

2017 PSSA Parent Resource Guide

Frequently
Asked
Questions

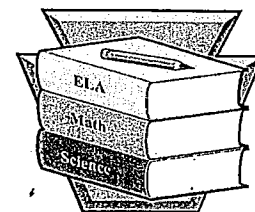
Information for Parents or Guardians

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)

English Language Arts Assessment, April 3–7, 2017

Mathematics Assessment, April 24–28, 2017

Science Assessment, May 1–5, 2017



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 at least two weeks prior to their administration 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 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 four 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 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 writing prompt, short-answer (grade 3), and/or text-dependent analysis (grades 4 through 8). The writing prompt requires students to compose a response using one of three modes: narrative (grades 3 through 8), informative/explanatory (grades 3 through 8), opinion (grades 3 through 5) or argumentative (grades 6 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. For writing prompts, scores are determined using a holistic scoring guideline that includes composition skills as well as conventions. 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 a writing prompt and 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 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 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 two to four 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.

PSSA ELA Test Design



—PCS PSSA Test Design—
2014–2015



PSSA English Language Arts Test Design

The PSSA English Language Arts test plan shown in the following table is organized by grade and broken down between Multiple-Choice (MC), Evidence-Based Selected Response (EBSR), Short Answer (SA) [G3 only], Writing Prompts (WP), and Text Dependent Analysis (TDA) [G4-8 only]. Core items are also distinguished from items that serve the role of psychometric use and field test (FT). The following tables summarize the ELA test design.

Standard Operational ELA High-Level Test Plan per Form from 2015 Onward

Grade	Selected Response							Constructed Response					Total Core Items	Total Core Points (Raw)	Total Core Points (Weighted)
	Passage-Based Multiple Choice (MC)			Stand Alone MC		Evidence-Based Selected Response (EBSR)		Passage-Based Short- Answer (SA)		Prompt (WP)	Text Dependent Analysis (TDA)				
	Core	Psychometric Use*	Embedded FT	Core	Psychometric Use*	Core	Embedded FT	Core	Embedded FT	Core**	Core **	Embedded FT			
3	20 (4 pass.)	6 (1 pass.)	8 (1 pass.)	18	2	4	2	2	1	1	0	0	42 SR 3 CR	58	62
4	23 (4 pass.)	6 (1 pass.)	8 (1 pass.)	18	2	6	2	0	0	1	1	1	47 SR 2 CR	64	84
5	23 (4 pass.)	6 (1 pass.)	8 (1 pass.)	18	2	6	2	0	0	1	1	1	47 SR 2 CR	64	84
6	23 (4 pass.)	6 (1 pass.)	8 (1 pass.)	18	2	6	2	0	0	1	1	1	47 SR 2 CR	64	84
7	23 (4 pass.)	6 (1 pass.)	8 (1 pass.)	18	2	6	2	0	0	1	1	1	47 SR 2 CR	64	84
8	23 (4 pass.)	6 (1 pass.)	8 (1 pass.)	18	2	6	2	0	0	1	1	1	47 SR 2 CR	64	84

* Psychometric Use is generally for equating purposes. Not all equating items will be unique on all forms. [Passage-based is estimated as 3 total passages for 18 unique MC items across all forms.]

**Weighted (G3: WP x 2; G4-8: WP x 3, TDA x 4)

July 2014



—PCS PSSA Test Design—
2014–2015



English Language Arts PSSA Test Content Blueprints

The content blueprints for the PCS-based ELA assessment (beginning with the 2015 PSSA administration) are shown in the following tables. The blueprints are organized around three Reporting Clusters (Reading, Writing, and TDA) based on the expressed emphasis contained within the PCS. As stated in the released PDE Assessment Anchor and Eligible Content documents, the Reporting Categories are as follows:

- A = Literature Text
- B = Informational Text
- C = Writing
- D = Language
- E = Text Dependent Analysis

In addition to the above, the first two Reporting Categories (Literature Text and Informational Text) are understood to be the “Genre Reporting Categories.” The Genre Reporting Categories A and B for ELA will be mapped as part of a dual-alignment into Core Competencies Reporting Categories. There are three themes prevalent throughout the PCS-ELA Standards, and these themes appear in both Literature Text and Informational Text that will appear on the PCS-based PSSA ELA test. The following table shows how the results of specific PCS-based Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content will be mapped to provide for a second layer of reporting. These three additional (dual) Reporting Categories are as follows:

