

Dear Parents and Guardians:

The Methacton School District will be administering the 2021 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) to all students in Grades 3 through 8 during the month of May. The testing schedule is outlined below.

PSSA TESTING SCHEDULE

PSSA Administration	Grades Tested	Testing Dates
English Language Arts	Grades 3 through 8	May 11, 12, and 13
Mathematics	Grades 3 through 8	May 19 and 20
Science	Grades 4 and 8	May 24 and 25

The PSSA is the Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) annual standards-based test used to measure a student's attainment of the Pennsylvania Core and Academic Standards. The assessment is designed to assist Pennsylvania school districts in determining the quality of their educational programs. It takes a collaborative effort of school personnel, parents and guardians, and most importantly, our students, to achieve success.

Per PDE guidance, students who participate in a fully virtual program are required to test in-person and on-site. In Methacton, this means students will test on-site at their school of enrollment. To help us schedule PSSA testing, we are asking families of students who are enrolled in the virtual program to complete the form below by 11:59pm on Tuesday, April 13th.

[PSSA Testing Schedule Form for Virtual Students](#)

Chapter 4 of Title 22 of the Pa. Code (22 Pa. Code 4.4) provides for the rights of any parent/guardian to excuse their child from the state assessment if they find the assessment to be in conflict with their religious beliefs. If a parent pursues a religious exemption from the PSSA or Keystone Exams, they are to contact their school principal at least 1 week prior to the start of testing to follow the appropriate procedures, which include:

- Communication via email to the building principal of the request for religious exemption.
- The building principal will respond to your request, and ask for you to preview the materials in person, and if due to Covid-19 concerns, this is not possible then that should also be communicated to the principal
- Letter to the Superintendent of Schools indicating the opt-out for religious reasons

Parents can assist our efforts and reaffirm the importance of the assessment at home by ensuring their child gets plenty of rest prior to each testing session, is provided a healthy breakfast every morning, and arrives to school on time. Please avoid the scheduling of doctor's appointments and vacations during this time frame; students are required by the PDE to make-up any missed portion of the test within a specific window of time.

Included in this letter is the PDE *Information for Parents or Guardians - Frequently Asked Questions* and information concerning electronic devices as they pertain to PSSA testing. This information will also be posted on the District website.

Thank you for your support throughout the PSSA testing sessions. If you have additional questions, please contact your child's school principal.

Sincerely,



Matthew W. Walsh, Ed. D.

Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment



Information for Parents or Guardians Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)

**Grade 3-8 English Language Arts Assessment May 11-13,
Mathematics Assessment May 19-20,
and Grade 4-8 ONLY Science Assessment May 24-25**

Frequently Asked Questions

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. If 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 principal to inform them of their desire to opt-out of the test and the principal will explain the process more in detail.

Report Testing Irregularities

Parents/guardians who believe that a testing irregularity may have occurred may email ra-ed-pssa-keystone@pa.gov or call 814-418-1651 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.



PDE CELL PHONE AND ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY FOR TESTING

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, 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 him or her 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 in his or her possession 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 and test materials have been returned, it is discovered that a student used and/or had a cell phone or other unapproved electronic device in his or her possession during the administration of the test, the school's discipline policy will be followed and the student's test will not be scored.