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March 22, 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian:

During the months of April and May Erie's Public Schools will administer the 2021 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) to students in grades 3-8 and the Keystone exams to students taking Algebra I, Literature, and Biology. PSSA Science assessments involve grades 4 and 8. Some students in special education programs may be included in alternative assessments (PASA). PSSA test administration is mandated for all school districts within the Commonwealth which will begin the week of April 26th. Spring Keystones will begin the week of May 17<sup>th</sup>. These assessments have been designed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to help determine the agreement of district curriculum with state standards. Performance on the PSSA will become part of the Future Ready PA Index to be released in the fall of 2021. Students taking the state assessments will receive individual score reports. Your child's results will be distributed to you and the principal. The state will not receive any reports with individual names included.

**Your child's safety is the utmost concern during the administration of the assessments. Due to the current COVID environment, schools will be following the precautions listed in the District Health and Safety Plan. Testing sessions will follow social distancing guidelines, face masks will be required, and students testing online will be required to bring their District assigned Chromebook.**

State testing cannot be administered remotely. If your child is currently only attending school virtually, the school will be contacting you to schedule in person testing during the window.

You have the right to review the test items by making arrangements with the school principal. Students can be excluded from testing only if their parent/guardian finds the assessment items to be in conflict with their religious beliefs. Please read the attached flyer entitled: *Information for Parents or Guardians, Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)* which will provide you with further information about the assessment.

Under state and federal law, the integrity of these tests cannot be compromised. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) prohibits cell phones and electronic devices from entering the testing location during the test administration. The consequence for using and/or having a cell phone or other electronic device during the test administration will result in the application of a "do not score" label/flag on the student's test and the student will retake the exam. Furthermore, if a student uses a cell phone or electronic device in any manner during the administration of the test, the device will be confiscated until the parent or guardian can come to the school, and in the presence of the parent or guardian, the cell phone or other electronic device will be viewed to ensure that no information or material regarding the assessment is present. Under PDE regulations, violation of the no cell phone or other electronic device will result in disciplinary action, the severity of which will vary depending on whether test material has been compromised. If any item on an assessment has been compromised, and can no longer be used or needs to be replaced, the parent/guardian and/or student may be responsible for PDE's cost to replace the item/test statewide.

Please encourage your child to try their very best on these tests and be sure they come to school well-rested and ready to demonstrate all that they have learned this year. We thank you for your support of your student's achievement and appreciate your continued involvement in your child's education.

Sincerely,

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Superintendent of Schools

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# DISTRICT PSSA SCHEDULE

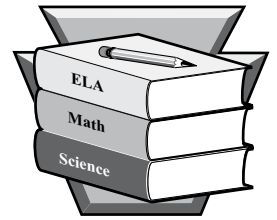
April/May 2021

## Middle School Schedule: AM Testing

<b>ELA Test 1</b>	<b>ELA Test 2</b>	<b>ELA Test 3</b>	<b>Math Test 1</b>	<b>Math Test 2</b>	<b>Science Test 1 (Gr 8)</b>	<b>Science Test 2 (Gr 8)</b>
April 26	April 27	April 28	April 29	April 30	May 3	May 4

## Elementary School Schedule: AM Testing

<b>ELA Test 1</b>	<b>ELA Test 2</b>	<b>ELA Test 3</b>	<b>Math Test 1</b>	<b>Math Test 2</b>	<b>Science Test 1 (Gr 4)</b>	<b>Science Test 2 (Gr 4)</b>
May 3	May 4	May 5	May 6	May 7	May 10	May 11



### 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 4 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 from the time testing materials are received 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) or call 844-418-1651 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, 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. 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 multiple-choice items 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 two types of questions: multiple-choice and open-ended. In a multiple-choice question, the correct answer is chosen from the four presented options, while 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 4 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 4 and 8 complete two sections of questions for the science 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 two types of questions: multiple-choice and open-ended. In a multiple-choice question, the correct answer is chosen from the four presented options, while open-ended questions require students to compose their responses. At grade 8, the science assessment also includes 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: The Nature of Science, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Earth and Space Sciences. The proportion of items in each reporting category varies by grade level.