



MARION CENTER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 156 • 22820 Route 403 HWY N. • Marion Center, Pennsylvania 15759
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April 2013

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

The Keystone Exams are end of course assessments designed by the State of Pennsylvania to evaluate proficiency in academic content. At the high school level, they are required tests that are replacing the PSSA exams. ***Beginning with the class of 2017 (our current 8th graders), students must demonstrate proficiency on the Algebra I, Literature, and Biology Keystone Exams to graduate.*** However, our students in grades 8-11 will all need to take the Keystone Exams for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) purposes. Students who are not initially successful on any given Keystone Exam will be offered multiple opportunities to re-take the exam(s) throughout their high school careers. The Keystone Exams will be administered in the following subjects: Algebra I, Biology, and Literature.

You are receiving this information because your child will be participating in one or more of these exams. The Spring administration of the Keystone Exams will occur from May 13 through 24. This administration will involve students who are currently enrolled in the courses that correspond to the Algebra I, Biology, and Literature exams and for those students who did not pass one or more Keystone Exams during the Winter session. Please note that any student who passed any one of the Keystone Exams during the field test phase two years ago will NOT have to retake the exam(s) he/she has already passed. A list of those students has been provided to the District by the State.

Test security during Keystone testing has become a major issue across the state of Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Department of Education has made it clear to all school districts that the integrity of the test cannot be compromised in any way and has set a number of requirements to ensure adequate test security, including a cell phone policy that must be followed by all school districts. In short, students are not permitted to have cell phones, smart phones, and other prohibited electronic devices during the test. If students bring such devices to the test site, they will be collected at the door. In addition:

* The consequence for using and/or having a cell phone or other electronic device during the test administration will result in the application of a "Do Not Score" label on his/her test booklet or appropriate notification to not score on the online version, and the student will not receive a score.

* If the student uses a cell phone or electronic device in any manner during the administration of the test, the phone or electronic device will be confiscated until such time that the parent or guardian can come to the school, and in the presence of the parent or guardian, the cell phone or other electronic device will be viewed to ensure that no information or material regarding the assessment is present.

* Violation of the "no cell phone or other electronic device" rule will result in discipline, and that discipline will vary depending on whether test material has been compromised.

* Any items on an assessment that have been compromised, and can no longer be used will have to be replaced, and the parents and students may be responsible for the cost of replacement.

The Marion Center Area School District appreciates the cooperation of all students and their parents/guardians with respect to PDE's cell phone policy.

Enclosed is a copy of the Information for Parents regarding the Pennsylvania Keystone Exams. We want all of our students to be successful. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, and school board members, working together as a team, will enable us to reach this goal.

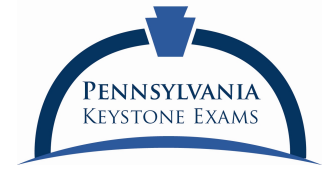
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank J Garritano". The signature is written in a cursive style with a blue ink color.

Dr. Frank J Garritano
Superintendent

Information for Parents or Guardians

Pennsylvania Keystone Exams



What are the Keystone Exams?

The Keystone Exams are end-of-course assessments designed to evaluate proficiency in academic content. Beginning with the class of 2017, students must demonstrate proficiency on the Algebra 1, Literature, and Biology Keystone Exams to graduate. Students will be offered multiple opportunities to take the keystones throughout their high school careers.

Who will participate in the Keystone Exams?

Beginning in 2012–2013 the Algebra I, Literature, and Biology Keystone Exams will replace the grade 11 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) tests in mathematics, reading, and science for purposes of satisfying No Child Left Behind (NCLB)/Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements. Therefore, all students in grade 11 must participate in the Algebra I, Literature, and Biology Keystone Exams. Additionally, students in any grade who are enrolled in a Keystone related course should participate.

When will the exams be offered?

The Keystone Exams will be administered three times each year—winter, spring, and summer. Specific administration dates will be published by the Pennsylvania Department of Education on the SAS website at www.pdesas.org.

Who decided what Keystone Exams should measure?

Groups of educators from across Pennsylvania chose the areas of knowledge on which the Keystone Exams are based. The groups included teachers, supervisors, curriculum

directors, and college specialists. These groups also reviewed, edited, and approved exam questions.

What is assessed on the Keystone Exams?

Pennsylvania adopted the Common Core Standards, standards aligned with expectations for success in college and the workplace. The keystones are designed to measure these standards.

How long is a Keystone Exam administration?

There is no time limit for a student to complete a Keystone Exam. Each Keystone Exam should take the typical student 2 to 3 hours to complete. There are two modules on each test, and each module (or Test Session) of the Keystone Exam should take 1 to 1.5 hours to complete. Districts may select to administer the entire Keystone Exam at once or do each module on separate, consecutive days.

What are the available formats for administering the Keystone Exams?

The Keystone Exams are available in both online and paper/pencil formats. Districts will determine if online, paper/pencil, or both formats will be used locally. Makeup exams will also be administered in either online or paper/pencil format.

Will students have an opportunity to experience online testing before taking a Keystone Exam online?

Tutorials and online training programs have been developed for the Keystone Exams. The PA Online Assessment Student Tutorial uses pictures, motion, and sound to present visual and verbal descriptions of the properties and

features of the PA Online Assessment system. Students are allowed to repeat the Student Tutorial as often as desired and needed. The Online Tools Training (OTT) provides an introductory experience using the PA online assessment software allowing students to observe and try out features of the PA online assessment software prior to the actual assessment. Within the OTT, students also have the opportunity to practice typing responses in a narrative format, graphing functions, and entering equations using an equation builder tool. The online exam also has a “Help” feature that is available to the student during the exam.

What types of questions are on the Keystone Exams?

The Keystone Exams will include multiple-choice questions and constructed-response, or open-ended, questions. For each Keystone Exam, approximately 60% to 75% of the total score will be from multiple-choice questions and 25% to 40% of the total score will be from constructed-response questions.

How are the written responses to constructed-response questions scored?

The written responses for constructed-response questions are scored by evaluators trained in applying a pre-determined scoring system. Scores are based on content only. Spelling and punctuation are not included as part of the scoring process. Most constructed-response questions require students to show their work or explain their reasoning. These Keystone Exam questions will ask students to explain, analyze, describe, or compare. Some questions will also require students to perform calculations or create graphs, plots, or drawings.

How are the results reported?

Keystone Exam scores will be processed as quickly as possible and provided to the districts.

Two copies of the individual student report for all Keystone Exams will be sent to the school districts and charter schools. One copy should be sent home to parents/guardians; the other is kept by the school/district.

School-level reports will be used for curricular and planning purposes. School districts and charter schools may publish the results of Keystone Exams for each school. The state will also release school-by-school exam data.

May parents see the Keystone Exams?

Parents and guardians may review the Keystone Exams if they believe they may be in conflict with their religious beliefs by making arrangements with the School Test Coordinator once the exams arrive at the school. Confidentiality agreements must be signed, and no copies of the Keystone Exams or notes about exam questions will be permitted to leave the school.

If, after reviewing the Keystone Exams, parents or guardians do not want their child to participate in one or all of the exams due to a conflict with their religious beliefs, they may write to the school district superintendent or charter school CAO prior to the beginning of the exam(s) to request to excuse their child from the exam(s).

For additional information about the Keystone Exams, visit the SAS website at www.pdesas.org or contact your school district.