

# PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### OVERVIEW

The Commonwealth's new system of graduation requirements will help guarantee that a Pennsylvania diploma reflects the knowledge and skills that our graduating students need to be successful in college and the workplace in an increasingly complex and challenging economy. These requirements—including new tools and flexible options—are designed for districts to help all students, starting with the class of 2015, demonstrate proficiency in state academic standards. The Department of Education will provide districts and educators with resources to guide planning and implementation of the new requirements. This document provides an overview of the new requirements and answers to frequently asked questions.

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# INTRODUCTION TO GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

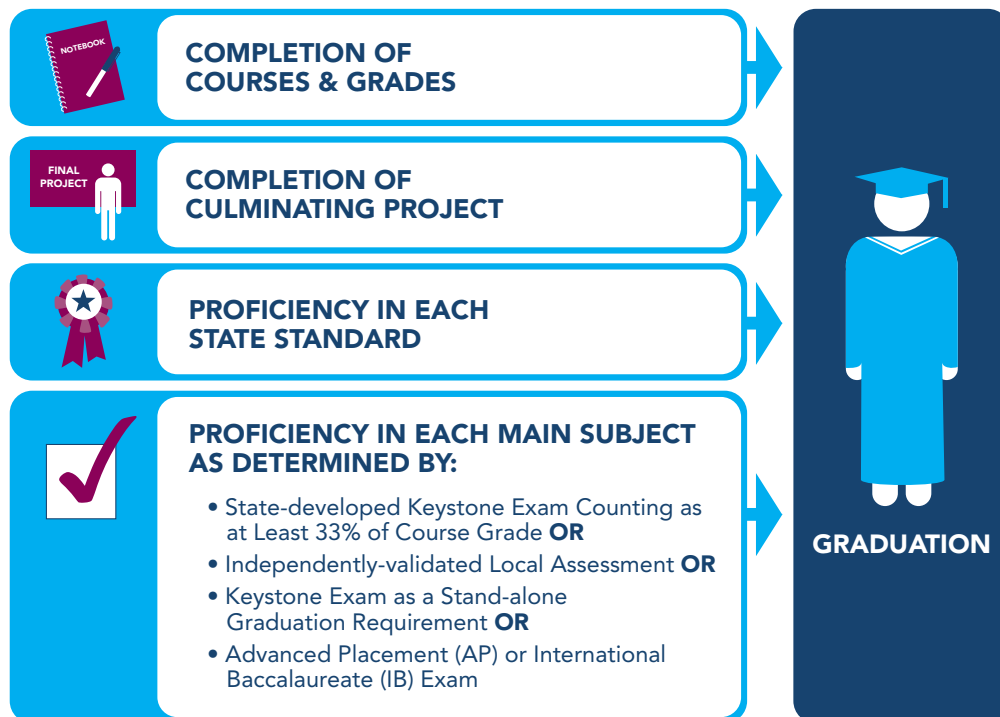
Starting with the class of 2015, new high school graduation requirements will help ensure that Pennsylvania’s students are prepared for college and career. Along with current requirements (course completion and grades, completion of a culminating project, and demonstration of proficiency in each of the state standards not assessed by a state assessment), students will complete one of the following pathways for each main subject:

- Successful completion of courses in which a Keystone Exam serves as the final exam and counts for at least one-third of the course mark; or
- Demonstration of proficiency on independently-validated local assessment systems; or
- Demonstration of proficiency on a Keystone Exam used as a stand-alone graduation requirement in a given content area; for additional information on this option, please review the State Board of Education’s [policy guidance](#); or
- Demonstration of proficiency on an Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate Exam.

Along with planning for the recently-adopted Common Core State Standards, implementation of the graduation requirements is well under-way. In this development stage, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) will provide regular updates on plans that will support the work of our educators and students.

A variety of options for assessments provides school districts with maximum flexibility for implementation, measuring achievement, and supporting struggling students.

## SCHOOL DISTRICT GRADUATION POLICIES MUST AT LEAST INCLUDE:



## BIG PICTURE: HOW DOES IT ALL CONNECT?

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The new graduation requirements and assessments are complementary to the standards that guide Pennsylvania's high school education system. The standards, anchors, and eligible content for each subject area of the Keystone Exams are grounded in Pennsylvania's comprehensive approach to supporting student achievement—the *Standards Aligned System (SAS)*—and the *Common Core State Standards*.

