



BLUE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT

David H. Helsel
Superintendent of Schools

Kristin N. Frederick
Assistant Superintendent of Schools

March 2025

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian of Blue Mountain Elementary Student:

The Blue Mountain School District will participate in the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) Program. These tests measure the achievement of students across the Commonwealth in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. The testing dates for each of the assessments are given in the chart below. Information concerning these assessments is provided on the attached *Frequently Asked Questions* sheet.

Test	Grades	Dates
PSSA English/Language Arts	Grades 3, 4, 5	4/23/25 – 4/25/25
PSSA Mathematics	Grades 3, 4, 5	4/28/25 – 4/29/25
PSSA Science	Grade 5	4/30/25 – 5/1/25

These assessments provide achievement information for each individual student, and student score reports will be provided to parents. The assessments also provide grade level, school level, and district level information which assists Blue Mountain in making curricular, instructional and teacher in-service decisions. All students will be using their computers to access PSSA testing materials.

A state-level policy continues to be implemented this year that prohibits any student from having a cell phone or other electronic device while taking any of the PSSA assessments. We encourage students to leave their cell phones at home on testing days. However, prior to beginning the tests each day, teachers will ask students to hand-in their cell phones. The phones will be kept in a secure location until testing is completed for the day. There are severe consequences for students found to be in possession of a cell phone during PSSA assessments. Please read over the attached letter from the Pennsylvania Department of Education concerning electronic devices and discuss it with your child.

Please review the attached *Code of Conduct for Test Takers* with your child prior to the assessment. If you have any questions about the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment Program, please contact me at (570) 366-0515, ext. 1028 or knfrederick@bmsd.org.

Sincerely,

Kristin N. Frederick

Assistant Superintendent

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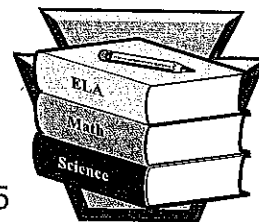
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Frequently
Asked
Questions

Information for Parents or Guardians

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)

English Language Arts Assessment, April 21–25, 2025
Mathematics and Science Assessment, April 28–May 9, 2025



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 5 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 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, technology-enhanced, 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. Technology-enhanced questions use interactive formats to allow students to construct answers. 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 questions 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 three types of questions: multiple-choice, technology-enhanced, and open-ended. In a multiple-choice question, the correct answer is chosen from the four presented options. Technology-enhanced questions use interactive formats to allow students to construct answers. 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 5 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 5 and 8 complete two sections of questions for the science assessment. The science assessment will consist of different groups of questions on different test forms.

What types of questions are on the assessment?

Students respond to three types of questions: multiple-choice, technology-enhanced, and open-ended. In a multiple-choice question, the correct answer is chosen from the four presented options. Technology-enhanced questions use interactive formats to allow students to construct answers. Open-ended questions require students to compose their responses. Grades 5 and 8 may also include 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: Technology and Engineering, Life Sciences & Environmental Literacy and Sustainability, Physical Sciences, and Earth and Space Sciences. The proportion of items in each reporting category varies by grade level.

PART III – STUDENT PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES FOR ALL ASSESSMENTS

A. Code of Conduct

The *Code of Conduct for Test Takers* (Appendix F) provides requirements that students must follow before, during, and after each assessment. **It is important that the *Code of Conduct for Test Takers* be reviewed with all students and all questions are answered such that all students understand each point in this code of conduct before the testing day.** TAs must be prepared to answer any questions about the *Code of Conduct for Test Takers* so that all students can acknowledge their understanding of the requirements. Students should be assured that they may discuss the testing process or issues of concern with their parents/guardians.

Prior to starting the assessment, students will be required to indicate that they understand the *Code of Conduct for Test Takers* that was reviewed with them by their Test Administrators (TAs) (or other school employees).

For the paper and pencil administration, students will indicate they understand the *Code of Conduct for Test Takers* by bubbling in a response. For the online administration, students indicate they understand the *Code of Conduct for Test Takers* by starting the exam. See the mode-specific *Directions for Administration Manuals* for more details.

B. General Student Participation in the Assessment

With only a few very specific exceptions, the following students must participate (regardless of where the student is being educated) as PSSA assessment participation is used for State and Federal Accountability.

1. Public school students enrolled in grades 3 through 8 are required to participate in the 2025 English Language Arts (ELA) PSSA or the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) in English Language Arts (ELA). The ELA test is optional for EL students in their first (cumulative of time in the US) year of enrollment in US schools.
2. Public school students enrolled in grades 3 through 8 are required to participate in the 2025 Mathematics PSSA or the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) in mathematics.
3. Public school students enrolled in grades 5 and 8 are required to participate in the 2025 Science PSSA or the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) in science.
4. Participation by students in non-public schools is voluntary. Non-public schools that do participate must follow the same guidelines set-forth for public schools.

The student's current grade level must be assessed at the time of the assessment window.

An answer booklet or online assessment must be returned for every student, with the exception of the students who take an alternate assessment (PASA). Foreign exchange students are to be included in PSSA testing based on federal guidelines. In a few cases foreign exchange students may qualify for EL (English Learner) services. The foreign exchange students being served via an EL program will be treated as EL students when administering the PSSA.

The student data used for accountability purposes are pulled from the Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS) on the last day of each subject's testing window. It is the responsibility of each public school to ensure that all of its students are administered the exam, whether the student is being educated within the district or testing in an out-of-district placement.

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.