- A-K/B-K: Key Ideas and Details [Key Ideas]
- A-C/B-C: Craft and Structure, and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas [CSI]
- A-V/B-V: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use [Vocabulary]

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—PCS PSSA Test Design—
2014–2015



PCS-Based Reporting Summary Table

ELA Reporting Framework, Clusters, and Categories			Reporting Category Code
Reading	Genre	Literature Text	A
		Informational Text	B
	Core Competencies	Key Ideas and Details [Key Ideas]	A–K/B–K
		Craft and Structure, and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas [CSI]	A–C/B–C
		Vocabulary Acquisition and Use [Vocabulary]	A–V/B–V
Writing	Writing	C	
	Language	D	
Text Dependent Analysis			E

PCS-based PSSA ELA Blueprint: Dual Reporting for Reporting Categories A and B

Genre Reporting Categories	Core Competencies Reporting Categories		
	Key Ideas and Details (Key Ideas)	Craft and Structure, and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (CSI)	Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (Vocabulary)
A: Literature Text	A–K.1.1.1	A–C.2.1.1	A–V.4.1.1
	A–K.1.1.2	A–C.2.1.2 –G6, 7, and 8 only	A–V.4.1.2
	A–K.1.1.3	A–C.2.1.3 –G6, 7, and 8 only	
		A–C.3.1.1	
B: Informational Text	B–K.1.1.1	B–C.2.1.1	B–V.4.1.1
	B–K.1.1.2	B–C.2.1.2	B–V.4.1.2
	B–K.1.1.3	B–C.2.1.3 –G6, 7, and 8 only	
		B–C.3.1.1	
		B–C.3.1.2	
		B–C.3.1.3 –G3, 4, and 5 only	

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PCS-based PSSA ELA Blueprint: Reporting Information for Reporting Categories C, D, and E

Reporting Categories	Descriptors		
C: Writing	Opinion –G3, 4, 5 only Argumentative –G6, 7, 8 only	Informational –G3, 4, 5 only Expository –G6, 7, 8 only	Narrative
	C.1.1.1	C.1.2.1	C.1.3.1
	C.1.1.2	C.1.2.2	C.1.3.2
	C.1.1.3	C.1.2.3	C.1.3.3
	C.1.1.4	C.1.2.4	C.1.3.4
	C.1.1.5 –G5, 6, 7, and 8 only	C.1.2.5 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only	C.1.3.5 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only
		C.1.2.6 –G5, 6, 7, and 8 only	
D: Language	Grammar and Usage	Capitalization, Punctuation, and Spelling	Conventions
	D.1.1.1	D.1.2.1	D.2.1.1.1
	D.1.1.2	D.1.2.2	D.2.1.1.2 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only
	D.1.1.3	D.1.2.3	D.2.1.1.3 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only
	D.1.1.4	D.1.2.4 –G3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 only	D.2.1.1.4 –G5, 6, 7, and 8 only
	D.1.1.5	D.1.2.5 –G3, 5, and 8 only	D.2.1.1.5 –G6, 7, and 8 only
	D.1.1.6	D.1.2.6 –G3 only	D.2.1.1.6 –G8 only
	D.1.1.7		
	D.1.1.8		
	D.1.1.9 –G3, 7, and 8 only		
	D.1.1.10 –G8 only		
	D.1.1.11 –G8 only		
E: Text Dependent Analysis	Analysis, Reflection, and Research		
	E.1.1.1 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only		
	E.1.1.2 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only		
	E.1.1.3 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only		
	E.1.1.4 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only		
	E.1.1.5 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only		
	E.1.1.6 –G5, 6, 7, and 8 only		



—PCS PSSA Test Design—
2014–2015



The English Language Arts blueprints are provided in the following two tables.