**Q** How are the newly adopted Common Core State Standards in English and Math reflected in the Keystone Exams?

**A** A University of Pittsburgh study completed in June 2010 compared the Common Core State Standards to Pennsylvania's current system of academic standards and found the two to be well aligned. The Common Core State Standards will guide all new content questions for the Keystone Exams in these subject areas. The regulation adopting the Common Core State Standards in English and Math includes a three-year transition, which will allow a gradual phase-in of any new standards and incremental adjustments to Keystone Exams.

**Q** How are the Keystone Exams connected to SAS?

**A** The Keystone Exams are aligned with SAS and are simply a new assessment tool for districts. On the [SAS website](#), districts will be able to access a wide range of supporting resources to guide planning for Keystone Exams, including: [Standards-Based Instruction](#), [Voluntary Model Curriculum](#), and [Classroom Diagnostic Tools](#).

**Q** Hasn't the U.S. Department of Education awarded significant funding to support the development of common assessments aligned with the Common Core State Standards? If so, why are we investing state money and resources now?

**A** While Pennsylvania plans to participate in the common assessment initiative, those exams are not scheduled to be implemented until 2014-2015; we can't wait that long to make sure our students are ready for college and the workplace. Moreover, the common assessment initiative will produce exams in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math ONLY—while Keystone Exams will cover 10 core academic subjects: Algebra I, Algebra II, Biology, Chemistry, Civics and Government, English Composition, Geometry, Literature, U.S. History, and World History.

**Q** How will districts and schools be evaluated in the context of Keystone Exams?

**A** Under the new regulation, Pennsylvania plans to join a number of states—including Maryland—that use end-of-course exams for purposes of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements under No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

**Q** How can we be sure the next gubernatorial administration will continue with this policy?

**A** During the last 20 years—across administrations and across the aisle—Pennsylvania policymakers have placed a priority on standards-based reform, and we fully expect this commitment to continue into the next administration and future administrations.

**Q** How are education stakeholders involved in the implementation of this reform?

**A** Successful implementation of the new graduation requirements requires the input and expertise of classroom teachers and school leaders. That’s why, along with the State Board of Education, PDE has formed five committees that bring more than 75 classroom teachers, building and district level administrators, school board members, postsecondary leaders, and employers to the table. The implementation teams are making important strides, including the development of **Performance Level Descriptors** and the design of **policy guidance for the local assessment option** that was approved by the State Board of Education on September 16, 2010.

**Q** What is the authority for the change in graduation requirements?

**A** Under the Public School Code, the State Board of Education has longstanding authority to establish state graduation requirements. On January 8, 2010, the State Board of Education promulgated new high school graduation requirements under state law, Chapter 4 regulation (§4.24). These requirements were approved by Pennsylvania’s Independent Regulatory Review Commission and the Office of Attorney General.

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

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### KEYSTONE EXAMS

*Keystone Exams will help school districts guide students toward meeting state standards—standards aligned with expectations for success in college and the workplace. The exams are end-of-course assessments designed to evaluate proficiency in Algebra I, Algebra II, Biology, Chemistry, Civics and Government, English Composition, Geometry, Literature, U.S. History, and World History. These exams will be rolled out over the next five years, beginning with Algebra I, Biology, and Literature Keystone Exams in May 2011.*

*Students should take the Keystone Exam immediately following the related course and can retake the exam any of the three times it is administered during the following year—winter, spring, and summer. Under the new system of graduation requirements, students can earn a diploma through successful course completion in which a Keystone counts for at least one-third of the course grade. Ultimately, the Keystone Exams will replace the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) tests in 11th grade for purposes of making AYP determinations.*

#### A KEYSTONE EXAM IS . . .

- Administered at the end of the course
- Counted as at least 1/3 of overall course grade
- Available for students to retake either in its entirety or just a portion (module) three times during the year: winter, spring, and summer

The following are questions often asked to PDE staff and administrators regarding the new graduation requirements. We will continue to keep you updated with the latest information and news on the 'Graduation Requirements' section of the SAS website.

