



## Palmerton Area Junior High School

Dave Sodl, Principal  
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April 7, 2026

### **PSSA Testing**

Dear Parents/Guardians,

On April 20th, 21st, and 22nd our 7th and 8th grade students will be taking the PSSA English Language Arts assessment tests. On April 27th and April 28th, our 7th and 8th grade students will be taking the PSSA Mathematics assessment test and on April 29th and April 30th, our 8th grade students will be taking the PSSA Science assessment test. For 8th grade Algebra 1 students, the Keystone Algebra 1 exam will be administered on May 13th and May 14th. Please allow me to remind everyone of the importance of these assessments. The PSSA testing process is designed to provide information to families, the school district, and the general public about the quality of our schools. The results of these assessments also help to inform our teachers which content areas need to be a focus of their instruction to best meet the academic needs of their students. We ask that you please join us in encouraging your child(ren) to do their very best on these assessments.

As a parent or guardian, you have the right to review the test materials in advance. You must make an appointment to review the test by calling the Junior High School office at 610-826-2492 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 2:30 PM from April 7th through April 20th. Please note that if you choose to review the test, you must sign a statement attesting that you will maintain confidentiality. You should note that you will not be permitted to take notes or copy any test material during your review. If after reviewing the test materials you determine that it conflicts with your religious beliefs, you must inform the Superintendent of Schools in writing prior to the first day of testing.

Her mailing address is ...

Dr. Angela Friebolin  
Superintendent of Schools  
680 Fourth Street  
Palmerton, PA 18071

You can also contact her via email: [afriebolin@palmerton.org](mailto:afriebolin@palmerton.org)

During the actual tests, students are not permitted to have any electronic devices. If a student must bring an electronic device to school on these days, it is not permitted to be on their person in the testing room. We are required by the Commonwealth to collect it. The device will be returned after the test is completed. Here is the related statement from the Pennsylvania Department of Education: "In an era of cell phones, smartphones, smart watches, and other electronic devices which can easily photograph and instantly share photographs, confidential and secure test materials can easily be compromised. 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." Please remind your child of this restriction. Please review the documents that are included with this letter for more information regarding the PA Department of Education's Calculator Policy, Code of Conduct for test takers, Electronic Device Policy and Frequently Asked Questions document.

Given the importance of these tests it is imperative that your child has the best possible testing environment. We will be providing the regular free breakfast that we have been offering all year to all students. Please make sure that your child has plenty of rest each night and that he/she arrives at school in a timely manner.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



David Sodl  
Principal- Palmerton Area Junior High School

cc:	Dr. A. Friebolin	Superintendent
	K. Beblavy	Director of Curriculum and Instruction
	K. Carroll	School Counselor



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 of secure assessment material, 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. Electronic devices such as but not limited to cell phones, smartphones, smartwatches, smart glasses, E-readers, Nooks, Kindles, 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 are not permitted in any testing site. Please speak with your child and let your child 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 consequences.

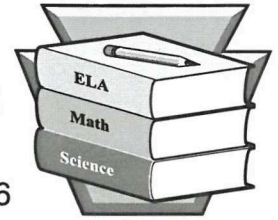
You will be contacted by the school if your child is discovered using and/or having a cell phone or other unapproved electronic device during the administration of the PSSA or Keystone Exams. Students who ignore this directive will be subject to the school's discipline policy and the Department of Education's 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 and further action may be taken.

If, after testing is complete, it is discovered that a student used and/or had a cell phone or other unapproved electronic device during the administration of the test, the school's discipline policy will be followed and the student's test will not be scored.

# Information for Parents or Guardians

## Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)

English Language Arts Assessment, April 20–24, 2026  
Mathematics and Science Assessment, April 27–May 8, 2026



### GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PSSA

#### Which schools participate?

All school districts and charter schools participate in the assessments. Nonpublic and private schools may also participate on a voluntary basis.

#### 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 5 and 8

#### Who decided what the assessments should measure?

Groups of educators from all levels of education in Pennsylvania chose the areas of knowledge and skills upon which the assessments are based. The groups included teachers, supervisors, curriculum directors, and college specialists. They also reviewed, edited, and approved the test items.

#### Who administers the assessments?

Each school chooses the person(s) who will administer the assessments. In most cases, these are teachers in the students' building.

#### How are the results reported?

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

#### May parents see the assessments?

Yes, under one circumstance. School entities are required to have policies to ensure that parents or guardians have the right to review a state assessment in the school entity during convenient hours for parents or guardians starting two weeks prior to the testing window to the end of the make-up schedule in order to determine whether a state assessment conflicts with

their religious belief. This is the only reason allowable under regulation.

Confidentiality agreements must be signed, and no copies of the assessments or notes about assessment items will be permitted to leave the school. If after reviewing the test, parents or guardians find the test to be in conflict with their religious belief and wish their student(s) to be excused from the test, the right of the parents or guardians will not be denied upon written request to the applicable school district Superintendent, charter school Chief Executive Officer, or AVTS Director. Parents or guardians should contact their child's school to make arrangements to review the test.

#### Report Testing Irregularities

Parents/guardians who believe that a testing irregularity may have occurred may email [ra-edirregularities@pa.gov](mailto:ra-edirregularities@pa.gov) to report the incident.

