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.