

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about State-Mandated Assessments

Below are frequently asked questions about state-mandated assessments. These answers reflect our current thinking based on available information and will be updated as new questions arise.

Q1. *Are there repercussions for students who do not take the PSSAs/Keystones? Do these tests have any effect, for example, on placement in advanced math or any other academic decisions?*

A1. At this time, there are no direct repercussions to a student, whose family decides to opt out of participation in state-mandated testing for religious reasons. Deciding to opt out of participation in state-mandated assessments for religious reasons does not have any effect on placement in future courses.

Q2. *If a student does not take the PSSA's/Keystones, what will he/she do during that time instead?*

A2. If a family decides to opt their child out of participation in state-mandated assessments for religious reasons, the child will be engaged in an alternate learning activity within his/her school.

Q3. *Do the results of the PSSAs impact a teacher's annual performance evaluations? If students do not take the tests or if the tests are not administered, does it affect the teacher in any way?*

A3. The assessment results are part of the data that comprise the building-level data portion and when appropriate, the teacher-specific data portion of a classroom teacher's evaluation.

Q4. *Is state or federal funding for the school tied to results or even just the number of students who take the PSSA's/Keystones?*

A4. At this time, funding is not directly tied to performance on state-mandated assessments, and funding is not directly connected to the participation rate in state-mandated assessments.

Q5. *Are PSSA rankings important to the school in any way?*

A5. Performance on state-mandated assessments is one indicator of the quality of our instructional program. This indicator is used to compare ourselves with other districts locally and state-wide. PSSA and Keystone scores have also been used by many organizations and individuals to evaluate the rigor of district programming.

Q6. *Are PSSA test results valid if fewer than 95% of the students in a school building participate?*

A6. It is the position of PDE that the validity of PSSA results are not compromised by the percentage of students participating in it.

Q7. *For what reason would a family opt their student out of state testing?*

A7. The only approved reason to opt out of participating in PSSA testing, according to PDE, is for religious beliefs.