



SPRING 2026

Preparation for Online Testing

When including Classroom Diagnostic Tools (CDT) and Firefly testing, almost 100% of Pennsylvania's public districts have already administered online tests in some capacity! This great news means that most schools and students will enter this spring's online tests with experience that will increase confidence and eliminate some common concerns and misconceptions.

If your students have not yet been exposed to online testing on the DRC INSIGHT test engine, it's not too late! You can still provide your students, teachers, and technology staff with valuable experience by administering CDT or Firefly. Both assessments utilize the same platform that is used for the PSSA and Keystone Exams. Also, administering CDT or Firefly in a manner consistent with spring testing will give you an opportunity to confirm that your technical configurations and bandwidth are ready to support the full spring test population.

All LEAs must also ensure that their students are provided access to the Online Tools Training (OTT) and Online Tutorials at <https://portal.te.drcedirect.com/PA/patrain> prior to the spring administration. These resources are an imperative piece of preparing students for online testing. The 2025 Item Samplers have also been transitioned to deliver the items and content through the DRC test platform, giving educators and students another opportunity to interact with the platform in a way that closely replicates online testing.

In addition to these hands-on opportunities, DRC has a wide array of technology resources available on the DRC INSIGHT Portal, as well as online administration training on the PSA Training site (sites.google.com/datarecognitioncorp.com/psa-assessments/home).

Schools are also encouraged to attend PDE's scheduled training and office hours to hear more information and to ask questions.

Tuesday, March 24, from 10:00-11:00 am
Thursday, March 26, from 10:00-11:00 am
Wednesday April 8, from 10:00-11:00 am
Wednesday, April 15, from 10:00-11:00 am

Online Spanish

For the very first time, Spanish tests for the PSSA and Spring Keystone Exams will be delivered via the DRC INSIGHT test engine. This exciting new transition allows students who require a Spanish translation to take their tests through the same online platform that delivers all of Pennsylvania online assessments. Also, the online Spanish test provides access to embedded English references directly within the test engine and eliminates the need for printed English reference materials.

Schools that administer the Spanish test will need to order *Spanish Directions for Administration Manuals* (DFAs) via DRC's Additional Materials Ordering system or access and print the DFAs from PDE's website or the DRC INSIGHT Portal. Spanish tests are also available as a paper accommodation (Print on Demand) for the student who qualifies for both accommodations. The Spanish test does not offer a text-to-speech (audio) accommodation. Students who require this accommodation will need to have the test administered in accordance with PDE's policy for individual read-aloud.

Note: Students who will take a Spanish test must have the appropriate accommodation marked on the student's record before the student's test ticket is printed. This will ensure the correct form is delivered to the student for testing.

2026 Summer Keystone Exams

All LEAs that participate in the Summer Keystone Exams should be aware of an important process change that will impact your receipt of assessment material. DRC will not collect enrollments for the online-only summer administration. As a result, LEAs **will not receive** an automatic shipment of administration manuals. LEAs that plan to administer the Summer keystones must order manuals from DRC's Additional Materials Ordering system or download the manuals from PDE's website or the DRC INSIGHT Portal. The same is true of printed copies of reference sheets.

The biology test for this summer will be the legacy test only (because the STEELS cut scores will not yet be established). The biology test should be limited to students who have previously taken a legacy test and are attempting to improve their best-score-to-date.

Contact DRC PA Customer Service 1-800-451-7849
Email: PAcustomerservice@datarecognitioncorp.com
DRC INSIGHT Portal: [pa.drcedirect.com](https://portal.te.drcedirect.com)

PSA Training Site: sites.google.com/datarecognitioncorp.com/psa-assessments/home

Legacy Keystone Biology

Beginning this spring, the Keystone Biology test will be aligned to the new STEELS standards. Accordingly, DRC INSIGHT will deliver a STEELS test to all students assigned to a standard Biology test session. However, the former (“Legacy”) Biology test will still be available as an accommodation for re-testers who are attempting to improve their Biology best-score-to-date.

If you plan to administer the Legacy Biology test to a student who is re-taking Biology this spring, you must select the legacy accommodation prior to printing the student’s test ticket. The legacy accommodation is the only means by which a student can access the Legacy Biology test. The legacy test is available online and with all accommodated forms.

