



Dear Parents/Guardian:

Your student will be participating in the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)/Keystone Examination, a state-mandated standardized assessment from April 22, 2024 through May 10, 2024. The details below and the documents included with this mailing provide important information and policies, so please take a few minutes to review them.

Included Documents

- Frequently Asked Questions - Information for Parents/Guardians
 - Provides an overview of the basics of the PSSA/Keystone
- Keystone/PSSA Test Features and Accommodations
 - Defines test features and accommodations
 - Provides a link to the complete Accommodations Guidelines documents
- Electronic Devices Parent Letter
 - Details the Pennsylvania Department of Education policy on and consequences for using cell phones and other electronic devices during testing

School Policy on Electronic Devices

Students are encouraged to leave their electronic devices home during testing. In the event devices are brought into school, they will be collected prior to testing. The school will not be responsible for any lost, stolen or damaged electronic devices. As explained in the Electronic Devices Parent Letter, cell phones and other communication devices will not be allowed during the test administration. The following actions will be taken if a student is found in possession of any kind of electronic device during testing:

- The student will either have to retake the test from the beginning or not receive a score.
- The phone or communication device will be confiscated until such time that you come to the school. In your presence, the cell phone or other device will be viewed to ensure that it contains no information or material about the assessment.
- Students that violate the ban on cell phones and other electronic devices will be disciplined at the minimum, with an out of school suspension, depending on whether the test material was compromised the discipline action may be more severe.
- If items on an assessment are compromised, they will have to be replaced. Parents and students may be responsible for the cost of replacing the items.

Please review the above policies carefully and discuss them with your student. As always, we appreciate your full cooperation in this important matter.

If you have questions on any of the included documents or cell phone policy, please contact Mrs. Solar at 215-400-3090.

Sincerely,
Bianca Gillis
Principal

Dear Parent/Guardian:

In an era of cell phones, smartphones and other electronic devices which can easily photograph and instantly share photographs, confidential and secure test materials can be easily compromised. Not only is it expensive to replace a compromised test item, the material contained in the PSSA and Keystone Exams is copyrighted property of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Copying or duplicating the material from the assessment, including the taking of a photograph of secure assessment material, is a violation of the federal Copyright Act. Penalties for violations of the Copyright Act may include the cost of replacing the compromised test item(s) or fines of no less than \$750 up to \$30,000 for a single violation (17 U.S.C. § 101 et seq.).

In order to ensure reliable test results and to avoid the cost of replacing test items, the Department of Education requires schools to set rules and take certain steps to protect test materials. Electronic devices such as but not limited to cell phones, smartphones, smartwatches, E-readers, Nooks, Kindles, iPods, tablets, camera-ready devices, and any other electronic device which can be used to photograph or duplicate test materials, access the internet and/or communicate with others during the administration of the PSSA or Keystone Exams are not permitted in any testing site. Please speak with your child and let your child know that the possession and/or use of a cell phone or other electronic device during the administration of the PSSA or Keystone Exams will result in consequences.

You will be contacted by the school if your child is discovered using and/or having a cell phone or other unapproved electronic device during the administration of the PSSA or Keystone Exams. Students who ignore this directive will be subject to the school's discipline policy and the Department of Education's requirement that the student's test will not be scored and the student will be required to retake the entire exam. The electronic device will be held by school staff, and the device's stored photographs and other functions will be examined with your permission. You may request to be present when the electronic device is examined. If a photograph of the PSSA or Keystone Exam is discovered or if permission to search other functions of the electronic device is refused, the device will be held by the school staff. The Pennsylvania Department of Education holds the copyright to all material contained within the PSSA and Keystone Exams. The Pennsylvania Department of Education will be contacted and further action may be taken.

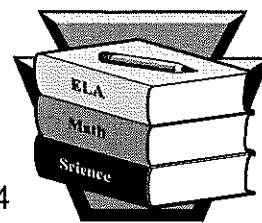
If, after testing is complete and test materials have been returned, it is discovered that a student used and/or had a cell phone or other unapproved electronic device during the administration of the test, the school's discipline policy will be followed and the student's test will not be scored.

Frequently
Asked
Questions

Information for Parents or Guardians

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)

English Language Arts Assessment, April 22–26, 2024
Mathematics and Science Assessment, April 29–May 10, 2024



GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PSSA

Which schools participate?

All school districts and charter schools participate in the assessments. Nonpublic and private schools may also participate on a voluntary basis.

Which students take the assessments?

Except for a very few students who meet specific criteria for participation in an alternate assessment, all students are included in the assessments as outlined below:

ELA & Mathematics—Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8
Science—Grades 4 and 8

Who decided what the assessments should measure?

Groups of educators from all levels of education in Pennsylvania chose the areas of knowledge and skills upon which the assessments are based. The groups included teachers, supervisors, curriculum directors, and college specialists. They also reviewed, edited, and approved the test items.

Who administers the assessments?

Each school chooses the person(s) who will administer the assessments. In most cases, these are teachers in the students' building.

