



FAQs for Parents about PSSAs and Keystone Exams - MIDDLE SCHOOL Spring 2021

What tests will be given this spring?

This spring, all students in grades 3-8 are scheduled to take the PSSA test in Reading/ELA and Math. Students in grades 4 and 8 are also scheduled to take the PSSA test in Science.

The Keystone Exams are end-of-course exams given to students completing Algebra 1, Biology, and/or English 10 (Literature Exam). Students taking Algebra 1 in 8th grade are scheduled to take the Algebra 1 Keystone Exam.

When are the PSSA testing dates?

- Reading/ELA: May 25-28 T/Th Students: May 25 and 27 W/F Students: May 26 and 28
- Math: June 1-2 T/Th Students: June 1 W/F Students: June 2
- Science: June 3-4 T/Th Students: June 3 W/F Students: June 4

When are the Keystone Algebra testing dates?

- TBD in May

What are the allowable reasons for opting my child out of the PSSA tests and/or Keystone Exams?

The only allowable exclusion per Chapter 4 of the Pa. Code is for religious reasons. However, nothing in the school code prevents or penalizes parents or guardians from excluding their child for other reasons.

What if I don't want my child to take the PSSAs or Keystone Exams?

If you are choosing to opt out your child *due to religious reasons*, you must follow these steps:

1. The parent or guardian should contact the building principal and arrange a time to come to the school and review the assessment in the presence of school personnel.
2. The parent or guardian must sign a confidentiality agreement prior to examining the test materials. When reviewing materials, no note-taking, photocopying, recording, etc., is allowed.
3. If the parent or guardian finds the test to be in conflict with their religious belief, they must provide a written request to the Superintendent stating as such.

If you are choosing to opt out your child *for any other reason* than religious reasons, notify your child's principal in writing of your request.

Please have all requests to opt out submitted to the building principal by April 30, 2021.

How are Keystone Exams different from the PSSAs?

Keystone Exams are end-of-course exams given at the end of Algebra 1, Biology, and English 10. Beginning with the class of 2023, Pennsylvania has added a state-wide graduation requirement that students must meet in addition to the graduation requirements of the BASD. For current sophomores and beyond, in order to earn a high school diploma in Pennsylvania, students must demonstrate their proficiency by completing one of the following:

- Scoring proficient or advanced on each Keystone Exam - Algebra I, Literature, and Biology.
- Earning a satisfactory composite score on the Algebra I, Literature, and Biology Keystone Exams. The passing composite score will be available in August 2019.

- Earning a passing grade on the courses associated with each Keystone Exam, and satisfactorily complete one of the following: an alternative assessment (SAT, PSAT, ACT, ASVAB, Gold Level ACT WorkKeys), advanced coursework (AP, IB, concurrent enrollment courses), pre-apprenticeship, or acceptance in a 4-year nonprofit institution of higher education for college-level coursework.
- Earning a passing grade on the courses associated with each Keystone Exam, and pass the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) or the National Institute of Metalworking Skills (NIMS) assessment in an approved Career and Technical Education concentration.
- Earning a passing grade on the courses associated with each Keystone Exam, and demonstrate readiness for postsecondary engagement through three pieces of evidence from the student's career portfolio aligned to student goals and career plan. Examples of evidence will include ACT WorkKeys, SAT Subject tests, AP, IB and concurrent coursework, higher education acceptance, community learning project, completion of an internship, externship or co-op or full-time employment.
(See [PDE Statewide High School Graduation Requirement page](#) for more information.)

This means that if a student is scheduled to take a Keystone Exam in the Spring of 2021 and the parent/guardian chooses not to have their child take the exam, the student will need to satisfy the graduation requirement in one of the alternate ways listed above or take the Keystone Exam by the end of their junior year. The best time to take the Keystone Exam is at the end of the associated course.

Will my child's teacher be negatively impacted by my decision to opt out my child from testing?

There is no teacher accountability tied to the PSSA tests or Keystone Exams for the 2020-2021 school year.

Will my child be negatively impacted by my decision to opt them out of testing?

There is no consequence for a child who does not take the PSSA tests this year. However, if your child was scheduled to take an Algebra 1 Keystone Exam and is a member of the class of 2023 or beyond, they have to satisfy the PA Statewide High School Graduation Requirement (see above) *in addition to the BASD graduation requirements* in order to graduate.

If my child is not taking the PSSA tests and/or Keystone Exams, what will they do on test days?

The final schedule for students not testing will depend on the number of students taking the exam. It is possible that students who are not taking the PSSA tests will learn remotely on testing days. Your building principal will communicate the final schedule for those days in May.