



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

September 2015

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Last April, a new Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) was administered in your child's classroom in English Language Arts and Mathematics. The new assessment was developed to meet the more challenging demands of the PA Core Standards, which were adopted in 2013 to better prepare students to be successful in college, postsecondary training, or in the 21st century work force.

The tests' more rigorous standards included more complex, multi-part questions, and required more thoughtful reasoning by students. It is likely that your child's scores are lower than in years past, this reflects the fact that they are being measured by a different assessment.

The Spring 2015 PSSA is the first year in the transition to the PA Core. Successful alignment to these new standards requires time, curriculum development and resources; therefore a change in your student's score should not be interpreted as a decline in their learning or in their teacher's performance.

The scores represent a snapshot in time and are meant to determine a baseline for measuring future growth. Comparing your student's scores and level of performance on the new assessment with those from previous years is not a valid comparison and may not provide an accurate depiction of their learning. The Department of Education anticipates that as students and teachers become more familiar with the new standards and additional resources are directed to classrooms, students' scores should steadily rise.

Schools have been working hard to update curriculum and provide the best education possible for your child, with the ultimate goal of student success. And while standardized tests can be useful benchmarks for growth, they are not the sole indicator of student achievement.

Your contribution to your child's education is critical, and I hope that the Department of Education, the commonwealth's schools, and families can all work together to educate and prepare Pennsylvania's next generation for postsecondary success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pedro Rivera".

Pedro A. Rivera
Secretary of Education

For additional information about the PSSA, including Performance Level Descriptors for ELA and Math, visit PDE's website at www.education.pa.gov and click on the "PSSA Information" tab.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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