All students who take the STEELS Biology test this spring will be considered first-time testers, regardless of whether a student has taken a biology test in the past. Any past biology results will not be included in the best-score-to-date calculation for students who take the STEELS test.

Note: The STEELS Biology standards will be set this summer and approved by the State Board in September. As such, only the Legacy Biology test will be available for the 2026 Summer Keystone Exams. Only students who are re-testing to improve their legacy best-score-to-date should take the Summer Keystone Biology Exam.

Paper Materials for the Spring Assessments

The statewide transition to online testing requires that all non-accommodated tests are delivered via the online format, including Spanish tests. **There are no paper versions of the standard tests available for the spring administration.** The only paper materials available to schools this spring are large print and Braille booklets, and these accommodated materials must be ordered exclusively via the Additional Materials Ordering system. Schools can begin placing orders for large print and Braille booklets four weeks prior to the test windows, but the secure materials will arrive no sooner than two weeks prior to the test windows.

Students whose IEP/504 plans require paper testing on a standard form will need to be provided with a locally-printed (Print on Demand) version of the test. This version of the test is available only as an accommodation and requires schools to submit a Unique Accommodation Assurance form to PDE prior to selecting the accommodation in the DRC INSIGHT Portal. Only a very small percentage of students will need this test accommodation. It is not an option for students who simply prefer a paper-and-pencil form.

All students who participate in the assessment using large print, Braille, or Print on Demand will need to have their responses fully transcribed into the online test engine. In addition, LEAs will be responsible for handling and securely destroying the large print, Braille and Print on Demand materials after transcription is complete.

Online Parental Reviews

Every District Assessment Coordinator (DAC) will be able to access Parental Review test tickets via the DRC INSIGHT Portal starting March 30, 2026 for PSSA and April 20, 2026 for Keystone Exams.

To access the online Parental Review Test Tickets:

1. Log into the DRC INSIGHT Portal
2. Choose the “My Applications” dropdown menu, and then “Test Management”
3. Next, choose “Manage Test Sessions”
4. Under Administration, choose the correct administration
5. Choose “SAMPLE DISTRICT – 412345678” from the District drop down
6. The School dropdown will display “PARENTAL REVIEWS”
7. Click the Show Sessions button.

The Sessions table will populate. Choose the printer icon for the assessment for which you need Parental Review Test Tickets.

Corrections Systems – Summer 2026

The Keystone Corrections, Grades 3-8 Attribution, and Grade 11 Attribution systems serve the sole purpose of providing districts and schools an opportunity to ensure that the student data used for administration and accountability reporting is accurate and complete. These systems allow you to match students to PIMS, to correct a student's district or school assignment, or to make a manual match to a student's results from a previous Keystone Exam.

PDE's expectation is that all LEAs will leverage these important systems to make all allowed corrections before final reporting files are produced. LEAs that do not utilize the systems will not have an opportunity to fix incorrect data in final reporting.

The systems have been scheduled in a manner that attempts to minimize conflicts with holidays and other summer events. All District and School Assessment Coordinators must be aware of the dates and must ensure that staff are available to complete the necessary tasks in the allotted time.

Spring Keystone Corrections Window | June 22-24, 2026

Grades 3-8 Attributions System Window | June 25-July 1, 2026

Grade 11 Attributions System Window | July 23-27, 2026

Continued Success for Firefly

As of this March, more than 1,514 schools have taken advantage of the new Firefly assessments, resulting in more than 928,000 tests being administered across the Commonwealth so far this year! The expanded Firefly program, which now includes Science and Biology, continues to be the only benchmark assessment program that is fully aligned to Pennsylvania's assessment standards.

PDE's Firefly program provides schools with free, high-quality benchmark assessments that are designed specifically for Pennsylvania and measure the same knowledge and skills as the PSSA and Keystone Exams. The computer-adaptive assessments are available for ELA, Mathematics, Science, Literature, Algebra I, and Biology.

Beginning this school year, student results from the Firefly ELA, Mathematics, Literature, and Algebra I tests include predictions for student performance on the spring summative assessments. (*Predictions for Science and Biology will be added next year.*) Firefly reports also now include student progress across multiple test administrations. These unique features further bolster Firefly as the optimal tool to gauge student mastery of Pennsylvania content and preparedness for the spring assessments. In addition, DRC has released a host of new interactive reports and instructional strategies that provide teachers with valuable tools to analyze results and monitor student progress.

