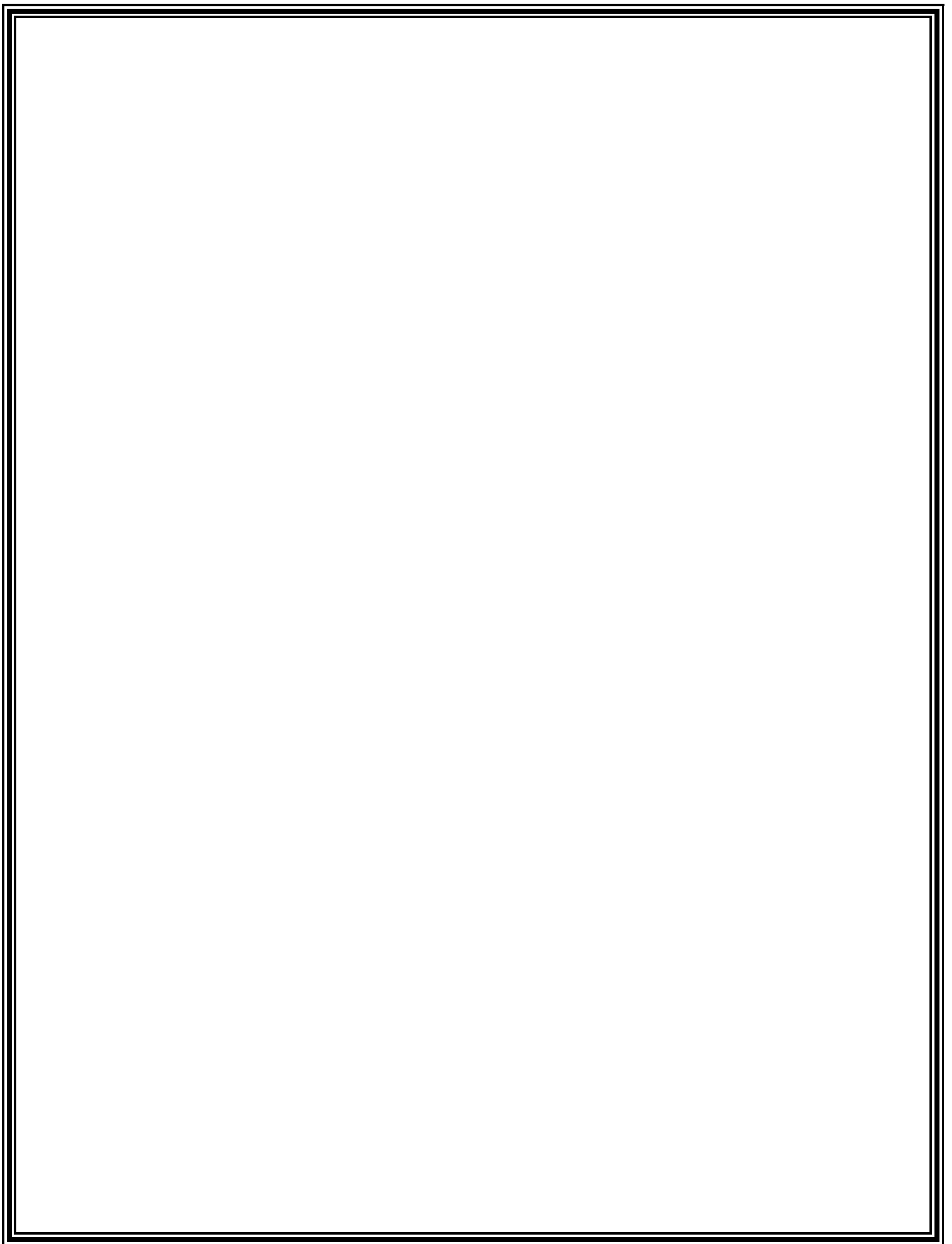


# **PSSA PARENT INFORMATION BOOKLET**



## **2011-2012 PARENT INFORMATION**



# PSSA FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

## **What is the PSSA?**

The PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) is a standards-based assessment administered in all Pennsylvania public schools. There are four content-specific assessments including reading, math, science and writing.

## **Which grades take the PSSA?**

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires annual testing in reading and math for all students in grades 3-8 and one high school grade (11th grade in Pennsylvania).

The PSSA reading and math assessment has been given annually in grades 5, 8, and 11 since 1998. The grade 3 PSSA reading and math assessment was first administered in 2004-05, and grades 4, 6, and 7 were first added in 2005-06.

The PSSA writing assessment is given in grades 5, 8 and 11 and the PSSA science assessment is given in grades 4 and 8 exclusively.

## **What do PSSA scores mean?**

Students are identified as performing in one of four levels: advanced, proficient, basic and below basic. The goal is for all students to be proficient or advanced – meaning that they have mastered Pennsylvania’s assessment anchor content standards at their grade level. Individual student scores, provided only to their respective schools and to their families, can be used to assist teachers in identifying students who may be in need of additional educational opportunities, and school scores provide information to schools and districts for curriculum and instruction improvement discussions and planning.

## **The four performance levels are broadly defined as:**

**Advanced** – This level reflects superior academic performance. Advanced work indicates an in-depth understanding and exemplary display of the skills included in the Pennsylvania Academic Content Standards.

**Proficient** - Proficiency reflects satisfactory academic performance. Proficient work indicates a solid understanding and adequate display of the skills included in the Pennsylvania Academic Content Standards.