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT (grades 3 through 8)

#### How long does the assessment take?

The entire English Language Arts assessment takes approximately three to four hours to complete. Your school district will inform you about the assessment schedule.

#### What does the assessment include?

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.

#### What types of questions are on the assessment?

Students respond to multiple-choice, evidence-based selected-response, technology-enhanced, and constructed-response questions. In a multiple-choice question, the correct answer(s) is chosen from four options. Evidence-based selected-response questions have two parts, and students select one or more answers for each part. Technology-enhanced questions use interactive formats to allow students to construct answers. Constructed-response questions may include a short-answer (grade 3) or text dependent analysis (grades 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 reading passage to compose an essay.

### **How are written responses to constructed-response items scored?**

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.

### **What is assessed in English Language Arts?**

The English Language Arts assessment addresses six major reporting categories as well as two text types. Students respond to standalone questions assessing 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.

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENT (grades 3 through 8)**

#### **How long does the assessment take?**

The entire mathematics assessment takes approximately two to three hours to complete. Your school district will inform you about the assessment schedule.

#### **What does the assessment include?**

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.

#### **What types of questions are on the assessment?**

Students respond to three types of questions: multiple-choice, technology-enhanced, and open-ended. In a multiple-choice question, the correct answer is chosen from the four presented options. Technology-enhanced questions use interactive formats to allow students to construct answers. 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).

#### **How are written responses to open-ended items scored?**

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.

### **What is assessed in Mathematics?**

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 through 8 respond to a set of questions without a calculator. Constructed-response items may require the students to show all of their work (e.g., calculations, graphs, drawings) and/or to explain in writing how they solved the problems.

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCIENCE ASSESSMENT (grades 5 and 8)**

#### **How long does the assessment take?**

The entire science assessment takes approximately one to two hours to complete. Your school district will inform you about the assessment schedule.

#### **What does the assessment include?**

Students in grades 5 and 8 complete two sections of questions for the science assessment. The science assessment will consist of different groups of questions on different test forms.

#### **What types of questions are on the assessment?**

Students respond to three types of questions: multiple-choice, technology-enhanced, and open-ended. In a multiple-choice question, the correct answer is chosen from the four presented options. Technology-enhanced questions use interactive formats to allow students to construct answers. Open-ended questions require students to compose their responses. Grades 5 and 8 may also include science scenarios.

#### **What is a science scenario?**

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.

#### **How are written responses to open-ended items scored?**

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.

#### **What is assessed in science?**

The science assessment addresses the four major reporting categories: Technology and Engineering, Life Sciences & Environmental Literacy and Sustainability, Physical Sciences, and Earth and Space Sciences. The proportion of items in each reporting category varies by grade level.



## PENNSYLVANIA CALCULATOR POLICY

If a student chooses to use a calculator (other than the online options) on the Keystone Exams or PSSA in sections where the calculator is permitted, the student must adhere to the guidelines listed below. It is incumbent upon the School Assessment Coordinator to ensure that all calculator policies are implemented and followed, including making sure calculators have no programs or other data stored in their memory other than those that are factory installed. Please note that if a student wants to restore the deleted programs, the student will need to back up these programs prior to the assessment. In addition, the memory must be cleared on the calculator prior to and following each test session of the assessment. This task must be completed by the Test Administrator or Proctor. Students are not to complete this task.

Calculators with testing mode or exam mode must have the testing mode or exam mode activated prior to the exam session by the Test Administrator or Proctor. Directions to activate testing mode or exam mode are provided on the PDE website.

The following are not permitted for the PSSA or Keystone Exams:

- Devices that have a primary purpose other than functioning as a calculator such as cell phones, smartphones, smartwatches, PDAs, laptops, tablets, pocket organizers, etc.
- Calculators with infrared, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, or other beaming or wireless capabilities, unless the beaming or wireless capabilities are disabled
- Calculators with built-in Computer Algebra Systems (CAS)
- Calculators that make noise, have paper tape, need to be plugged in, or talk; these specific calculators can only be used as a required accommodation as stated in the Accommodations Guidelines
- Calculators shared by students during a test session
- Any and all non-factory (add-on) programs or information stored in the calculator

This calculator policy is intended to be a general description of what is not allowed. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list of specific calculators, devices, or technologies that must not be used on the PSSA or Keystone Exams. Please note that as technology changes, this policy may also change.



## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TEST TAKERS

### DO ...

- Listen to, read, and follow all directions given.
- Ask questions if you do not understand the directions.
- Read each question carefully, especially multiple-choice items that ask for the “best answer.” Also, be sure to read any open-ended items carefully before responding.
- Keep your eyes on your own test.
- Answer each test item.
- Check that you have completed all the test items before you submit your final responses online.
- Report any suspected cheating to your teacher or principal.

### DO NOT ...

- Have notes in your possession during the test.
- Have any unapproved electronic devices (cell phones, cameras, smartphones, smartwatches, earbuds, smart glasses, etc.) in your possession during the test. Note, you may have approved calculators, if applicable, during the test.
- Share a calculator with others.
- Use a calculator when not permitted.
- Talk with others about questions on the test during or after the test. (Students should be assured that they may discuss the testing process or issues of concern with their parents/guardians.)
- Take notes about the test to share with others.
- Leave an online test session until the session is complete or until instructed to do so.
- Use social media to post information about the test and/or test items.