PCS-based PSSA ELA Blueprint: Percent of the Core by Reporting Category by Grade

Cluster	Reporting Category	Grade					
		3	4	5	6	7	8
Reading	A	24– 34%	18– 27%	18– 27%	18– 27%	18– 27%	18– 27%
	B	24– 34%	18– 27%	18– 27%	18– 27%	18– 27%	18– 27%
Writing	C*	13%	14%	14%	14%	14%	14%
	D	29%	21%	21%	21%	21%	21%
TDA	E*		19%	19%	19%	19%	19%
All Areas Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Reflect the impact of weighted values

PCS-based PSSA ELA Blueprint: Points by Reporting Category by Grade

Cluster	Reporting Category	Grade					
		3	4	5	6	7	8
Reading	A	15–21 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts
	B	15–21 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts
Writing	C*	8 pts	12 pts	12 pts	12 pts	12 pts	12 pts
	D	18 pts	18 pts	18 pts	18 pts	18 pts	18 pts
TDA	E*		16 pts	16 pts	16 pts	16 pts	16 pts
All Areas Total Core		62 pts	84 pts	84 pts	84 pts	84 pts	84 pts

*Reflect the impact of weighted values

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—PCS PSSA Test Design—
2014–2015



ELA Test Development Design

At grade 3, the PCS-ELA core can be described as:

20 core passage MC items	20 points
18 core standalone MC items	18 points
2 core 2 pt EBSR items	4 points
2 core 3 pt EBSR items	6 points
2 core 3 pt SA items	6 points
1 core 4 pt WP (weighted x2)	8 points
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Total	62 points

As shown in the operational layout tables below, the PSSA ELA test will be four (4) sections starting in 2015. Due to the different roles of Short Answer (SA) and Text Dependent Analysis (TDA) items, the design for grade 3 differs from the design of grades 4 through 8. SA items are used at grade 3 only, and TDA prompts are used at grades 4 through 8 only.

ELA Operational Section Layout Plan for Grade 3

Section	Content Emphasis	Number of MC/EBSR	Number of WP/SA	Estimated Number of Passages	Estimated Section Testing Time (in minutes)
1	Writing and Language	20 MC	1	0	60
2	Reading	8–12 MC 1–3 EBSR	1	2	34–50
3	Reading	14 MC 2 EBSR	1	2	48
4	Reading	8–12 MC 1–3 EBSR	1	2	34–50

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At grades 4 through 8, the PCS-ELA core can be described as:

23 core passage MC items	23 points
18 core standalone MC items	18 points
3 core 2 pt EBSR items	6 points
3 core 3 pt EBSR items	9 points
1 core 4 pt TDA (weighted x4)	16 points
1 core 4 pt WP (weighted x3)	12 points
Total	84 points

ELA Operational Section Layout Plan for Grades 4 through 8

Section	Content Emphasis	Number of MC/EBSR	Number of WP/TDA	Estimated Number of Passages	Estimated Section Testing Time (in minutes)
1	Writing and Language	20 MC	1	0	60
2	Reading	15–18 MC 4–5 EBSR	0	3	58–69
3	Reading and Text Dependent Analysis	14 MC 2 EBSR	1	2	73
4	Reading and Text Dependent Analysis	5–8 MC 1–2 EBSR	1	1	48–57

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PSSA Math Test Design



—PCS PSSA Test Design—
2014–2015



PSSA Mathematics Test Design

The PSSA Mathematics test plan shown in the following table is organized by grade and broken down between multiple-choice (MC) and open-ended (OE) items. Core items are also distinguished from items that serve the role of Psychometric Use and field test (FT). The following tables summarize the Mathematics test design.

Standard Operational Mathematics High-Level Test Plan per Form from 2015 Onward

Grade	Multiple-Choice (MC)			Open-Ended (OE)			Total Core Items	Total Core Points
	Core	Psychometric Use*	Embedded Field Test	Core	Psychometric Use*	Embedded Field Test		
3	60	2	10	3	0	1	60 MC 3 OE	72
4	60	2	10	3	0	1	60 MC 3 OE	72
5	60	2	10	3	0	1	60 MC 3 OE	72
6	60	2	10	3	0	1	60 MC 3 OE	72
7	60	2	10	3	0	1	60 MC 3 OE	72
8	60	2	10	3	0	1	60 MC 3 OE	72

* Psychometric Use is generally for equating purposes. Not all equating items will be unique on all forms [up to 18 unique MC items across all forms].

