

Pocono Mountain School District

PO Box 200 • Swiftwater, Pa 18370 • 570-839-7121

Information for Parents/Guardians

2021 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)

English Language Arts (Grades 3-8), Mathematics (Grades 3-8), and
Science Assessment (Grades 4/8 only)

June 1 (ELA), June 3 (ELA), June 4 (Mathematics), June 7 (Mathematics) and
June 8 (Science)

Administering 2 sections of the PSSA per day will save on several days of testing and poor attendance. Students who opt out of PSSA testing will stay at home on testing days and complete asynchronous assignments in their Google classrooms.

Please review cell phone/electronic device policy attached to this handout

May 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians:

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 only

May parents see the assessments?

Yes- under one circumstance. Parents and guardians may review a state assessment in the school entity during convenient hours from the time the testing materials are received to the end of the make-up schedule by making arrangements with their child's school. 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.

How are the results reported?

Two copies of the individual student report for all assessments will be sent to the school districts for distribution to parents, teachers, guidance 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 may publish the results of PSSA testing for each school. The state will also release school- by-school assessment data.

English Language Arts Assessment (Grades 3-8)

The entire English Language Arts assessment takes approximately three to four hours to complete. 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. Students respond to three types of questions: multiple-choice, evidence based-selected-response, and constructed-response. In a multiple-choice question, the correct answer 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 (grade 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 passage to compose an essay. 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. The English Language Arts assessment addresses six major reporting categories as well as two text types. Students respond to standalone multiple-choice items addressing 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.

Mathematics Assessment (Grades 3-8)

The entire mathematics assessment takes approximately two to three hours to complete. 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. 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 mathematics-specific scoring guideline. 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 questions in each reporting category vary by grade level. As a part of the assessment of Cluster A, Numbers and Operations, students in grades 4-8 respond to a section questions without a calculator. Constructed-response items may 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)

The entire science assessment takes approximately one to two hours to complete. 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. 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 science-specific scoring guideline. 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.

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.

Should you have any further questions, please call 570-839-7121, ext._____.

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 PSSA or Keystone Exams will result in certain consequences.

You will be contacted by the school if your child 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. 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.

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