



**Tredyffrin/Easttown School District**

# Hillside Elementary School

507 Howellville Road  
Berwyn, PA 19312-1000  
(610) 240-1500

March 2019

Dear Hillside Third and Fourth Grade Parents,

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) tests in English/Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics and Science will be administered the weeks of April 22 and April 29, 2019. The state designed these tests as measures to determine student proficiency according to state standards. Historically, Hillside Elementary School students have performed very well on these assessments, and we are confident that this tradition of excellence will continue.

In recent years, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) made changes to PSSAs both in the amount of testing and how schoolwide proficiency is calculated. ELA testing was reduced from four days of testing to three days, math was reduced from three days to two days, and science (fourth grade only) remained at two days but with a reduction in the number of questions. Changes were also made with respect to the calculation of school proficiency rates on PSSAs when the school participation rate in a tested subject falls below 95%. If the participation rate falls below 95%, each subsequent non-tested student will be designated as non-proficient in the school proficiency calculation.

For your convenience, Hillside's PSSA testing schedule is detailed *on the back of this letter*. The ELA PSSA will be administered to students in grades 3 and 4 from April 23-25. The testing window issued by the state for both Math and Science testing falls within the week of April 29. Therefore, the Math PSSA will be administered to students in grades 3 and 4 on April 29 and 30 and the Science PSSA will be administered to students in grade 4 on May 1 and 2. Teachers will inform students of testing locations and times as the dates draw nearer. Although specific times have been scheduled for test completion, students may request additional time to complete the test, and we will ensure they have the time they need.

Please help your child prepare to perform at his or her best. Attendance at school, adequate sleep and eating a healthy breakfast are important. It will also be helpful if you remind your child to take the time to check his or her answers and to write a rough copy before completing responses to open-ended questions.

The state provides for the right of parents/guardians to excuse their children from PSSA testing if, upon inspection of the testing materials, the assessment is in conflict with their religious beliefs. Parents/guardians who wish to review the assessment materials may do so by contacting me and scheduling a meeting time. We are scheduled to receive the testing materials from the state by April 1. We would like to conclude meetings to review the materials by April 10 so testing arrangements can be finalized.

For further information regarding the PSSA, please find the enclosed documents from the Pennsylvania Department of Education: "Information for Parents and Guardians" and a letter detailing the consequences should any students possess a prohibited electronic device such as a cell phone, tablet and/or smartwatch during testing. If you have any questions related to the testing schedule or process, please call me at 610-240-1501. Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Diane M. Cohle  
Principal

**Hillside Elementary School**  
**PSSA Testing Schedule**

**Third Grade**

April 23 – ELA	10:45
April 24 – ELA	10:45
April 25 – ELA	10:45
April 29 – Math	10:45
April 30 – Math	10:45

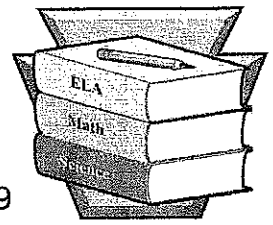
**Fourth Grade**

April 23 – ELA	9:00
April 24 – ELA	9:00
April 25 – ELA	9:00
April 29 – Math	9:00
April 30 – Math	9:00
May 1 – Science	9:00
May 2 – Science	9:00

# Information for Parents or Guardians

## Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)

English Language Arts Assessment, April 15–26, 2019  
Mathematics and Science Assessment, April 29–May 3, 2019



### 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-ed-pssa-keystone@pa.gov](mailto:ra-ed-pssa-keystone@pa.gov) or 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 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 through 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.