



# School of the Future

Chief Learner: Dr. John R. Smith Jr.  
9th Grade Principal: Thomas Murtaugh  
10th Grade Principal: Amanda Pointer  
11th-12th Grade Principal: Dr. Hyacinth Wood

4021 Parkside Avenue Philadelphia, PA 19104  
(215) 400- 7790 [www.sof.philasd.org](http://www.sof.philasd.org)

Dear **Junior Learner**,

In 2018, Act 158 was signed into law outlining state graduation requirements and the ways in which Keystone Exams factor into these requirements. State graduation requirements are effective for students in the Classes of 2023 and beyond. In order to graduate from high school, students must meet all local graduation requirements related to credits and coursework along with the state requirements outlined in Act 158. Students must meet one of Pennsylvania’s five pathways to earn a diploma and demonstrate career and/or college readiness.

For the Graduating Class of 2026, the following Keystone Assessment Pathway options exist to meet state graduation requirements:

• *Keystone Proficiency Pathway #1:*

Scoring proficient (score of at least 1500) or advanced on all three Keystone Exams (Algebra I, Literature, and Biology)

• *Keystone Composite Pathway #2:*

Earning a satisfactory composite score (4452) on the Algebra I, Literature, and Biology Keystone Exams (while achieving at least one proficient/advanced score and no score of below basic on the remaining two)

Your highest Keystone scores at the current moment:

Algebra 1 \*\*\*

ELA \*\*\*

Biology \*\*\*

You are receiving this letter as you are scheduled for the Spring keystones. You will be testing for any test that you do not have a proficient (score of 1500) or advanced score. Test takers are expected to arrive by 7:30am.

Your testing room is \*\*\*.

<b>Monday 5/13</b> Normal school day	<b>Tuesday 5/14</b> Late Arrival 10:45 am	<b>Wednesday 5/15</b> 11th Grade Algebra	<b>Thursday 5/16</b> 11th Grade ELA	<b>Friday 5/17</b> 11th Grade Bio
<b>Monday 5/20</b> Normal school day Make-up testing only	<b>Tuesday 5/21</b> Normal school day Make-up testing only	<b>Wednesday 5/22</b> Normal school day Make-up testing only	<b>Thursday 5/23</b> Normal school day	<b>Friday 5/24</b> Normal school day

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me through email ([Kursta@philasd.org](mailto:Kursta@philasd.org)).

Sincerely,  
Kendra M Ursta  
School of the Future  
Roster Chair, Keystone Coordinator

HR: \*\*\*\*

*ALL TESTING WILL BE ONLINE. MAKE SURE YOU BRING YOUR CHARGED CHROMEBOOK AND CHARGER.  
LET YOUR ADVISOR KNOW PRIOR TO TESTING IF YOU ARE IN NEED OF TECHNOLOGY.*



# School of the Future

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11th & 12th Grade Principal: Dr. Hyacinth Wood  
10th Grade Principal: Ms. Amanda Pointer  
9th Grade Principal: Mr. Thomas Murtaugh

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your student will be participating in the **Keystone Examination**, a state-mandated standardized assessment on **May 14- 17, 2024** with make-up dates of 5/20- 22. . The details below and the documents included with this mailing provide important information and policies, so please take a few minutes to review them.

## Included Documents

1. Frequently Asked Questions - Information for Parents or Guardians
  - provides an overview of the basics of the Keystone
  - explains a parent's right to "opt out" his/her student from testing in the "May parents see the assessments?" section
2. Keystone/PSSA Test Features and Accommodations
  - defines test features and accommodations
  - provides a link to the complete Accommodations Guidelines documents
3. Electronic Devices Parent Letter
  - details the Pennsylvania Department of Education policy on and consequences for using cell phones and other electronic devices during testing

## School Policy on Electronic Devices

As explained in the Electronic Devices Parent Letter, all unapproved electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, smartphones, smartwatches, cameras, etc.) and other communication devices will not be allowed during the test administration. For purposes of the Keystone/PSSA administrations, PDE **no longer** distinguishes between **possessing** and **using** an unapproved electronic device. Electronic devices are not allowed during testing.

