



Five Key Points Educators Should Know About the 2015 PSSA

1. This past spring a new PSSA was administered in Pennsylvania's classrooms, grades 3 through 8, in English Language Arts and Mathematics. This assessment was the first PSSA to be fully-aligned to the more rigorous PA Core Standards, which the State Board of Education adopted in fall 2013. The PA Core Standards are intended to better prepare commonwealth students for college and career readiness when they graduate.
2. On July 9, 2015, at a public meeting in Harrisburg, the State Board of Education approved "cut scores" for determining student performance levels on the 2015 PSSAs. The Secretary of Education recommended these cut scores, which a standards setting team of 58 Pennsylvania educators developed. These educators are subject matter experts who represented different geographic regions, levels of teaching experience, and urban, suburban, and rural communities. The team used a best practice methodology called "Bookmarking," and the process was undertaken with fidelity and reliability.
3. The heightened difficulty of the PA Core and the limited time between final adoption and implementation of the new PSSA have resulted in fewer students scoring proficient or advanced. Other states have experienced similar results when making the transition to more rigorous standards. A thorough transition to the new standards requires time to develop new curriculum, train teachers, and provide resources to support the new curriculum. The 2014-15 school year marks year one of what will be a multi-year transition. With time, and as student and teacher familiarity with the new PA Core grows, student performance should steadily improve.
4. In regards to PVAAS, based on what has happened in other states during their transition to more rigorous standards, it is unlikely that there will be a substantial decrease in PVAAS growth measures statewide, even if there is a substantial decrease in the percentage of students testing in the Proficient range or higher.
5. Teachers and administrators have worked hard to update curriculum and align teaching with the new standards. The commonwealth's students, families, and communities appreciate the important role that educators play in influencing the state's future and appreciate their commitment to education.



Five Key Points Parents Should Know About the 2015 PSSA

1. This past spring a new PSSA was administered in Pennsylvania's classrooms, grades 3 through 8, in English Language Arts and Mathematics. This assessment was the first PSSA to be fully-aligned to the more rigorous PA Core Standards, which the State Board of Education adopted in fall 2013. The PA Core Standards are intended to better prepare commonwealth students for college and career readiness when they graduate.
2. A decline in your student's performance level does not indicate that he/she is learning less. Transitions take time, including curriculum development and resources, and the 2014-15 school year was only year one of the new assessment. It is not useful to directly compare students' scores on the new assessment to students' scores from previous assessments because they are aligned to different standards. The results on the 2015 test are a snapshot in time and will set a benchmark for future academic growth.
3. The process of developing new standards and scaling scores was undertaken with thoroughness and thoughtfulness by a committee of Pennsylvania educators. As students and teachers become more familiar with the new standards, and more resources are directed at transitioning to the new standards, students will experience steady academic growth.
4. Results on standardized tests are not the sole indicator of student achievement. Students have different strengths and flourish in different ways. It is important to evaluate students in a holistic manner, using a variety of performance measures.
5. You can help your child(ren) grow academically by reviewing their PSSA results with them and by continuing to encourage them to do their best in school.



Four Key Points Students Should Know About the 2015 PSSA

1. The PSSA administered in your class last spring may have seemed more difficult than the PSSAs you've taken in the past. That's because the assessment measured the new standards of the PA Core. Pennsylvania adopted the PA Core in 2013 in order to help students, like you, be more prepared for college or the work force when you graduate from high school.
2. Some material you're learning in your classes is being taught much earlier than it used to be, and that can make the assessment harder. Plus, the new assessment included more problem solving, writing and critical thinking skills than on past assessments.
3. There are four performance levels on the PSSA: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient and Advanced. Because the test was harder, you may not have done as well as you have done in the past and that's ok. Teachers and parents know that the longer you are learning the new standards the better you will do.
4. Your teachers and your schools are working very hard to develop a new curriculum aligned to the new PA Core, to help you do well not just on tests, but to help you be successful as you proceed in school and when you graduate.