

## **NJDOE Misses 'Modest Goal' for High School Tests**

Education Law Center Update, 6.28.11

Partial results for the Alternative High School Assessment (AHSA) indicate that even more students may not graduate this June than during last year's graduation crisis that saw an estimated 3000 fail to get diplomas.

According to a June 23 statement from the NJ Department of Education (NJDOE) [[see attached] 3164 seniors who took the Math AHSA did not pass, and 3591 who took the Language Arts AHSA did not pass. In addition, an unknown number of seniors who need AHSA to graduate did not complete the assessment.

The Department has not disclosed the number of graduation appeals submitted in recent weeks under its new Educational Proficiency Plan process. Last year, about 1100 appeals were submitted by districts for students who did not pass the traditional High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) or the AHSA

NJDOE has provided only limited data about AHSA results and the graduation prospects of thousands of seniors despite a \$1.1 million contract with Measurement, Inc. (MI), a commercial test vendor hired to manage and score the AHSA. MI returned results of the April test to districts on May 27, but NJDOE's June 23 statement was the first public indication of the results. The Department may be trying to avoid the public outcry over the test that last year led to two legislative hearings and a hastily devised appeals process.

On the basis of the limited data available, ELC estimates that as many as 5000 students may not be eligible to receive diplomas on time, even if they complete all other credit and local graduation requirements. New Jersey's growing population of English Language Learners is likely to be among the most affected groups, as two-thirds of these students rely on the alternative test, which provides more time and accommodations for non-Native English speakers.

Some of the affected students may graduate this summer after completing another AHSA administration. The Department says a final count will not be available "until Fall 2011 after all members of the Class of 2011 have graduated - including summer graduates - and all test results have been tabulated at a student level." NJDOE has still not provided a full accounting for the seniors who did not graduate last June. It is not clear how many of those students eventually passed the AHSA last summer, returned for a fifth year of high school, or dropped out.

Whatever the final total for 2011, the Department has already fallen far short of the "modest goal" it set last September to have "fewer than 2,000 seniors unable to show evidence of reading, writing and math competence on the HSPA or the AHSA" by April. Obviously, many more students are not receiving the support and preparation they need to succeed.