**Q Must all districts administer the Keystone Exams?**

**A** For purposes of graduation requirements, districts and charter schools have the option to administer the Keystone Exams as standard final exams, or they may use locally-developed or approved, independently-validated assessments. Following approval by the U.S. Department of Education, all districts would need to administer three Keystone Exams—Algebra I, Biology, and Literature—for AYP purposes.

**Q How are the Keystone Exams related to graduation requirements?**

**A** Keystone Exams are one option districts have to measure student proficiency against state standards. Additional options include a locally-developed, independently-validated local assessment, or Advanced Placement (AP), or International Baccalaureate (IB) tests.

**Q When will students take the Keystone Exams?**

**A** Districts can decide when students are ready to take the Keystone Exam—typically a time near the end of the course, which allows the Keystones to replace teacher-developed final exams.

**Q Are the Keystone Exams for high school students only?**

**A** No. Students should take the Keystone Exam when they complete the related coursework, which may be as early as grades 6, 7, or 8 for Algebra I, for example.

**Q Can Keystone Exam scores for students in middle school count toward state high school graduation requirements?**

**A** Yes. Keystone Exams will be available for students who take a course associated with a Keystone Exam in middle school. For example, when a grade 8 student passes the Algebra I course and scores “proficient” on the Algebra I Keystone Exam, he/she will have met this requirement for graduation.

**Q Can students “test out” of a course by passing a Keystone Exam? Will schools be required to let people take the Keystone Exam who haven’t taken the course?**

**A** School districts will have the discretion to allow students to take a Keystone Exam even if the student has not taken the course. In that case, a student scoring “advanced” on a given Keystone Exam may be awarded credit for the course without actually taking the course.

**Q How will the results from the Keystone Exams administered in May 2011 be used?**

**A** In districts that elect to use the Keystone Exams, students in grades 7 and 8 (graduating classes of 2015 and 2016) who are enrolled in Algebra I or Biology during the 2010-2011 school year must participate in the Keystone Exams (unless they take the course only during the first semester). Since the cut scores and performance levels for these exams will not be set until after the school year ends, results should not be factored in the students’ final course grades for graduation requirements. As a result, these students will be exempt from that aspect of the requirements.

During the 2010-2011 school year, students in grades 9 through 12 who are enrolled in Algebra I, Biology, or Literature are encouraged to participate in the Keystone Exams. Their scores also will be used in the setting of cut scores and performance levels, but it is not a requirement for graduation. PDE recommends that the Literature Keystone Exam be taken at the end of grade 10.

In future years, additional exemptions will occur whenever a Keystone Exam is first administered statewide.

**Q** How can districts and schools prepare now for the spring 2011 Keystone Exams?

**A** On the SAS website, districts can access materials to help plan for the spring 2011 Keystone Exams, including [Keystone Exams Overview](#), [Performance Level Descriptors](#), [Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content](#), and [Testing Schedule](#). At the 2010 SAS Institute in December, PDE will share information and additional details about the spring 2011 Keystone Exams.

## LOCAL ASSESSMENTS

*Independently-validated local assessments are another option for districts to help students meet high school graduation requirements. For example, districts may choose to develop assessments that are at least as rigorous as the Keystone Exams, aligned with state academic standards, and administered to all students. In accordance with the [policy guidance](#), other districts may wish to use Keystone Exams as a component of their local assessment systems. Districts that require proficiency on the Keystone Exams will be deemed approved for validation requirements in that content area.*

**Q** Our district is planning to use locally-developed assessments to comply with the new regulation. Must local assessments count for one-third of a student's course grade?

**A** No. The state-designated weight of one-third applies only to the state-developed Keystone Exams.

**Q** How will the state evaluate local assessments?

**A** For local assessments to satisfy [state graduation requirements](#), they must meet the following criteria:

- Align with state academic standards
- Meet rigorous expectations, comparable to those used for the Keystone Exams
- Be administered to all students

### A DISTRICT-ADOPTED LOCAL ASSESSMENT IS . . .

- Of equal rigor
- Aligned with state standards
- Administered to all students
- Required to be independently validated & the state will pay half of the cost to validate

### KEYSTONE EXAM AS A LOCAL ASSESSMENT IS . . .

- A stand-alone graduation requirement
- Deemed approved for validation requirements
- Within district discretion whether it impacts a course grade

Additional criteria may be established by the Local Assessment Validation Advisory Committee. In early 2011, this committee will issue detailed guidance, including a handbook for districts.