**Basic** – This level reflects marginal academic performance. Basic work indicates a partial understanding and limited display of the skills included in the Pennsylvania Academic Content Standards. This work is approaching satisfactory performance, but has not been reached. There is a need for additional instructional opportunities and/or increased student academic commitment to achieve the proficient level.

**Below Basic** – The lowest level reflects inadequate academic performance. Below basic work indicates little understanding and minimal display of the skills included in the Pennsylvania Academic Content Standards. There is a major need for additional instructional opportunities and/or increased student academic commitment to achieve the proficient level.

# PSSA FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

## **Do students have to pass the PSSA in order to graduate?**

Students must demonstrate proficiency in reading and math in order to earn a high school diploma, but whether or not to require proficiency on the PSSA to graduate is a local decision. Districts may choose to use an alternative form of assessment to demonstrate proficiency for graduation requirements.

## **What are cut scores and how are they used?**

Cut scores are the points on the range of scaled scores that identify the difference between performance levels. The cut scores define the range of scores that fall into a single performance category.

## **Will any new subjects be added to the PSSA?**

In accordance with NCLB, Pennsylvania implemented a new science test for grades 4, 8 and 11, in the spring of 2008. NCLB requires a science assessment in one grade per elementary, middle, and high school level. There are no plans to implement any new subject assessments or expansion of grades tested without any new requirements from the US Department of Education (USDE).

## **How long do the assessments take?**

The reading and math tests take about two and a half to three hours each, not including time needed for teacher administration of the tests. The writing test takes approximately two and a half hours – one hour for each writing prompt – and another 20 minutes for the multiple choice portion. Tests are not timed, but suggested times are given for planning purposes.

## **When are the tests administered?**

The test schedule is as follows:

- Grade 3, 4, and 5 PSSA Reading and Math Assessment – March 12<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> 2012
- Grade 5 PSSA Writing Assessment – April 16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> 2012
- Grade 4 PSSA Science Assessment – April 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> 2012

# NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION AS RELATED TO THE PSSA

- Students tested in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade
- By the year 2014 all students must score in the proficient or advanced range in each category. Growth targets for the next three years are as follows:

Subject	Proficient/Advanced Target for 2012	Proficient/Advanced Target for 2013	Proficient/Advanced Target for 2014
Mathematics	78%	89%	100%
Reading	81%	91%	100%

- This proficiency level must also be reached for all subcategories including:
  - gender
  - race and ethnicity
  - IEP students
  - Limited English Proficient Students
  - Economically Disadvantaged Students
- 95% of the student body must be tested. 1% of the student body may take an alternate assessment, the PASA, which may only be given to students who have significant learning difficulties.
- The entire student body must have an attendance rate of at least 90% for the school year.

## ANNUAL YEARLY PROGRESS (AYP)

- Each school and each of its subgroups that contain 40 or more members (i.e., low income, IEP status, ESL, major racial and ethnic groups) will meet the annual proficiency target with 95% participation rate, and show growth in either attendance (K-8) or graduation rate (9-12) towards a 90% goal or 80% goal respectively. AYP will be calculated either by averaging grade spans for 2 years, or by using current year data, whichever is higher.
- SAFE HARBOR means that if a school or subgroup reduces the number of students that score below proficient by 10% or more, it will be considered to have met AYP. The school and its subgroups, however, are still bound by the 2014 deadline.

# PSSA FRAMEWORKS BY SUBJECT:

<b>PSSA MATHEMATICS</b>	Reporting Category	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	Numbers and Operations	40-50%	43-47%	41-45%
	Measurement	12-15%	12-15%	12-15%
	Geometry	12-15%	12-15%	12-15%
	Algebraic Concepts	12-15%	12-15%	13-17%
	Data Analysis and Probability	13-16%	12-15%	12-15%
	<b>Total Points</b>	<b>72 Points</b>	<b>72 Points</b>	<b>72 Points</b>

<b>PSSA READING</b>	Grade	Comprehension and Reading Skills	Interpretation and Analysis
	3	60-80 %	20-40 %
	4	60-80 %	20-40 %
	5	60-80 %	20-40 %

<b>PSSA WRITING: 5TH</b>	Multiple Choice	Writing Prompts		Totals
	12	Conventions	Mode	100
		8	80	
	12 items each worth 1 point each (12 X 1) = 12	2 items each worth a maximum of 4 points each (2 X 4 = 8)	2 items each worth a maximum of 4 points each (The raw score is multiplied by 10) (2 X 4) X 10 = 80	12 +8+80=100

<b>PSSA SCIENCE: 4TH</b>	Reporting Category	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 11
	The Nature of Science	34 50%	34 50%	37 50%
	Biological Sciences	12 17.6%	12 17.6%	13 17.6%
	Physical Sciences	11 16.2%	11 16.2%	12 16.2%
	Earth and Space Sciences	11 16.2%	11 16.2%	12 16.2%
	<b>Total Points</b>	<b>68 points</b>	<b>68 points</b>	<b>74 points</b>

## **HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?**

- ✓ Utilize school and outside resources to help your child practice throughout the year (PSSA homework, etc.)
- ✓ Talk about the importance of the PSSA with your child.
- ✓ Be sure that your child is well rested and attends school on all testing days.
- ✓ Be sure that your child gets a solid breakfast each morning before the PSSA.
- ✓ Encourage and motivate your child to take the test seriously.
- ✓ Let your child know that you are interested in the results.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

