

## Getting Ready for the 2011 Assessments Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### NAEP

#### **How is it decided which district takes the NAEP? Is this voluntary or is this assigned to certain districts?**

Individual schools are selected by the contractor for NAEP using the criteria for selection of schools provided by the US Department of Education. Participation in NAEP is required by both state and federal regulations.

### TIMSS

#### **When will school selection for TIMSS take place?**

The school selection notification was completed in June, 2010 for 2011 TIMSS testing.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

#### **Will new PSSA Accommodations be available for 2010-11, or should we use the document from last year?**

The updated PSSA Accommodations Guidelines is now available on the PDE website.

### PSSA

#### **Why is the test so early this year? Why can't the test be given yearly in May, to give a TRUE measure of what the students learned during that year?**

The PSSA testing window is established using three major criteria:

1. Reporting date requirements
2. Spring break in the majority of school calendars
3. Testing window for the Keystone end-of-course exams (in May 2011)

#### **Are students permitted to do the open-ended problems first, then follow with the multiple choice, or do they need to do the problems in numerical order?**

Within the section they are working, students may do the open-ended items first.

#### **Are "common items" the items found on all forms of the test?**

Yes. Common items are the items found on all forms of the assessment.

#### **What are the three writing modes that may be tested in 5th grade?**

The three writing modes that may be tested in Grade 5 are: Narrative, Informational, and Persuasive.

#### **What is the maximum score a student can achieve for reading and math?**

There is a maximum score attained each year, but there is no maximum attainable score. The maximum score attained depends on the difficulty of the test in a particular year.

As the assessments are new (different) each year, the maximum score a student can achieve is different from year to year. With the public release of the PSSA Technical Report each February, the maximum scores can be determined. Although the cut scores remain the same from year to year, the assessments and students are different. The top end (maximum) score is considered to be a "floating score" because a minimum cut score is assigned for each grade level.

**If a parent requests a student to be exempt from taking the PSSA, must they first come in and review the test? Must they make the request every year?**

Yes, parents must go to the school to review the applicable PSSA two weeks prior to the testing window. They must sign a confidentiality agreement. They may request exemption for religious reasons, and must complete such a review/request each year.

**How is it determined how much each individual question is worth on the student's scaled score? It appears that some questions are worth more than others. How is a question's value determined?**

Every multiple choice question is worth one point and every open-ended question is worth four points in math, three points in reading, and some either two points or four points depending on the item and grade level in Science. The number of scale score points a student receives per question is not constant. Suppose one student earns 50 points and another student earns 60 points. The change in scale score going from 50 points to 51 points may be less than the change in scale score going from 60 points to 61 points. That's because at the ends of the distribution the value of one raw score point (e.g. one more point from *any* multiple choice question) is greater than the value of that same raw score point in the middle of the distribution.

**Why are the cut scores different from grade to grade?**

The tests are different. Performance level cut scores were set by grade level and by content area.

**How many open-ended questions are there on the Grade 3 Reading assessment?**

There are three open-ended questions on the Grade 3 Reading assessment.

**What are equating blocks?**

Equating blocks are groups of test questions that are used to help determine student growth from year to year. They are questions that were previously used and have data associated with them. These questions do not count toward a student or school score. They are used to help set the scale score for that year.

**If a student answers an open-ended question using bullets instead of a paragraph format, can they earn all 3 points?**

Responses to PSSA open-ended Reading test items are scored for their accuracy and completeness, not their use of English sentence and paragraph convention, so the use of bullets does not present a problem from that angle. However, the student must be able to judge whether the answer is a complete answer. Some students will respond with accurate bullets that do give a complete response (although it may not be a complete sentence). It can be a misleading to teach students to respond to an open-ended question by restricting the response to bullets only. Some students need to "discuss" or explain a response in order to arrive at the correct answer. So, in answer to your question as to when (if ever) a bulleted "list" would receive 3 points, bare lists are rarely complete enough to receive 3 points. This is because the PSSA prompts typically ask for an explanation, a summary, or an analysis.

## **PSSA-M**

**How do LEAs determine how many and which IEP students qualify for the PSSA-M?**

That is a local decision (IEP Team). LEAs should use the ASIST document found on the PDE website. Keep in mind when you make your decision that all students eligible to take the PSSA-M should be taking the PSSA-M. Do not let the 1% and 2% rules affect eligibility.

**Can different students be chosen to take the Modified Math than the Modified Reading?**

Yes. Different students can be eligible to take the Modified Math Assessment than are eligible to take the Modified Reading Assessment.

**If the PSSA-M is taken for math, does the student have to take the PSSA-M for Reading as well?**

No. Students should take whichever test is appropriate for them and for which they qualify.

**If a student takes one modified test and one un-modified, do they do all of the math tests first? or do they do the modified tests first?**

That is a district's choice. PDE recommends taking all of one subject area (e.g., the PSSA-M for math) and then all of the other subject area.

**If a student scored proficient on the PSSA-M, is the student eligible to take the PSSA-M the following year?**

The decision to determine which test is appropriate for the student with the IEP is made on an annual basis. If the IEP team determines that a particular student, who scored proficient on the 2010 test, is eligible to take the PSSA-M, then the student should take the PSSA-M.

**Is the 2% rule applied to the PSSA-M Reading test also?**

Yes. The 2% rule will be applied to the PSSA-M Reading test also.

**Is the 2% calculated by building specific or grade span specific?**

The 2% is calculated at the Grade Span level by the district; however, decisions roll-up to the school level.

**If every student who is eligible to take the PSSA-M does so, but only 2% of our school population will be counted as proficient, doesn't that hurt the school?**

If a student is eligible to take the modified test, the student should take the modified test. The 2% is calculated at the district grade-span level.

**What is the purpose for accepting only 2% of the scores on the PSSA-M as proficient and advanced?**

The 2% Rule is a Federal Decision

**What are the 2% and 1% numbers based on, the number of students who actually take the test during the testing window, or the enrollment numbers as of the October cutoff date for eligibility?**

The 1% and 2% are based on the number of students tested.

**Can we administer multiple sections of the PSSA-M in a single day? For example, two sections in one day.**

Yes. Multiple sections of the PSSA-M can be given in a single day.

**If a new student enters the district after the October ordering of assessment materials, is it possible to request additional PSSA-modified tests and what is the process?**

Yes

## **ELL**

**Why is the date for the ELL first year exemption so late - May 7, 2010, when the test is scheduled to begin on March 14th this year?**

The date is determined by the last day of the previous year's testing window.

**Do ELL students need to be in an alternate setting or must they be in a small group to take the test?**

Setting accommodations should be considered on an individual basis, although it is not uncommon for this group of students to require similar accommodations.

**May students be exited from ESL on other criteria if the student is not in a grade level that takes the PSSA?**

Please contact Tami Shaffer or Linda Long in the Bureau of Teaching and Learning Support at 717-787-8913 for information regarding exiting an ESL program.

**CDT**

**Where can I find the free Classroom Diagnostic Tool that was mentioned in the “Getting Ready” presentation?**

If you are interested in enrolling your district in the Classroom Diagnostic Tools, please complete the Classroom Diagnostic Tools 2010- 2011 Registration Form available on the PA eDIRECT website (<https://pa.drctdirect.com>).