Pocono Mountain School District

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April 2021

Information for Parents/Guardians
Spring 2021 Keystone Exams

Algebra 1 (May 24 and May 25, 2021)   Literature (May 27 and May 28, 2021)
Biology (June 1 and June 3, 2021)

<u>Please review the cell phone/electronic devices policy that has been included</u>

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The Spring Keystone Exams will be administered May 17 – June 25, 2021. The Pocono Mountain School District testing window will be May 24 – June 3, 2021. Parents/guardians can help their children prepare for the test by ensuring that they get plenty of sleep the night before the test, they eat a good breakfast and encouraging them to do their best.   Below is a list of frequently asked questions as well as the State Assessment Administration Possession, and/or Use of Electronic Devices Policy:

What are the Keystone Exams?
The Keystone Exams are end-of-course assessments designed to evaluate proficiency in academic content. Beginning with the class of 2022-2023, students must demonstrate proficiency on the Algebra I, Literature, and Biology Keystone Exams to graduate or fulfill one of the other graduation pathways provided to graduate. Students will be offered multiple opportunities to take the Keystones throughout their high school careers.

Who will participate in the Keystone Exams?
In 2012–13, the Algebra I, Literature, and Biology Keystone Exams replaced the 11th-grade Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA) in math, reading, and science for purposes of student, educator, and school accountability. Students should take the Keystone Exams at or near the end of a Keystone-related course. The students' results are banked until their junior year for accountability purposes and until their senior year for graduation purposes. Some students who previously completed a Keystone-related course but did not take the Keystone Exam will also participate for accountability purposes. Additionally, students who take a Keystone Exam and do not score Proficient may re-take the exam.

When will the exams be offered?
The Keystone Exams will be administered three times each year - winter, spring, and summer. Specific administration dates will be published by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Who decided what Keystone Exams should measure?
Groups of educators from across Pennsylvania chose the areas of knowledge on which the Keystone Exams are based. The groups included teachers, supervisors, curriculum directors, and college specialists. These groups also reviewed, edited, and approved exam questions.

What is assessed on the Keystone Exams?
Pennsylvania adopted the Pennsylvania Core Standards, standards aligned with expectations for success in college and the workplace. The Keystones are designed to measure these standards.

How long is a Keystone Exam Administration?
There is no time limit for a student to complete a Keystone Exam. Each Keystone Exam should take the typical student 2 to 3 hours to complete. There are two modules on each test, and each module (or Test Session) of the Keystone Exam should take 1 to 1.5 hours to complete. Districts can administer the Keystone Exam modules across two days or divided across the morning and the afternoon of the same day.

What are the available formats for administering the Keystone Exams?
The Keystone Exams are available in both online and paper/pencil formats. Districts will determine if online, paper/pencil, or both formats will be used locally. Makeup exams will also be administered in either online or paper/pencil format.

Will students have an opportunity to experience online testing before taking a Keystone Exam online?
Tutorials and online training programs have been developed for the Keystone Exams. The PA Online Assessment Student Tutorial uses pictures, motion, and sound to present visual and verbal descriptions of the properties and features of the PA Online Assessment system. Students are allowed to repeat the Student Tutorial as often as desired and needed. The Online Tools Training (OTT) provides an introductory experience using the PA online assessment software allowing students to observe and try out features of the PA online assessment software prior to the actual assessment. Within the OTT, students also have the opportunity to practice typing responses in a narrative format, graphing functions, and entering equations using an equation builder tool. The online exam also has a "Help" feature that is available to the student during the exam.

What types of questions are on the Keystone Exams?
The Keystone Exams will include multiple-choice questions and constructed-response, or open-ended, questions. For each Keystone Exam, approximately 60% to 75% of the total score will be from multiple-choice questions and 25% to 40% of the total score will be from constructed-response questions.

How are the written responses to constructed-response questions scored?
The written responses for constructed-response questions are scored by evaluators trained in applying a pre-determined scoring system. Scores are based on content only. Spelling and punctuation are not included as part of the scoring process. Most constructed-response questions require students to show their work or explain their reasoning. These Keystone Exam questions will ask students to explain, analyze, describe, or compare. Some questions will also require students to perform calculations or create graphs, plots, or drawings.

How are the results reported?
Keystone Exam scores will be processed as quickly as possible and provided to the districts. Two copies of the individual student report for all Keystone Exams will be sent to the school districts and charter schools. One copy will be sent home to parents/guardians; the other is kept by the school/district. School-level reports will be used for curricular and planning purposes. School districts and charter schools may publish the results of Keystone Exams for each school. The state will also release school-by-school exam data.

May parents see the Keystone Exams?
Parents and guardians may review the Keystone Exams if they believe they may be in conflict with their religious beliefs by making arrangements with the school test coordinator once the exams arrive at the school. Confidentiality agreements must be signed, and no copies of the Keystone Exams or notes about Exam items will be permitted to leave the school. If, after reviewing the Keystone Exams parents/guardians do not want their child to participate in one or all of the exams due to a conflict with their religious beliefs, they may write a letter specifying their objection to the school district superintendent prior to the beginning of the exam(s) to request to excuse their child from the exam(s).

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

Should you have any further questions, please call _____.

Sincerely,

_____, 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, 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 PS SA 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.

Should you have any further questions, please call _____.

Sincerely,

_____, Principal