

**ASSESSMENT  
DATES:**

- > **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS  
ASSESSMENT  
[GRADES 3-8]:  
APRIL 3-6**
- > **MATHEMATICS  
ASSESSMENT  
[GRADES 3-8]:  
APRIL 24-26**
- > **SCIENCE  
ASSESSMENT  
[GRADES 4 and 8]:  
MAY 1-2**

**ATTENDANCE NOTE:**

Please make every effort to schedule any necessary appointments outside of the testing window, or in the afternoon, as students cannot be dismissed in the middle of a test session. In the event an appointment is scheduled during the test session, your child must notify his/her test administrator prior to the beginning of a test session to ensure he/she will have ample time to complete the test session in its entirety, otherwise a make-up session will be scheduled accordingly.

**PENNSYLVANIA SYSTEM OF  
SCHOOL ASSESSMENT [PSSA]  
NEWSLETTER**

**MARCH 2017**

**A MESSAGE FROM MR. FARRELL, PRINCIPAL**

The 2017 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment [PSSA] will be administered to 7th and 8th Grade students in the areas of English Language Arts [ELA] beginning Monday, April 3, 2017 and continuing through Thursday, April 6, 2017 AND Mathematics beginning Monday, April 24, 2017 and continuing through Wednesday, April 26, 2017.

8th Grade students will also be administered the Science Assessment on May 1 & 2, 2017.

It is important that the students put forth their best effort for ALL Assessments. Good attendance throughout the testing periods is extremely important. We ask parents to ensure that their children attend school each day and come to school well rested and prepared for the assessments with pencils and a calculator.

**GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PSSA**

**WHICH SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN THE ASSESSMENTS?**

Students in grades 3 through 8 in all school districts will take the English Language Arts [ELA] and Mathematics Assessments. Students in grades 4 and 8 will take the Science Assessments. Except for a very few students who meet specific criteria for participation in an alternate assessment, all students are included in the assessments.

**WHO DECIDED WHAT THE ASSESSMENTS SHOULD MEASURE?**

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

**WHO ADMINISTERS THE ASSESSMENT?**

Each school chooses the person(s) who will administer the assessment. 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 are sent to the school district for distribution to parents, teachers, school counselors, and/or principals. The state does not receive any reports with individual names included. Reports will be used for curricular and planning purposes. School districts 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?**

Parents [guardians] may only review the assessments to determine whether the assessment conflicts with their religious beliefs. Arrangements need to be made with the District Assessment Coordinator at least two weeks prior to the administration. Copies of the assessments or notes about the assessments are NOT permitted to leave the school and confidentiality agreements must be signed. If the parents find the test to be in conflict with their religious beliefs and wish their child be excused from the test, the parent must submit a written request stating the objection to the Superintendent.

## DETAILS ABOUT EACH ASSESSMENT

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS [ELA]**

The entire English Language Arts [ELA] assessment takes approximately three to four hours to complete.

Each student completes four sections of questions for the ELA assessment, responding to three types of questions: multiple-choice, selected-response, and constructed-response. In a multiple-choice question, the correct answer is chosen from four options. Selected-response questions have two parts, and students select one or more answers for each part. Constructed-response questions require students to compose their responses. These include a writing prompt, short-answer questions [grade 3 only], and text-dependent analysis questions [grades 4-8 only]. The writing prompt requires students to compose a response using one of three modes [narrative, informative/explanatory, or opinion in grades 3-5 and narrative, informative/explanatory, or argumentative in grades 6-8]. 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 passage to compose an essay.

The ELA assessment addresses six major reporting categories as well as two text types. Students respond to standalone multiple-choice items assessing language and a writing prompt. Additionally, students read a number of passages that indicate both comprehension and reading skills and their analysis and interpretation of different types of texts.

### **MATHEMATICS**

The entire Mathematics assessment takes approximately three to four hours to complete.

Each student completes three sections of questions for the Mathematics assessment, responding to two types of questions: multiple-choice and open ended. In a multiple-choice question, the correct answer is chosen from four options. Open-ended questions require students to compose their responses and generally require students to provide detail in support of their answers [such as showing or describing the steps performed to complete a calculation].

The Mathematics assessment addresses five major reporting categories across four clusters with the reporting categories assessed and the proportion of items in each category varying by grade level. As a part of the assessment of Cluster A, *Number and Operations*, students in grades 4-8 respond to a section of items in which a calculator is not permitted. Constructed-response items require students to show all of their work [calculations, graphs, drawings, etc] and to explain how they solved the problems.

### **SCIENCE**

The entire Science assessment takes approximately two to four hours to complete.

Students in grades 4 and 8 complete two sections of questions for the science 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. 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.

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 devoted to each reporting category varies within a grade level.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BUREAU OF ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY ON ELECTRONIC DEVICES

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 it is 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, 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. One step or rule required in all schools is that electronic devices are not permitted at test sites. Electronic devices include cell phones, smartphones, E-readers, Nooks, Kindles, iPads, 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. Please speak with your child and let him or her 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 certain consequences.

If a student is discovered using and/or having a cell phone or other electronic device in his or her possession during the administration of the PSSA or Keystone Exams, you will be contacted by the school. Students that 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. In addition, the electronic device will be held by school staff and the device's stored photographs will be searched. School staff will also ask for permission to search other functions of the electronic device. 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 and, because 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.

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 electronic device in his or her possession during the administration of the test, the school's discipline policy will be followed and the student's scores will be invalidated.