



Dear Provident Families:

In April and May, Provident Charter School (PCS) students will participate in the [Pennsylvania System of School Assessment \(PSSA\)](#) testing. The PSSA helps Pennsylvania and Provident Charter School meet federal and state requirements. The assessments are designed to serve as one data point to indicate how students and schools are progressing on Pennsylvania standards to families, educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

The PSSAs provide us with valuable data regarding the effectiveness of our instructional programming for all of our students. Individual student scores can be utilized to identify additional educational supports for students in need, while overall school scores help us to improve our curriculum and instructional approaches. Additionally, ***federal and state requirements mandate that 95% of our student population must participate in PSSAs*** to ensure that we are meeting the needs of all students. In the 2021-2022 school year, Provident Charter School failed to meet this 95% threshold in two student subgroups: students with disabilities as well as our Black and Brown students. While you will find information regarding Section 4 of Chapter 4 (religious opt-out) below, we encourage you to work with our administrative team and teachers to ensure that all PCS students have the appropriate accommodations to successfully participate in PSSA testing in order to meet our 95% participation mandate.

While we recognize that ***April 27th is National Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day***, we are requesting that families choose alternative dates that do not conflict with state testing to participate in this tradition. When students are absent on state testing days they are often pulled from content area classes to participate in make-up assessments. This can create a hardship due to staffing challenges for proctoring the assessments.

Please review the PSSA schedules below and talk with your child about the importance of these assessments. This is an opportunity for your child to demonstrate how they have grown as learners. As partners in your child's education, you can help by ensuring your child is present and on time for testing days. Additionally, placing limits on electronic devices helps students to get the recommended 9-11 hours of sleep each night so that they are well-rested for the assessments.

2023 PSSA Schedule of Administration	
April 25-27	ELA (Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)
May 3 & 4	Math (Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)
May 9 & 10	Science (Grades 4 & 8 only)

Students in grades 6-8 will participate in an online testing format for English language arts and students in grade 8 will participate in an online testing format for science, all other assessments will be conducted utilizing a paper and pencil format. In preparation for the testing window, **ALL STUDENT DEVICES FOR GRADES 6-8 MUST BE RETURNED TO PROVIDENT CHARTER SCHOOL BY APRIL 19th, 2023**. Teachers have been instructed to halt school-to-home transport for devices in these grades on April 12th, 2023 and provide alternative paper and pencil homework assignments until May 16th, 2023.

Please note that section 4.4 of Chapter 4 provides for the right of parents (or guardians) to excuse their children from the state assessment if upon inspection of the testing materials, they find the assessment to be in conflict with their religious beliefs. This is the only basis for a parental excusal from the statewide assessments. In order to review the state assessment forms, parents (or guardians) must notify their child's principal in writing **no later than April 15th, 2023**. The state assessments will be available for parents (or guardians) to **review between April 12th - April 19th**. The Pennsylvania Department of Education requires that the test forms be reviewed at the school responsible for administering the assessments. Parents (or guardians) who desire to review the assessment forms will be asked to sign a prepared statement concerning the requirements of assessment security and confidentiality. They may not photocopy, write, or in any other manner record any portion of the assessment, including directions. After reviewing the test(s), parents/guardians must provide a written request addressed to our CEO, Ms. Maria Paluselli, for parental excusal based upon religious conflict.

<i>Building Principal</i>	Ms. Connie Joseph	cjoseph@providentcharterschool.org
<i>Building Assistant Principal</i>	Ms. Kristy Yonushonis	kyonushonis@providentcharterschool.org
<i>Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment</i>	Ms. Shannon Iachini	siachini@providentcharterschool.org
<i>CEO</i>	Ms. Maria Paluselli	mpaluselli@providentcharterschool.org

All steps in this process must be completed in order for a family excusal request to be accepted. No requests to view test forms will be accepted after April 19th, 2023. If you would like additional information about the state assessment program, please contact your child's building principal or Ms. Shannon Iachini, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment.

Thank you for being a partner in your child's educational journey.

Respectfully,

Ms. Shannon Iachini
 Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
 Provident Charter School
 412-709-5160 ext. 515



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 your child 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 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 during the administration of the test, the school's discipline policy will be followed and the student's test will not be scored.

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)
English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science Assessment
Frequently Asked Questions
Updated April 2022

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 or call 844-418-1651 to report the incident.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT (Grades 3 - 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 - 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.

PSSA Testing Religious Opt-Out Information

PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENT (PSSA) AND KEYSTONE EXAMS ASSESSMENT REVIEW AND OPT-OUT PROCEDURE

Section 4.4 of Title 22, Chapter 4 provides for the rights of any parent or guardian to excuse his or her child from the state assessment if, upon inspection of the testing materials, they find the assessment to be in conflict with their religious beliefs.

1. Parent/Guardian contacts the Building Principal within two weeks of the Pennsylvania Department of Education predetermined PSSA Assessment Window to schedule an assessment review. A Parent/Guardian may only request a secure assessment review if they believe that they may have an objection to content based upon their religious beliefs.
2. Parent/Guardian schedules the secure assessment review (to be held at the student's school) at a time convenient for both parties.
3. Parent/Guardian must surrender any electronic device(s) over to the district staff member. (to be held until secure review has been completed).
4. Parent/Guardian reviews and signs the Pennsylvania Department of Education Parent Confidentiality Agreement.
5. Parent/Guardian is not allowed to take any notes during the secure review.
6. Parent/Guardian reviews the assessment (for each content area considering an opt-out). To opt out of all three PSSA's, all three content area assessments must be reviewed.
7. Parent/Guardian documents religious objections within a letter and submits to the CEO for approval.
8. The CEO will approve the Parent/Guardian request. In cases of any disapproval, the CEO contacts Parent/Guardian providing notification of the determination.

The 2023 PSSA testing window begins Tuesday, April 25, 2023

Assessment reviews will be scheduled from April 12, 2023 until April 19, 2023. No assessment reviews and/or religious objections will occur after April 19, 2023

More information on the opt-out can be found on the PA Code and Bulletin website here:

<https://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/>