**Q Will the state offer districts resources for creating locally-developed assessments?**

**A** The state will provide districts creating local assessments with technical assistance and resources to help guide required elements. In addition, the state will pay for half of the assessment validation costs.

**Q What is the timeline for developing and validating local assessments? How long is the validating process? When does the local assessment need to be submitted for approval?**

**A** A detailed timeline (spanning approximately 18 months) will be available on the SAS website by spring 2011.

**Q When does a district need to declare that it will create a locally-developed assessment?**

**A** PDE will reach out to districts in early 2011 to gauge their interest in choosing the locally-developed assessment option. Districts can decide this option by content area (see next question). Districts should use the next few months for discussions and preliminary decision-making.

**Q If a district plans to use a local assessment for one subject, must they use local assessments for all subjects?**

**A** No. The regulation permits districts to select assessment options by content area. For example, a district may choose to administer a local assessment for Algebra I and the state-administered Keystone Exam for Biology.

**Q Would districts be able to create their own exams or work in partnership with other districts to develop local assessments?**

**A** Districts can work individually or jointly (e.g., within Intermediate Units) to develop (or purchase) local assessments. Districts can likewise share the local cost of validation.

**Q For districts that plan to develop local assessments—will students in the graduating classes of 2015 and 2016 who are currently taking courses such as Algebra I and Biology be permitted to continue taking local assessments even when they have not been validated?**

**A** Yes. As long as the district informs PDE of its intention to submit the local assessments to be validated when required, students will be permitted to continue taking local assessments even when they have not been validated. Districts should be aware that students must still complete courses with academic content assessed pursuant to subsections (b) and (c) of §4.24 (high school graduation requirements).

## ACADEMIC STANDARDS

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- Q** Are the Keystone Exams aligned with Pennsylvania Standards?

**A** All questions on the Keystone Exams are aligned to the Pennsylvania Standards. The *Pennsylvania Standards, Curriculum Frameworks, and Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content* can be found on the SAS website. There is also strong alignment between the Keystone Exams and the Common Core State Standards that must be fully implemented by 2013.
- Q** Are the Standards posted on the SAS website the most recent version?

**A** The Pennsylvania Standards posted on the SAS website are current. The Standards, along with other SAS resources, can be used to write curriculum to prepare students for the Keystone Exams.

## ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS (AYP)

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- Q** If a district decides to use *only* local assessments for graduation determinations, can these count for AYP when the PSSA is replaced by the Keystone Exams?

**A** No. NCLB requires a uniform state assessment for measuring student achievement in Reading, Math, and Science. While districts will decide how students meet high school graduation requirements, all students will take the Algebra I, Biology, and Literature Keystone Exams to meet AYP/NCLB requirements—just as they currently do with the PSSA.
- Q** Will only specific questions or all questions on each Keystone Exam in Algebra I, Biology, and Literature count for AYP purposes?

**A** AYP determinations will be based on all operational questions in the Keystone Exam.
- Q** If a student retakes the Keystone Exam, which score will count for AYP?

**A** PDE will seek approval from the U.S. Department of Education to count a student's highest score.
- Q** What is the process and timeline for replacing the grade 11 PSSA with the Keystone Exams? Will schools have to administer both assessments until the federal government approves this substitution?

**A** The process requires PDE to document, collect, and submit evidence of test development and test quality for the U.S. Department of Education's peer review. PDE anticipates approval by 2013. Until then, both assessments will be given.



**Q** What happens if a student takes the Algebra I Keystone Exam in grade 8—how is that attributed for AYP?

**A** A student in middle school who takes a Keystone Exam may have his/her results “banked” for AYP attribution at a later date.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN?

### TIMING

**Q** When will the Keystone Exams for Algebra I, Biology, and Literature be available? What is the long-term timeline for implementation?