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Mathematics PSSA Test Content Blueprints

The content blueprints for the PCS-based Mathematics assessment are shown in the following tables. The blueprint is organized around four thematic Reporting Clusters (Numbers and Operations, Algebraic Concepts, Geometry, and Data Analysis and Probability) based on the expressed emphasis contained within the PCS. Each cluster is broken down into Reporting Categories that are associated with specific grades or grade-spans. The corresponding Reporting Categories are as follows (grade associations are shown in parentheses):

- A = Numbers and Operations
 - A-T = Numbers and Operations in Base Ten (Grades 3–5)
 - A-F = Numbers and Operations – Fractions (Grades 3–5)
 - A-N = The Number System (Grades 6–8)
 - A-R = Ratios and Proportional Relationships (Grades 6, 7)
- B = Algebraic Concepts
 - B-O = Operations and Algebraic Thinking (Grades 3–5)
 - B-E = Expressions and Equations (Grades 6–8)
 - B-F = Functions (Grade 8)
- C = Geometry
 - C-G = Geometry (Grades 3–8)
- D = Data Analysis and Probability
 - D-M = Measurement and Data (Grades 3–5)
 - D-S = Statistics and Probability (Grades 6–8)



—PCS PSSA Test Design—
2014–2015



The PSSA Mathematics blueprints are provided in the following two tables.

PCS-based PSSA Mathematics Blueprint: Percent of the Core by Reporting Category by Grade

Reporting Category	Grade			Reporting Category	Grade		Reporting Category	Grade
	3	4	5		6	7		8
A-T	14–17%	18–22%	24–28%	A-N	18–22%	14–17%	A-N	14–17%
A-F	14–17%	20–25%	26–30%	A-R	17–21%	24–28%	B-E	30–35%
B-O	26–32%	24–28%	14–17%	B-E	26–30%	24–28%	B-F	20–25%
C-G	14–17%	14–17%	14–17%	C-G	14–17%	18–22%	C-G	17–21%
D-M	26–32%	17–21%	17–21%	D-S	18–22%	14–17%	D-S	14–17%
Total	100%	100%	100%	Total	100%	100%	Total	100%

PCS-based PSSA Mathematics Blueprint: Points by Reporting Category by Grade

Reporting Category	Grade			Reporting Category	Grade		Reporting Category	Grade
	3	4	5		6	7		8
A-T	10–12 pts	13–16 pts	17–20 pts	A-N	13–16 pts	10–12 pts	A-N	10–12 pts
A-F	10–12 pts	14–18 pts	19–22 pts	A-R	12–15 pts	17–20 pts	B-E	22–25 pts
B-O	19–23 pts	17–20 pts	10–12 pts	B-E	19–22 pts	17–20 pts	B-F	14–18 pts
C-G	10–12 pts	10–12 pts	10–12 pts	C-G	10–12 pts	13–16 pts	C-G	12–15 pts
D-M	19–23 pts	12–15 pts	12–15 pts	D-S	13–16 pts	10–12 pts	D-S	10–12 pts
Total Core	72 pts	72 pts	72 pts	Total	72 pts	72 pts	Total	72 pts

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—PCS PSSA Test Design—
2014–2015



Mathematics Test Development Design

At all grades, the PCS-Mathematics core can be described as:

60 core MC items	60 points
3 core 4 pt OE items	12 points
Total	72 points

As shown in the operational layout table below, the PSSA Mathematics test will be three (3) sections starting in 2015.

Mathematics Operational Section Layout Plan for Grades 3 through 8

Section	Content Emphasis	Number of MC	Number of OE	Estimated Section Testing Time (in minutes)
1	Mathematics	24	2	56
2	Mathematics	24	1	46
3	Mathematics	24	1	46

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PSSA Science Test Design



—PCS PSSA Test Design—
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PSSA Science Test Design

The PSSA Science test plan shown in the following table is organized by grade and broken down between multiple-choice (MC) and open-ended (OE) items. Core items are also distinguished from items that serve the role of equating block (EB) and field test (FT). The following tables summarize the Science test design. Note that not all equating block items shown in the table below will be unique on all forms.

Standard Operational Science High-Level Test Plan per Form

Grade	Multiple Choice (MC)			Open Ended (OE)			Total Core Items	Total Core Points
	Core	Equating Block*	Embedded FT	Core	Equating Block*	Embedded FT		
4	58	2	8	5	0	1	58 MC 5 OE	68
8	54 + 4 scenario-based	2	6 + 4 scenario-based	5	0	1	58 MC 5 OE	68

*Note that not all equating block items shown in the table below will be unique on all forms.