- A student observed actively engaged with an unapproved electronic device is defined as using the device.
- A student not observed using the unapproved electronic device, but in possession of an unapproved electronic device or found to have placed the unapproved electronic device where the student could easily access it, is considered the same as using an unapproved electronic device.
- An electronic device anywhere else in the room where a student cannot access it (e.g., in a backpack in the back of the room) should not be considered possession.

The following actions will be taken if a student is found in possession of and/or using an electronic device during testing:

- school personnel will determine if it was used to compromise the security or integrity of the test
- students that violate the ban on cell phones and other electronic devices, but did not compromise security/integrity, will be disciplined through the administration with the policies set forth by School of the Future, The School District of Philadelphia, and the PA Department of Education.
- Students that violate the ban on cell phones and other electronic devices, and did compromise security/integrity, will be disciplined through the administration with the policies set forth by School of the Future, The School District of Philadelphia, and the PA Department of Education.
- a "Do Not Score" label will be applied to his/her answer booklet and the student will either have to retake the test from the beginning or not receive a score
- the phone or communication device will be confiscated until such time that you come to the school. In your presence, the cell phone or other device will be viewed to ensure that it contains no information or material about the assessment
- if items on an assessment are compromised, they will have to be replaced. Parents and students may be responsible for the cost of replacing the items

Please review the above policies carefully and discuss them with your student. As always, we expect your full cooperation in this important matter.

If you have questions on any of the included documents or cell phone policy, please contact Kendra M Ursta ([Kursta@philasd.org](mailto:Kursta@philasd.org)) as she is the SOF Testing Coordinator,

Sincerely,  
Dr. John Smith  
Chief Learner, School of the Future



## Keystone/PSSA Test Features and Accommodations, 2023-2024

- There are certain options available to *all* the students during testing such as the use of extended time and reading aloud all of the items in math, science, Algebra 1, and Biology, and certain types of items in the ELA assessment, etc.
- Options available to *all* students are called “test features”.
- The options available to Sp. Ed., EL, and 504 Plan students that are *needed* to allow them to participate in the assessment/s are called “accommodations”. Therefore, accommodations are practices that provide equitable access to test items for these students.
- Accommodations are divided into 4 categories: Presentation, Response, Setting, and Timing.
- All accommodations that are available for the Keystone Examinations are also available for the PSSA.
- **It is critical to note that although some accommodations may be appropriate for instructional use, they may not be appropriate for use on a standardized assessment.**
- Accommodations must match the students’ needs; students must be willing to use them; and students must be involved in their selection (see “Supplemental Tools and Resources” in the [Accommodations Guidelines for PSSA and Keystone Exams\\*](#)).
- A best practice in choosing accommodations for testing is using the accommodations routinely with the student prior to testing and documenting successful use. It is not a good practice to provide an accommodation in an assessment situation that the student does not use on a regular basis.

### Accommodations available to ELs ONLY

Three separate *voluntary* accommodations are allowed specifically for ELs:

1. Word-to-word translation dictionaries, without definitions, pictures, or internet connection — allowed in Algebra 1 and Biology Keystone Examinations and Mathematics and Science PSSAs ONLY (Available to ALL ELs irrespective of the number of years in the country)
2. Qualified interpreters/sight translators\*\* — allowed in Algebra 1 and Biology Keystone Examinations, Mathematics and Science PSSAs, and Text Dependent Analysis (TDA) prompts of the ELA PSSA (Available ONLY for ELs in U.S. schools for less than 3 years)
3. Spanish/English test and answer booklets — allowed in Algebra 1 and Biology Keystone Examinations and Mathematics and Science PSSAs (Available ONLY for ELs in U.S. schools for less than 3 years)

*NOTE: The aforementioned ELs-specific accommodations are NOT available for monitored or exited students.*

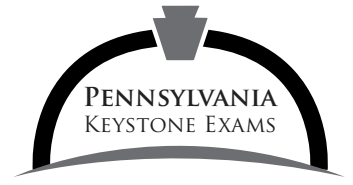
**\*For more information on Test Features and Accommodations, use the following link and look in the Accommodations section:**

<https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/PSSA/Pages/TestingInformation.aspx>

\*\*For the roles of interpreters and sight translators, go to the above link, and then click on [Accommodations Guidelines for ELs](#).

