



# PAXON HOLLOW MIDDLE SCHOOL

MARPLE NEWTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT  
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April 7, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The purpose of this communication is to provide families with information related to the 2021 Spring PSSA assessment. There are two sections found in this update. The first includes dates and information about the dates of the PSSA assessment, and the second contains information related to opt-out procedures and/or parental refusals.

## **PSSA Dates and Information:**

As mentioned in Dr. Kane's letter sent on March 17, the United States Department of Education (USDE) and the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) are requiring all schools to administer the PSSAs for the 2020-2021 school year. For your planning purposes, Paxon Hollow Middle School will be administering the PSSAs on the following dates:

### **Grades 6 – 8**

<b>Assessment/Grades</b>	<b>Test Dates</b>	<b>Make-Up Dates</b> (Additional dates will be added as needed)
English/Language Arts PSSA (Grades 6-8)	Wednesday, May 12 Thursday, May 13 Friday, May 14	Monday, May 17
Math PSSA (Grades 6-8)	Wednesday, May 19 Thursday, May 20	Friday, May 21
Science PSSA (Grade 8 Only)	Monday, May 24 Tuesday, May 25	Wednesday, May 26
Algebra I Keystone Exam	Wednesday, June 2 Thursday, June 3	Friday, June 4

The Marple Newtown School District must follow the state and federal mandate to administer the PSSAs. Although some flexibility was provided with regard to the testing window, USDE and PDE both affirmed their commitment to the administration of the PSSAs for the current school year.

The Marple Newtown School District will continue to adhere to all safety protocols during PSSA administration. It is important to note that students must be **in person** when the PSSA is administered. We would like for families to know that there is not a virtual administration option available for students. For those families who have elected to keep their children in the full virtual environment, classroom space will be provided during the in-person testing sessions. I will be communicating more detailed information and logistics regarding your child's testing location as we get closer to the testing dates.

### **Information Related to Opt-Outs / Refusals**

All Marple Newtown School District students are expected to participate in state-mandated testing. We realize that this year is unique for Paxon Hollow Middle School families as they navigate the ever-changing pandemic and its effect on education. Due to safety and social-emotional concerns, some of our families have inquired about opt-out/refusal options for PSSAs.

The PDE recognizes a religious objection opt-out option for PSSAs. This process requires parents/guardians to review the test materials and then submit in writing that they have a religious objection to the content. In addition to religious objection, the state allows a district to recognize that parents have the right to refuse participation in the PSSAs. This is known as a parental refusal and does not require the review of the testing materials. Instead, it requires written notification to the building principal that a parent/guardian does not want their child to take the PSSA.

All students who opt-out/refuse to take the PSSA will begin school after the assessments have been administered. If you would like to exercise your right as a parent to claim a religious opt-out or state a parental refusal, please send me an email before April 26<sup>th</sup>, at [TGretchen@mnsd.org](mailto:TGretchen@mnsd.org) to let me know your intention. It is important for families to know that students who opt-out of the PSSA will not attend school for in-person instruction while assessments are administered. Instead, students who have opted-out will be provided asynchronous work to do at home and are permitted to come to school for in-person instruction beginning at 10:34 am.

Thank you,

T.J. Gretchen  
Principal