It's not too late to participate in 2025-2026 Firefly administration! The ELA, Math, and Science tests will be available until April 17; and the Literature, Algebra I, and Biology tests will be available until May 11. For anyone wanting additional information, there is a wealth of information about administering and understanding [Firefly](#) on [PDE's website](#), the DRC INSIGHT Portal, and DRC's resources and training site:

(<https://sites.google.com/datarecognitioncorp.com/psa-assessments/home>).

Survey Questions

Four brief survey questions appear at the end of each online assessment but before the review page. Students will be asked to indicate if they used an external keyboard, mouse, or stylus and whether they practiced the online tools prior to testing. Students who navigate to the survey questions before completing all test items must be instructed to return to the items before submitting their tests. Navigating to the survey questions before answering all of the test questions **has no impact** on a student's ability to go back to their unanswered questions. Further information about the survey questions can be found in the *Directions for Administration Manuals*.

Pre-Populated Test Sessions

Beginning with the 2026 PSSA, DRC will pre-populate your schools' online test sessions based on information provided from PIMS. This option is possible because all testing will be online, and all students can be placed in online test sessions.

For PSSA, the "Test Sessions" file will utilize the data that is submitted in field 212 (A, B, I), along with Grade (field 10), and anything submitted in Home Room (field 13).

For the Keystone Exams, the "Test Sessions" file will utilize the data that is submitted in field 215 (1-7), along with Grade (field 10), and anything submitted in Home Room (field 13).

Test Session Names will be a combination of Home Room, Assessment, and Grade.

Schools can edit and delete these test sessions in the DRC INSIGHT Portal, as needed, either manually or through the Multiple Test Sessions upload process. To support the transition to PIMS-based test sessions, PDE has waived the requirement for teachers to be assigned to test sessions.

2026 IMPORTANT DATES

PSSA

Manuals delivered, Test Setup Available, and Additional Materials Opens	By March 23, 2026
English Language Arts Test Window	April 20-24, 2026
Mathematics, Science, Make-up Test Window	April 27-May 1, 2026
Mathematics, Science, Make-up Test Window (OPTIONAL)	May 4-8, 2026
Student Data Files Posted - ELA and Math	June 12, 2026
Accountability Student Data Files Posted - ELA and Math	August 18, 2026
Student Data Files Posted - Includes Science	September 23, 2026
Accountability Student Data Files Posted - Includes Science	October 13, 2026

Spring Keystone

Manuals delivered, Test Setup Available, and Additional Materials Opens	By April 13, 2026
Testing Window	May 11-22, 2026
Student Data Files Posted - Algebra and Literature	July 13, 2026
Student Data Files Posted - Biology	September 28, 2026

Summer Keystone

Testing Window	July 27—31, 2026
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Classroom Diagnostic Tools

Close of the 2025-2026 Testing Window	June 12, 2026
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Firefly

Close of the 2025-2026 Testing Window	April 17 (PSSA) May 8 (Keystone)
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Delayed Science Reporting

This spring's Science PSSA and Keystone Biology Exams are the first operational tests aligned to the new STEELS standards. After scoring is complete this summer, PDE and DRC will convene committees of Pennsylvania educators to establish and recommend cut scores for the STEELS-aligned assessments. DRC will begin generating student performance reports after the new cut scores have been approved by the State Board in September.

The release of student results and reports for Science and Biology will be directly impacted by the schedule for establishing the new cut scores. However, student results from the other PSSA and Keystone assessments will be released on a standard reporting schedule.

LEAs will receive two sets of District Student Data Files. For PSSA, ELA and Math will be released in June and Science in September. For the Keystone Exams, Algebra I and Literature will be released in July and Biology in September. The Individual Student Reports (ISRs) for PSSA will arrive in schools in November. Spring Keystone ISRs for Algebra I and Literature will arrive in schools in September and Biology in November.

Schools should closely monitor the release dates for all spring-assessment and accountability reports that are posted on the Announcements page on the DRC INSIGHT Portal.

Contact DRC PA Customer Service 1-800-451-7849
Email: PAcustomerservice@datarecognitioncorp.com
DRC INSIGHT Portal: pa.drctdirect.com

PSA Training Site: sites.google.com/datarecognitioncorp.com/psa-assessments/home