Strong Post-Test Certification Form* to certify that the integrity of the test administration was maintained before, during, and after testing. The STC should provide the signed form to the DTC. For a copy of the form, refer to the New Jersey Assessments Resource Center, located under **Start Strong**. The DTC must upload all the completed certification forms to PAN employing the same process used for uploading a *Start Strong Testing Irregularity Form.* Choose "Form—Post-Test Certification" for the category.