



Lower Merion

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School District

Ardmore, PA 19003-3399

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 added to as new questions arise.

Q1. Are there any academic repercussions on a student who does not take the PSSAs? 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. The PSSAs are a local and state measure of the extent to which a student achieved the learning goals identified in the standards for a particular grade level. There are other indicators of this within the local curriculum.

At this time, the decision 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, what will they do during that time instead?

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

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. These 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. The Pennsylvania Department of Education has produced a Frequently Asked Questions document about the impact of student performance measures for classroom teachers, available at

http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_6_2_146827_0_0_43/.

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

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 and these performance scores are a frequently a component in recognitions from various educational organizations. PSSA and standardized test scores have been used by many organizations and individuals to evaluate the rigor of district programming. In order to view information about school performance profiles, please visit <http://paschoolperformance.org>.

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

A6. It is the position of the Pennsylvania Department of Education 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 the Pennsylvania Department of Education, is for religious beliefs.

Q8. Does the District endorse test prep specifically for state tests?

A8. The LMSD K-12 Curriculum Services Team does not reallocate instructional time and resources specific to the preparation of students for participation in the PSSA.