**A** Algebra I, Biology, and Literature Keystone Exams will be administered in May 2011. A detailed [Spring 2011 Keystone Exam Testing Schedule](#) can be found on the SAS website. Below is the timeline for implementation:

Course	Field Test	Available For All Schools
Algebra I, Biology, Literature	Fall 2010	Spring 2011
Algebra II, Geometry, English Composition	Spring 2011	Winter 2011-2012
U.S. History	Fall 2012	Spring 2013
Chemistry, Civics and Government, World History	Spring 2015	TBD

**Q** When will the Keystone Exams be administered? Is there a window in which exams are administered? When will students receive Keystone Exam scores?

**A** The Keystone Exams will be administered three times each year—winter, spring, and summer—in order to accommodate block schedules and retesting. Districts will have discretion on when students receive exam scores. For graduating seniors, Keystone Exam scores will be available no later than 10 days prior to graduation. For all other students, scores will be available before the end of the school year.

**Q** When should the Literature Keystone Exam be administered in high school?

**A** PDE does not recommend districts create new or separate Literature and English Composition courses as a response to the Keystone Exams, given that both Literature and English Composition are typically taught in Language Arts, grades 9 through 12. While PDE recommends the Literature Keystone Exam be taken at the end of grade 10, districts may choose a different grade level. This decision will guide the schedule for the appropriate

Keystone Exams. It is important that districts make sure the coursework is aligned with the Keystone Standards and prepares students for the Literature Keystone Exam at whatever grade level has been designated. For example, a district may choose to focus on English Composition in grade 9 and administer the Composition Keystone Exam that same year. The Keystone English Composition Exam will be comprised of “stand-alone” writing prompts not associated with Literature. However, students can use the types of Literature studied in grade 9 when the Literature Keystone is given.

With regard to Literature instruction, PDE recommends a balance of contemporary and classic Literature and encourages districts to include equal amounts of fiction and nonfiction in their curriculum. This balanced approach will serve as a means of providing students with more diverse exposure to various countries, eras, and genres of Literature and is in keeping with Common Core State Standards.

For detailed information about the content associated with the Literature Keystone Exam and the Composition Keystone Exam, please refer to the Pennsylvania Standards. Under the ‘View Standards’ tab, click on the ‘Select a Course’ tab. You then will be able to see the Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content for each course by selecting the corresponding course name.

**Q** How much time should be allotted for each Keystone Exam?

**A** Each Keystone Exam should take the typical student 2 to 2.5 hours to complete. Each module (or Test Session) of the Keystone Exam should take 1 to 1.5 hours to complete. Districts and schools may select to administer the entire Keystone Exam at once or do each module on separate, consecutive days.

**Q** Do the Keystone Exams have a time limit for student completion? Can a student complete a Keystone Exam the next day?

**A** There is no time limit for a student to complete a Keystone Exam; however, any Test Session that has been started must be finished the same day. If special circumstances occur during an online Test Session (e.g., fire alarms, sickness), teachers will be provided appropriate instructions and students will be able to complete the exam.

## EVALUATION

**Q** When will students receive test scores? When will students know how the Keystone Exam impacts course grades?

**A** Keystone Exam scores will be processed as quickly as possible and provided to the districts. Districts will continue to calculate course grades and will inform students of final grades using their usual process. For graduating seniors, Keystone Exam scores will be available no later than 10 days prior to graduation. For all other students, scores will be available before the end of the school year.

- Q** If a student has not demonstrated proficiency on a Keystone Exam, can he/she receive points earned that would count for the 33% of the final grade?
- A** If a student scores Basic on a Keystone Exam, he/she can receive points earned that would count for the 33% of the final grade. If a student performs Below Basic on a Keystone Exam, the student would not receive points earned and should retake the exam at the earliest opportunity.

## EXAM FORMAT

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Download the *Exam Design Overview* on the SAS website for specifics on test formats for the Algebra I, Biology, and Literature Keystone Exams.

- Q** What types of questions will the Keystone Exams feature?
- A** The Keystone Exams will include multiple-choice questions and constructed-response, or open-ended, questions. For each Keystone Exam, approximately 60% to 75% of the total score will be from multiple-choice questions and 25% to 40% of the total score will be from constructed-response questions. The English Composition Keystone Exam will be an exception, with 20% of the total score from multiple-choice questions and 80% of the total score from constructed-response questions.
- Q** Will the Keystone Exams include multiple-choice questions with several possible correct answers? (For example, answer option A and answer option B are both correct, but answer option A is the best choice.)
- A** Each multiple-choice question will have only one correct answer. A student will earn either one point or no points based on his/her response.
- Q** Is there any partial credit assigned to a particular question format?
- A** Each correct multiple-choice answer will be worth one point. Partial credit could be given to answers provided on constructed-response questions, depending upon the rubric.
- Q** Will the Keystone Exams be administered online or in paper/pencil test booklets like the PSSA?
- A** Both online and paper/pencil formats will be available for all Keystone Exams. Districts will determine if online, paper/pencil, or both formats will be used. PDE recommends districts decide the number of students who can be tested in each format, given the assessment window. Makeup exams also can be administered in either online or in paper/pencil format.

