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March 27, 2026

Dear Northgate Middle School Families,

The Spring Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (**PSSA**) Exams are scheduled for the weeks of April 20 and April 27, 2026. As we approach the testing period, we want to take a moment to emphasize the importance of students doing their very best on these assessments. The PSSA is a valuable opportunity for students to demonstrate what they have learned throughout the year in **English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science (for 8th grade only)**.

These assessments provide important insights into our students' academic progress and help us tailor instruction to meet their needs. While we recognize no single test defines a student's abilities, performing their best on the PSSAs allows us to celebrate their growth and make informed decisions about curriculum and support services.

The PSSA exams will be administered on the following dates:

English Language Arts: Tuesday, April 21, Wednesday, April 22, and Friday, April 24

Mathematics: Monday, April 27 and Tuesday, April 28

Science (Grade 8 only): Wednesday, April 29 and Thursday, April 30

Below is a checklist of six key actions we want students to take during testing to help them perform at their best. Our middle school teachers have discussed and practiced these skills with all students. Completing all six will earn them a prize ticket on testing day. Daily prizes will be a snack to enjoy in the classroom, and on Fridays, the prize will be a treat in the cafeteria. Additionally, students' names will be entered into a drawing for big prizes.

1. **Be on time each day and have materials. Students will be expected to leave their Chromebooks at school and chargers will be available.**
2. **Take your time and work diligently for at least 50 minutes** on the multiple-choice questions, carefully answering every question, and be sure you have answered every question.
3. **Write a quality open-ended response.**
 - On the ELA exam: with an introduction, opening, conclusion, and supporting paragraphs with evidence in between.
 - On Math and Science exams: a clear and concise explanation.
4. **Use scratch paper.** Show your work and solve problems on scratch paper.
5. **Use the formula sheet.**
6. **Use the rubrics.** Grade your work using the rubric before turning it in. Feel confident that your answer has all the characteristics of proficient work.

How Families Can Help

You play an important role in helping your student feel confident and prepared. Here are a few simple ways to support them:

- **Encourage** your student to do their best on their daily school work leading up to the test. In particular, use practice problems as an opportunity to reinforce skills and ask questions.
- **Ensure Plenty of Rest** – A good night’s sleep before each test day helps with focus and stamina.
- **Provide a Healthy Breakfast** – Nutritious food fuels the brain and helps with concentration. Remember every student has the opportunity for free breakfast at school every day!
- **Arrive on Time** – Being punctual reduces stress and allows students to start the day calmly.
- **Reinforce the Importance of Trying Their Best** – Encourage your student to take their time, read carefully, and check their work. Let your student know that a little bit of stress is normal and even healthy. Remind them to use their "Chill" coping strategies to work through it and do their best.

Pennsylvania does not offer a remote option for these tests. Northgate Online Learning Academy (NOLA) students are expected to come to school on the days of the tests to complete the exams. **Our NOLA students will be assigned to testing groups and will need to report to the secondary building at 9:45 a.m. on test days.** Home-schooled students may also participate. Parents of homeschooled students must contact the principal by April 9, 2026, to arrange for inclusion in testing.

We appreciate your partnership in making this a **successful and stress-free** experience for your child. If you have any questions about the PSSA, please feel free to contact us. Our email addresses are included below. Thank you for your ongoing support!

Sincerely,

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