



Nevada Proficiency Examination Program

Understanding the NPEP

In Nevada, students take two types of assessments during their school years. In grades 3-8 students take the Criterion-Reference Test (CRT). In high school students take the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE). Both of these tests are a summative, standards-based test meaning that they provide a picture of what a student is able to do at a certain point, following instruction in the subject. The Nevada Writing Proficiency Exam is also given to students in 5th and 8th grades and again in 11th grade.

All of these assessments are based on learning standards and objectives designed by the Nevada Department of Education. The Nevada Academic Content Standards lays out what students should know and be able to achieve at each grade level, and the test is designed to measure student's success and levels of achievement. The learning objectives are designed to cover national as well as local standards and knowledge. Students are assessed in Reading and Mathematics in grades 3-8 and 11, in Science in 5th, 8th and 11th and Writing in 5th, 8th and 11th.

All students will take the Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT), the 5th and 8th Grade Writing Assessments and the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) in 11th. For students with disabilities testing accommodations are available. It is not a requirement of graduation to pass all sections of the High School Proficiency Exam; however failure to do so will require enrollment into a remediation program and continued efforts at passing the assessment.

All public schools in Nevada must participate in the state assessments of learning. The reporting of scores is published on each school's Nevada Accountability Report which is required by law.

Format of the NPEP

For students in grades 3-8, the Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) is given in Reading and Mathematics. These tests are given in multiple-choice (grades 3-8) and constructed-response formats (grades 4-8). On the Reading CRT, the length of the reading passages range from up to 500 words to up to 1000 words as students progress from grades 3 to 8. Students are provided with either a checklist or a rubric to use for their constructed-response answers.

The Nevada Writing Proficiency Exams gives students a chance to show their ability and achievement in mastering writing skills. This assessment is now computer-based. Students are given a reading passage and a prompt and the student generates his response on the computer. There is only one writing task on this test.

The essay is scored both analytically and holistically. The analytic score looks for a number of different criteria based on writing objectives and the holistic score assesses the overall effect of the essay. Essays are scored by at least two readers who are Nevada educators; they are trained to use rubrics aligned to the Nevada Academic Content Standards in Writing in the scoring of the essay.

The High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) in Reading, Mathematics and Science only uses multiple-choice questions. The High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) in Writing is currently a paper-and-pencil based test. The essays are scored by four readers who are Nevada educators who use rubrics aligned to the Nevada Academic Content Standards in Writing.

The High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) in Reading covers areas of reading comprehension, interpretation and evaluation. The High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) in Mathematics covers numbers, algebra/functions, geometry/measurement, and data analysis (statistics and probability). The High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) in Science covers physical science, life science, earth and space science and the nature of science.

Taking the NPEP

Students in grades 3-8 take the Nevada Criterion-Reference Test and the Writing Assessment for 5th and 8th graders during January-February.

For the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) in Mathematics, Reading and Science and the Writing Assessment for 11th graders the tests are in March; for high schoolers the test is offered four times throughout the year. Students must pass all sections of the HSPE as a requirement for graduation.

The assessments measure a student's proficiency in the skills required of the subject matter. In addition, the assessments look for a student's Depth of Knowledge Level on the subject. Depths of Knowledge Levels are: Level 1: Recall, Level 2: Use of Concepts/Skills and Level 3: Strategic Thinking and Problem Solving.

The questions on the assessment vary in complexity. For the scoring of the test, a constructed-response answer is given 3 points and a multiple choice answer is given 1 point. Students are given scaled scores; this shows both their level of proficiency and how they rank compared to other students. These scores are also used to improve instruction.

Scores are reported on a scale that shows how a student is learning in relation to the Nevada Content Standard. There are four Achievement Levels: Emergent/Developing, Approaches Standards, Meets Standards and Exceeds Standards. The scaled score shows where in this range a student's score falls. The terminology that is currently used is "cut score" meaning that this is where each Achievement Level begins. This is based on a scoring system of 100-500.

Get Your Child Ready for the NPEP

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