Date: July 28, 2021

To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads

Route To: District Test Coordinators, District Technology Coordinators, School Test Coordinators

From: Lisa J. Gleason, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner
              Division of Academics and Performance

Start Strong Fall 2021 Administration Information

This memo provides an overview of the Start Strong assessments, including enhancements for fall 2021 and reporting considerations for districts. It also includes key dates, information, and resources that districts will need as they begin preparations for the administration of the Start Strong assessments this fall.

Background
In the broadcast released on April 14, 2021, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) notified districts that the administration of the Start Strong assessment in the fall 2021 will satisfy the federal statewide assessment requirement to administer general assessments in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science for the 2020-2021 school year. This flexibility shall apply only to the 2020-2021 school year.

Overview
The Start Strong assessments are intentionally brief, designed to maximize instructional time and quickly provide critical data to teachers and school leaders. These assessments provide schools and districts the flexibility to address students' unique needs at the beginning of the school year.

The Start Strong assessments:

- Are based on a subset of prioritized prior-year academic standards;
- Are available in ELA grades 4-10, Mathematics grades 4-8, Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II, and in Science grades 6, 9, and 12;
- Can be administered in approximately 45-60 minutes;
- Will provide immediate results to educators through the assessment platform; and
- Will include the same accessibility features and accommodations as the NJSLA, including forms in Spanish and Text to Speech (TTS).

The Start Strong assessments utilize three performance levels ("Strong Support May Be Needed"; "Some Support May Be Needed"; and "Less Support May Be Needed") to aid educators and families in making decisions about the types of supports that students may need. The reports will be available to educators immediately after students complete the assessment. The assessments are not meant to replace any preferred assessment strategies being used locally but can be used to complement existing efforts to gather standards-based data (local benchmarks, writing samples, assignments, homework, etc.) at the beginning of the school year.

Enhancements for Fall 2021 Start Strong
The fall 2021 administration will feature enhancements that are based on the feedback received after the fall 2020 administration, which include the following:

- Expanded demographic data collection to mirror the NJSLA student group data (e.g. gender, race/ethnicity);
- Expanded reporting to provide additional details on the Individual Student Report (ISR), with information about the student's score and what it means;
- Integrated Start Strong assessment reports in the Parent Portal established for the NJSLA; and
- Added support resources through the released assessment item bank.

It is important to note that the fall 2021 Start Strong assessments will be used to satisfy federal assessment reporting requirements. These include public reporting of school-level participation and performance disaggregated by subgroup and reporting of student results to parents by districts.

District reports will be available within 30 days of the close of the Start Strong testing window on October 22, 2021, and aggregate reports are expected to be available PearsonAccess^next (PAN) by the end of November. In late fall, districts will also receive paper copies of student ISRs that will need to be distributed to parents.

Start Strong Administration Window: September 13, 2021 through October 22, 2021
Start Strong assessments will be administered in-person from September 13, 2021 through October 22, 2021. All students, including students with disabilities who are not eligible for the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessments, and English Language Learners, will be expected to participate in the Start Strong assessments. Districts are encouraged to set October 1, 2021 as a goal for administering the Start Strong assessments.

Student Registration/Personal Needs Profile (SR/PNP) Import
For Start Strong, districts must import student data directly to PAN. Districts will be able to upload their initial student registration files and import/update users in PAN beginning on **August 16, 2021**. Districts may continue to make updates to student data prior to and throughout the testing window until the district data clean-up window closes on **October 29, 2021**. All schools, including approved private schools for students with disabilities and other institutions which are not accountable schools, are responsible for registering students for Start Strong in PAN. Please note, however, that there will not be an automatic delivery of printed materials (Braille and large print test booklets) for Start Strong based on student registrations. Test coordinators must order these materials directly in PAN.

Administration Policies, User Guides, and Ancillary Materials
No later than **August 4, 2021**, electronic versions of the following Start Strong manuals will be made available to districts at the [NJSLA Resource Center](#) under **Start Strong**:

- Administration Policies
- Computer-based Testing (CBT) User Guide
- Paper-based Testing (PBT) User Guide
- Script for Administering the NJ Start Strong Assessments

These resources serve as abbreviated versions of the Test Coordinator Manual (TCM) and Test Administrator Manuals (TAMs) that District and School Test Coordinators are familiar with from the administration of the NJSLA.

Ancillary materials include additional resources that may be helpful to districts, educators, students, and parents. Some resources have been updated to be specific to Start Strong and can be found on the Start Strong webpage. Below is a list of the Start Strong specific resources that are available:

- Start Strong Mathematics Reference Sheets
- Start Strong Test Administration Agreement

- Start Strong Post-Test Certification
- Start Strong Irregularity Report Form
- Start Strong Testing Sign

Other resources that districts are familiar with from NJSLA will remain the same for Start Strong, including the following:

- NJSLA Accessibility Features & Accommodations Manual – 9th Edition
- Transfer Student Guidance
- Periodic Table
- Personal Needs Profile Guidance
- Infrastructure Trial Guide

District Test and Technology Coordinator (DTC) Training

The NJDOE expects District Test and Technology Coordinators to familiarize themselves with the responsibilities associated with their roles, including training Test Administrators (TAs) on the proper administration of the Start Strong assessments and ensuring the appropriate technology requirements are in place. A self-guided training presentation has been prepared for DTCs to use a companion to the Administration Policies and Test User Guides mentioned above. To access the training slides, DTCs should visit the NJSLA Resource Center, https://nj.mypearsonsupport.com/, under **Start Strong** after **August 12, 2021**. District Technology Coordinators should take note of updates to the TestNav application and changes to the recommendations regarding proctor caching.

Additionally, the Office of Assessments will hold online office hours in late August and early September to answer questions related to the Start Strong administration. There will be sessions focused on the following topics:

- Before Testing - Testing Requirements, Testing Environment, Accessibility Features and Accommodations, Maintaining Test Integrity, Start Strong Forms, Technology Setup, SR/PNP, Test Materials
- During/After Testing - Preparing Test Sessions, Testing Tickets, Test Status, Operational Reports
- New DTC Support- an opportunity for new DTCs to receive comprehensive support and answers to questions

The schedule for the online office hours will be as follows:

Session Dates	Sessions Times (Focus)	Topics
August 31, 2021 to September 2, 2021	AM Session: 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. PM Session: 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.	AM Session: Before Testing PM Session: During/After Testing
September 3, 2021	10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.	New DTC Support
September 9, 2021 to September 10, 2021	AM Session: 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. PM Session: 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.	AM Session: Before Testing PM Session: During/After Testing

District Test and Technology Coordinators identified in PAN will receive a memo via email with information about the procedures for accessing the online office hours.

Paper Testing Materials

Materials needed for paper-based testing will be managed differently for Start Strong. Districts should note the following information when preparing for testing students who have an accommodation requiring regular print test booklets, braille tests kits, and large print test kits:

- Paper test materials must be ordered through the additional order process, including Braille test kits and large print test kits.
- Regular print test booklets are to be printed locally.
- There are no printed answer documents for Start Strong.
- Students with an accommodation to test on paper must be assigned to a test session in PAN so their responses can be transcribed into TestNav.
- Additional instructions for the handling of physical test materials and the transcription of student responses are included in the Administration Policies and the Paper-Based Testing User Guide.

Contact information

If you have any questions, please contact the NJDOE's Office of Assessments at assessment@doe.nj.gov or (609) 376-3960.

c: Members, State Board of Education
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