How are the results reported?

Two copies of the individual student report for all assessments will be sent to all schools and districts that participate for distribution to parents, teachers, school counselors, and/or principals. The state will not receive any report with individual names included.

School-level reports will be used for curricular and planning purposes. School districts and charter schools may publish the results of PSSA testing for each school. The state will also release school-by-school assessment data.

May parents see the assessments?

Yes, under one circumstance. School entities are required to have policies to ensure that parents or guardians have the right to review a state assessment in the school entity during convenient hours for parents or guardians from the time testing materials are received to the end of the make-up schedule in order to determine whether a state assessment conflicts with their religious belief. This is the only reason allowable under regulation.

Confidentiality agreements must be signed, and no copies of the assessments or notes about assessment items will be permitted to leave the school. If after reviewing the test, parents or guardians find the test to be in conflict with their religious belief and wish their student(s) to be excused from the test, the right of the parents or guardians will not be denied upon written request to the applicable school district Superintendent, charter school Chief Executive Officer, or AVTS Director. Parents or guardians should contact their child's school to make arrangements to review the test.

Report Testing Irregularities

Parents/guardians who believe that a testing irregularity may have occurred may email ra-edirregularities@pa.gov or call 844-418-1651 to report the incident.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT (grades 3 through 8)

How long does the assessment take?

The entire English Language Arts assessment takes approximately three to four hours to complete. Your school district will inform you about the assessment schedule.

What does the assessment include?

Each student completes three sections of questions for the English Language Arts assessment. Some portions will be the same for all students, and some will consist of different groups of questions.

What types of questions are on the assessment?

Students respond to multiple-choice, evidence-based selected-response, and constructed-response questions. In a multiple-choice question, the correct answer(s) is chosen from four options. Evidence-based selected-response questions have two parts, and students select one or more answers for each part. Constructed-response questions may include a short-answer (grade 3) or text dependent analysis (grades 4 through 8). Short-answer questions require students to compose a brief response to support their answer. For the text dependent analysis question, students analyze a text and use evidence from the reading passage to compose an essay.

How are written responses to constructed-response items scored?

The written responses for English Language Arts are scored by evaluators trained in applying an ELA-specific scoring guideline. For short-answer questions, scores are based on content only. Spelling and punctuation are not included as part of the scoring process. Responses to text dependent analysis questions are scored based on both content and writing skills.

What is assessed in English Language Arts?

The English Language Arts assessment addresses six major reporting categories as well as two text types. Students respond to standalone multiple-choice items assessing language. Additionally, students read a number of passages from literature and informational genres and respond to questions about these passages that indicate both comprehension and reading skills and the students' analysis and interpretation of different types of texts.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENT (grades 3 through 8)

How long does the assessment take?

The entire mathematics assessment takes approximately two to three hours to complete. Your school district will inform you about the assessment schedule.

What does the assessment include?

Each student completes two sections of questions for the mathematics assessment. Some portions will be the same for all students, and some will consist of different groups of questions.

What types of questions are on the assessment?

Students respond to two types of questions: multiple-choice and open-ended. In a multiple-choice question, the correct answer is chosen from the four presented options, while open-ended questions require students to compose their responses. Open-ended questions generally require students to provide detail in support of their answers (such as showing or describing the steps performed to complete a calculation).

How are written responses to open-ended items scored?

The written responses for mathematics open-ended items are scored by evaluators trained in applying a mathematics-specific scoring guideline. In mathematics, scores are based on content only. Spelling and punctuation are not included as part of the scoring process.

What is assessed in Mathematics?

The mathematics assessment addresses five major reporting categories across four clusters. The reporting categories assessed and the proportion of questions in each reporting category vary by grade level. As a part of the assessment of Cluster A, Numbers and Operations, students in grades 4 through 8 respond to a set of questions without a calculator. Constructed-response items may require the students to show all of their work (e.g., calculations, graphs, drawings) and/or to explain in writing how they solved the problems.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCIENCE ASSESSMENT (grades 4 and 8)

How long does the assessment take?

The entire science assessment takes approximately one to two hours to complete. Your school district will inform you about the assessment schedule.

What does the assessment include?

Students in grades 4 and 8 complete two sections of questions for the science assessment. Some portions will be the same for all students, and some will consist of different groups of questions.

What types of questions are on the assessment?

Students respond to two types of questions: multiple-choice and open-ended. In a multiple-choice question, the correct answer is chosen from the four presented options, while open-ended questions require students to compose their responses. At grade 8, the science assessment also includes science scenarios.

What is a science scenario?

A science scenario contains text, graphics, charts, and/or tables and uses these elements to describe the results of a class project, an experiment, or other similar research. Students use the information found in a science scenario to answer multiple-choice questions.

How are written responses to open-ended items scored?

The written responses for science open-ended items are scored by evaluators trained in applying a science-specific scoring guideline. In science, scores are based on content only. Spelling and punctuation are not included as part of the scoring process.

