

March 13, 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian:

It is time to begin another PSSA spring testing schedule. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania requires all school districts to administer the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in reading, writing, mathematics, and science according to the following schedule:

Test	Grade Level(s)	Testing Window Dates
PSSA English Language Arts	Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	April 3 – April 7, 2017
PSSA Mathematics	Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	April 24 – April 28, 2017
PSSA Science	Grades 4, 8	May 1 – May 5, 2017

English Language Arts Assessment (Grades 3-8)

Each student completes four 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. Students respond 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.

Mathematics Assessment (Grades 3–8)

Each student completes three 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. 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). The written responses for mathematics open-ended items are scored by evaluators trained in applying a pre-determined scoring system. In mathematics, scores are based on content only. Spelling and punctuation are not included as part of the scoring process. The mathematics assessment addresses five major reporting categories across four clusters. The reporting categories assessed and the proportion of items in each reporting category vary by grade level. As a part of the assessment of Cluster A, Numbers and Operations, students in grades 4-8 respond to a section of items in which a calculator is not permitted. Open-ended items require the students to show all of their work (calculations, graphs, drawings, etc.) and/or to explain in writing how they solved the problems.

Science Assessment (Grades 4 & 8)

Students in grades 4 and 8 will 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. 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 written responses for science open-ended items are scored by evaluators trained in applying a pre-determined scoring system. In science, scores are based on content only. Spelling and punctuation are not included as part of the scoring process. 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. Each reporting category includes certain Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content.

All students will be included in the assessment, except for a few students who meet specific criteria. Parents and guardians may review the assessments by making arrangements with the school assessment coordinator. Confidentiality agreements must be signed, and no copies of the assessment or notes about assessment items will be permitted to leave the school. If after reviewing the test parents/guardians find the test to be in conflict with their religious belief and wish their student (s) to be excused from the test, the parents/guardians must provide a written request that states the objection to the Superintendent.

The PSSA results provide our school district with an objective measure of its educational program. In addition to district-based assessments, the PSSA also assists you in gaining a better understanding of your child's ability and performance based on state standards.

Thank you in advance, for your support. Please call your child's principal or school counselor if you have further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alan S. Futrick
Assistant Superintendent