

State Assessments

Past, Present, and Future

To understand academic performance scores, it is helpful to understand the assessments in place historically as well as present and future testing protocols. Factors contributing to scores include the standards upon which the tests are designed. The Keystone Exams, for example, assess proficiency on the PA Core Standards and are more demanding than the tests they replaced – PSSA Mathematics and Reading. The elimination of the PSSA-M in 2012-2013 represents yet another factor that may impact academic performance scores.

Other considerations include the addition of a more rigorous biology-focused science assessment and the elimination of a writing assessment at the secondary level. Thus, understanding academic performance over time requires an understanding of significant changes.

The tables below provide context for understanding the changes in the testing landscape and the overall increased rigor as PA Core Standard-aligned assessments are implemented.

Assessment Protocol: 2011-2012

Table I below illustrates the assessments employed in the calculation of Adequate Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind. PSSA, inclusive of PSSA-M and PASA when applicable, were the sole assessments, and were based upon PA Academic Standards.

Table 1 Pennsylvania Assessment Protocol 2011-2012										
	Grade									
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
PSSA Reading*	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	
PSSA Writing*			X			X			X	
PSSA Math*	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	
PSSA Science*		X				X			X	

* Based on PA Academic Standards

Assessment Protocol: 2012-2013 and 2013-2014

Table 2 below illustrates the assessments employed in the calculation of the academic performance score for the School Performance Profile and the ESEA federal accountability designations for Title I schools.

The significant change from prior years was the elimination of the PSSA-M for students with disabilities.

With the addition of Keystone Exams, it is important to note that these secondary assessments are based upon PA Core Standards and reflect more challenging content and a higher degree of rigor than the former grade 11 PSSAs. The addition of the Keystone Exams in Biology at the secondary level represents an additional measure of rigor.

While Keystone Exams are designed as end-of-course assessments, it should be noted that in the transition to the Keystone Exams, students in grade 11 were required to take them so that the grade 11 cohort could be used in the calculation for proficiency for federal and state accountability. In future years, the grade 11 cohort scores will more closely represent the scores of students in grade 11 who actually took the exams as end-of-course assessments. For both federal and state accountability of students in grade 11, the Keystone scores used are the best banked scores from each applicable Keystone module.

Table 2 Pennsylvania Assessment Protocol 2012-2013 and 2013-2014										
	Grade									
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
PSSA Reading*	X	X	X	X	X	X				
PSSA Writing*			X			X				
PSSA Math*	X	X	X	X	X	X				
PSSA Science*		X				X				
Keystone Exam Algebra I**									End of Course Exam Grade 11 Cohort	
Keystone Exam Biology**									End of Course Exam Grade 11 Cohort	
Keystone Exam Literature**									End of Course Exam Grade 11 Cohort	

* Based on PA Academic Standards

** Based on PA Core Standards

Assessment Protocol: 2014-2015

Table 3 illustrates the assessments that will be employed in the calculation of academic proficiency for schools. The notable changes include the transition of the PSSAs to assessments based upon the PA Core Standards and the transition from a reading assessment to an English Language Arts assessment - now including a writing assessment for grades 3 through 8.

Table 3 Pennsylvania Assessment Protocol 2014-2015										
	Grade									
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
PSSA English Language Arts**	X	X	X	X	X	X				
PSSA Math**	X	X	X	X	X	X				
PSSA Science*		X				X				
Keystone Exam Algebra I**										End of Course Exam Grade 11 Cohort
Keystone Exam Biology*										End of Course Exam Grade 11 Cohort
Keystone Exam Literature**										End of Course Exam Grade 11 Cohort
* Based on PA Academic Standards										
** Based on PA Core Standards										