What is assessed in science?

The science assessment addresses the four major reporting categories: The Nature of Science, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Earth and Space Sciences. The proportion of items in each reporting category varies by grade level.



PSSA: The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment

What is the PSSA?

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is a standards-based assessment which provides students, parents, educators, and citizens with an understanding of student and school performance related to the attainment of proficiency of the academic standards. These standards in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science identify what a student should know and be able to do at varying grade levels. Pennsylvania students in Grades 3 through 8 are assessed in English Language Arts and Math, and Pennsylvania students in Grades 4 and 8 are assessed in Science.

When will my child take the PSSA?

The PSSA is administered on an annual basis, with testing windows typically open in April and May. The calendar for the PSSA testing windows can be found [here](#). You should consult [SDP's Assessment Calendar](#) as well as your child's school calendar for specific dates when the PSSAs will be administered at their school.

What do teachers do with my child's PSSA results?

Individual student scores, provided only to your child's school, can be used to assist teachers in identifying your child's strengths and weaknesses. This then allows teachers to personalize your child's instruction to best support their growth. PSSA scores also provide information to schools and districts that can support improvement and planning discussions around curriculum and instruction.

What types of questions are asked on the PSSA?

For the ELA PSSA, the vast majority of test items are Multiple-Choice questions. However, there is also a writing component for all grade levels. 3rd Grade students are asked to respond to three Short-Answer prompts, while 4th-8th Grade students are asked to respond to two Text Dependent Analysis prompts. Short-Answer and Text Dependent Analysis responses are scored using a rubric.

For the Math and Science PSSAs, all students regardless of grade-level are asked a mix of Multiple-Choice questions and Open-Ended questions. Open-Ended responses are scored using a rubric.

For more information on this topic, please consult the [Math](#), [ELA](#), and [Science](#) test design documents.

What types of scores are reported on the PSSA?

For all three tested subject areas, students receive a raw score, a scale score and a performance tier rating (Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, or Advanced) that is associated with a specific scale score range. The scale score associated with each performance tier differs by grade-level and subject area. For a deeper breakdown, you can consult the Pennsylvania Department of Education's [Scale Score Ranges Document](#).

Additionally, the Pennsylvania Department of Education provides schools with reports on individual student performance by Reporting Category and Assessment Anchor. Assessment Anchors represent categories of subject matter (skills and concepts) that anchor the content of the PSSA.

For the ELA PSSA, there are four Assessment Anchors that are the same across Grades 3-8: Key Ideas & Details, Craft & Structure, Vocabulary, and Language. Grades 4-8 have one additional Assessment Anchor: Text Dependent Analysis.

For the Math PSSA, the Assessment Anchors differ by grade-band. For Grades 3-5, the Assessment Anchors are: Numbers & Operations in Base Ten, Fractions, Operations & Algebraic Thinking, Geometry, and Measurement & Data. For Grades 6-7, the Assessment Anchors are: The Number System, Ratios & Proportional Relationships, Expressions & Equations, Geometry, and Statistics and Probability. For 8th grade, the Assessment Anchors are: The Number System, Functions, Expressions & Equations, Geometry, and Statistics and Probability.

What does it mean to be Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, or Advanced?

The Pennsylvania Department of Education has performance level descriptors for both [Math](#) and [ELA](#) available on their website.

For the Science PSSA, the Assessment Anchors are the same for both 4th grade and 8th grade. There are several Assessment Anchors, which can be grouped more neatly into the following Reporting Categories: The Nature of Science, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Earth & Space Sciences.

Is the PSSA timed?

The PSSA is not timed, but students cannot complete a section over multiple days. If students start a section on a Monday, they cannot finish that section on Tuesday. For ELA, the assessment is broken into three sections. For Math and Science, the assessment is broken into two sections. The estimated time to complete a section of the PSSA varies depending on the types of questions asked in each particular section. For more information on this topic, including the types of questions asked on each section and the estimated time to complete each section, please consult the [Math](#), [ELA](#), and [Science](#) test design documents.

Does the PSSA affect my child's grade?

This test does not affect students' grades.

How does my child take the PSSA?

The PSSA is typically taken via pencil and paper; however, there are also online versions of the assessment. Regardless of which version your child is taking, all students must take the PSSA in person at their school.

Where can I find the results from the PSSA?

Schools receive two paper copies of Individual Student Reports each Fall. You can ask your child's school for a hard copy of their Individual Student Report. Results are also posted in the Parent Portal under the Standardized Test section of the Student Profile.

Who can I contact with further questions about the PSSA?

If you have further questions about the PSSA, it is recommended that you reach out to your child's school. The contact information for your child's school can be obtained from SDP's new [School Profiles website](#).

Where can I find additional information on the PSSA?

School District of Philadelphia's Office of Assessment: <https://www.philasd.org/era/assessment/>

Pennsylvania Department of Education's PSSA homepage: <https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/PSSA/Pages/default.aspx>