# 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 2022–2023, students must demonstrate proficiency on the Algebra I, Literature, and Biology Keystone Exams to graduate or fulfill one of the other pathways provided to graduate. Students will be offered multiple opportunities to take the keystones throughout their high school career.

### Who will participate in the Keystone Exams?

In 2012–13, the Algebra I, Literature, and Biology Keystone Exams replaced the 11th-grade Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA) in math, reading, and science for purposes of student, educator, and school accountability. Students should take the Keystone Exams at or near the end of a Keystone-related course. The students' results are banked until their junior year for accountability purposes and until their senior year for graduation purposes. Some students who previously completed a Keystone-related course but did not take the Keystone Exam will also participate for accountability purposes. All students who take a Keystone Exam may re-take the exam.

### 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.

### 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. Other groups of Pennsylvania educators also reviewed, edited, and approved exam questions.

### What is assessed on the Keystone Exams?

Pennsylvania adopted the Pennsylvania 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 two to three hours to complete. There are two modules on each test, and each module (or Test Session) of the Keystone Exam should take one to 1.5 hours to complete. Districts can administer the Keystone Exam modules across two days or divided across the morning and the afternoon of the same day.

### What are the available formats for administering the Keystone Exams?

The Keystone Exams are available in both online and paper and pencil formats. Districts will determine if online, paper and pencil, or both formats will be used locally. Makeup exams will also be administered in either online or paper and 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 percent to 75 percent of the total score will be from multiple-choice questions and 25 percent to 40 percent 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 a letter indicating they have a religious objection to the school district superintendent or charter school CAO to request their child be excused from the exam(s).

## **Report Testing Irregularities**

Parents/guardians who believe that a testing irregularity may have occurred may email [ra-edirregularities@pa.gov](mailto:ra-edirregularities@pa.gov) or call 844-418-1651 to report the incident.

**For additional information about the Keystone Exams, visit the PDE website at [www.education.pa.gov](http://www.education.pa.gov) or contact your school district.**

Dear Parent/Guardian:

In an era of cell phones, smartphones and other electronic devices which can easily photograph and instantly share photographs, confidential and secure test materials can be easily compromised. Not only is it expensive to replace a compromised test item, the material contained in the PSSA and Keystone Exams is copyrighted property of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Copying or duplicating the material from the assessment, including the taking of a photograph of secure assessment material, is a violation of the federal Copyright Act. Penalties for violations of the Copyright Act may include the cost of replacing the compromised test item(s) or fines of no less than \$750 up to \$30,000 for a single violation (17 U.S.C. § 101 et seq.).

In order to ensure reliable test results and to avoid the cost of replacing test items, the Department of Education requires schools to set rules and take certain steps to protect test materials. Electronic devices such as but not limited to cell phones, smartphones, smartwatches, E-readers, Nooks, Kindles, iPods, tablets, camera-ready devices, and any other electronic device which can be used to photograph or duplicate test materials, access the internet and/or communicate with others during the administration of the PSSA or Keystone Exams are not permitted in any testing site. Please speak with your child and let your child know that the possession and/or use of a cell phone or other electronic device during the administration of the PSSA or Keystone Exams will result in consequences.

You will be contacted by the school if your child is discovered using and/or having a cell phone or other unapproved electronic device during the administration of the PSSA or Keystone Exams. Students who ignore this directive will be subject to the school's discipline policy and the Department of Education's requirement that the student's test will not be scored and the student will be required to retake the entire exam. The electronic device will be held by school staff, and the device's stored photographs and other functions will be examined with your permission. You may request to be present when the electronic device is examined. If a photograph of the PSSA or Keystone Exam is discovered or if permission to search other functions of the electronic device is refused, the device will be held by the school staff. The Pennsylvania Department of Education holds the copyright to all material contained within the PSSA and Keystone Exams. The Pennsylvania Department of Education will be contacted and further action may be taken.

If, after testing is complete and test materials have been returned, it is discovered that a student used and/or had a cell phone or other unapproved electronic device during the administration of the test, the school's discipline policy will be followed and the student's test will not be scored.