—PCS PSSA Test Design—
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Science PSSA Test Content Blueprints

The content blueprints for the PAS-based PSSA science assessment (continuing with the 2015 PSSA administration) are shown in the following tables. The proposed blueprint is organized around four Reporting Categories based on the expressed emphasis contained within the PAS, including three under Science Content. The four corresponding Reporting Categories are:

- A = The Nature of Science
- B = Biological Sciences
- C = Physical Sciences
- D = Earth & Space Sciences

PAS-based PSSA Science Blueprint: Percent of the Core by Reporting Category by Grade

Area	Reporting Category	Grade	
		4	8
The Nature of Science	A	50%	50%
Science Content	B	16–17%	16–17%
	C	16–17%	16–17%
	D	16–17%	16–17%
All Areas Total		100%	100%

PAS-based PSSA Science Blueprint: Points by Reporting Category by Grade

Area	Reporting Category	Grade	
		4	8
The Nature of Science	A	34 pts	34 pts
Science Content	B	11–12 pts	11–12 pts
	C	11–12 pts	11–12 pts
	D	11–12 pts	11–12 pts
All Areas Total		68 pts	68 pts



—PCS PSSA Test Design—
July 2014



Science Test Development Design

As shown in the operational layout tables below, the PSSA Science test will continue to be two (2) sections starting in 2015. Due to the use of scenarios, the design for grade 4 differs from the design of grade 8. Scenarios are used at grade 8 only. At both grade 4 and grade 8, the PSSA Science core can be described as:

58 core MC items	58 points
5 core 2 pt OE items	10 points
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Total	68 points

Science Operational Section Layout Plan for Grade 4

Section	Content Emphasis	Number of MC	Number of OE	Estimated Section Testing Time (in minutes)
1	Science	34	3	49
2	Science	34	3	49

Science Operational Section Layout Plan for Grade 8

Section	Content Emphasis	Number of MC	Number of OE	Estimated Section Testing Time (in minutes)
1	Science	35	3	56
2	Science	35	3	56



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 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 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 scores will be invalidated.

PSSA General Strategies for Students

- Right before you begin the PSSA, relax and think positive thoughts.
- Don't work too fast - take your time and think carefully.
- Remember, you can write whatever you want in your test booklet.
- Be sure that you fill in your answers on the answer sheet ("bubble sheet"), and do not write anything extra on that answer sheet,
- Reread all the answer choices before you select an answer
- watch out for trick answers - there may be a better answer choice.
- Watch out for words like never, always, all, and only
- try to put the question in your own words.
- In your test booklet, cross out any answer choices that you know are wrong.
- Answer all the questions, do not leave any blank
- Try not to waste too much time on a question - you can skip a question, and move on to the next one, but remember to go back later and answer questions you skipped.
- In your test book, if you skip a question, circle the number so you can go back to it later.
- If you skip a question, also skip that number on your answer sheet so you are still on the right question number
- if you answered a question but you are not sure about it or you guessed, circle that number in your test book so you can go back later to try again.
- When you answer a question, circle the answer choice in your test book and fill in the bubble or circle on the answer sheet - then when you are finished, you can go back to make sure you filled in the right circle for each question
- carefully fill in the circles on the answer sheet, so the circles are completely filled and dark.
- On the answer sheet, be careful not to fill in two circles for a single question.
- Do not make any extra pencil marks on your answer sheet - extra marks can be counted like wrong answers.
- When you're finished, go back and check your answers - answer any questions you skipped and check ones you weren't sure about.
- Don't be afraid to change your answer when you go back, if you find a better answer.

PSSA Test Tips for Parents

To help your child prepare adequately for the PSSA tests, you can do several things to encourage your child to do his/her best.

- Make sure your child is in school during the testing sessions.
- Encourage your child to listen carefully to all of the directions and ask questions about anything that is not clear.
- See that your child gets an adequate amount of sleep before the test.
- Make sure that your child eats his/her usual breakfast on the day of the test.
- Encourage your child to do his/her best!

Helpful website with additional information:

<http://www.education.pa.gov/K12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/PSSA/Pages/default.aspx#tab-1>