

Frequently
Asked
Questions

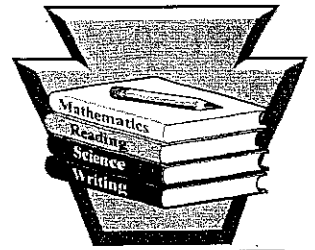
Information for Parents or Guardians

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)

Reading & Mathematics Assessment, March 12 – 23, 2012

Writing Assessment, April 16 – 20, 2012

Science Assessment, April 23 – 27, 2012



INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCIENCE ASSESSMENT (grades 4, 8, and 11)

How long does the assessment take?

The entire science assessment takes approximately two to four hours to complete. Your school district should inform you about the assessment schedule.

What does the assessment include?

Students in grades 4 and 8 complete two sections of questions for the science assessment; grade 11 students complete three sections. Some portions will be the same for all students, and some will consist of different groups of questions.

What types of questions are on the assessment?

Students respond to two types of questions: multiple-choice and open-ended. In a multiple-choice question, the correct answer is chosen from the four presented options, while open-ended questions require students to compose their responses. At grades 8 and 11, the science assessment also includes science scenarios.

What is a science scenario?

A science scenario contains text, graphics, charts, and/or tables, and uses these elements to describe the results of a class project, an experiment, or other similar research. Students use the information found in a science scenario to answer multiple-choice (grades 8 and 11) and open-ended (grade 11 only) questions.

How are the written responses to open-ended items scored?

The written responses for science open-ended items are scored by evaluators trained in applying a pre-determined scoring system. In science, scores are based on content only. Spelling and punctuation are not included as part of the scoring process.

What is assessed in science?

The science assessment addresses the four major reporting categories: The Nature of Science, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Earth and Space Sciences. The proportion of items devoted to each reporting category varies within a grade level. Each reporting category includes certain Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content.