# COMPUTER-BASED ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT

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## EXAM ADMINISTRATION

**Q** What tools or functions will be available for students to use on the online version of each Keystone Exam?

**A** The tools available for all online Keystone Exams include an answer cross-off, highlighter, notepad, magnifier, flag, and line guide that students can use to track text. The tool functions are described in the PA Online Assessment Student Tutorials. Formula sheets, a basic calculator, a scientific calculator, and a graphing tool also will be available for the online Keystone Exams in Math. Students can practice using all these tools prior to taking any Keystone Exam by completing the corresponding Online Tools Training.

The PA Online Assessment Student Tutorials can be accessed from the [PA eDIRECT website](#) under the 'Test Setup' menu. Click on 'General Information' and then select the 'Test Tutorials' tab. The Online Tools Training can be accessed by launching the PA Online Assessment software. PA Online Assessment software is available on the [PA eDIRECT website](#). However, it does require a user account to access as the download is considered secure and not available for public access. Once the PA Online Assessment software has been installed, select 'Online Tools Training' under the 'Keystone Exams' tab.

**Q** Will students be able to use scratch paper when taking the Keystone Exams online?

**A** Students will be allowed to use scratch paper when taking the online Keystone Exams. All scratch paper must be collected and returned to the School Test Coordinator at the end of the Test Session.

**Q** What happens if a student inadvertently exits the online Keystone Exam?

**A** While all answer responses will be saved, mark-ups using the highlighter, answer cross-off, notepad, or flag tools will not be saved. To re-enter the Test Session, the student should use the same username and password.

## PA ONLINE ASSESSMENT STUDENT TUTORIALS

**Q** Will there be a PA Online Assessment Student Tutorial for each course of the Keystone Exams?

**A** Each course of the Keystone Exams being administered online will have a PA Online Assessment Student Tutorial. The Student Tutorials use pictures, motion, and sound to present visual and verbal descriptions of the properties and features of the PA Online Assessment system. Once the PA Online Assessment Student Tutorial is opened, the user can follow the menu selection on the screen to determine which videos to view. It is strongly encouraged to have students review the PA Online Assessment Student Tutorials prior to taking any Keystone Exam. Students are allowed to repeat the Student Tutorial as often as desired and needed.

**Q** How long will it take to complete the PA Online Assessment Student Tutorial?

**A** Although an exhaustive exploration of the Student Tutorial will take about 30 minutes, most students can become knowledgeable about the PA Online Assessment in as little as 15 minutes of exploration. However, additional time should be scheduled for students to review the Student Tutorial segments as needed.

## ONLINE TOOLS TRAINING

**Q** Will there be an Online Tools Training for each course of the Keystone Exams?

**A** Each course of the Keystone Exams being administered online will have an Online Tools Training. The Online Tools Training is designed to provide an introductory experience using the online assessment software in preparation for taking the Keystone Exam. It is strongly suggested that students be given time to take the Online Tools Training prior to taking the Keystone Exam for the first time. Specific instructions to administer the Online Tools Training are detailed in the *Keystone Exams Directions for Administration Manuals*.

**Q** What is the purpose of each Online Tools Training?

**A** The purpose of the Online Tools Training is for students to observe and try out features of the online assessment software prior to the actual assessment. Questions have been chosen to demonstrate online assessment features and uses. This will allow students to experience taking the exam on a computer and to experiment with the features available during an actual Keystone Exam. The Online Tools Training is NOT designed to demonstrate complete coverage of the assessed content, and it is NOT scored.

**Q** Will each of the Online Tools Trainings for the Keystone Exams include constructed-response questions for students to practice entering their answers on the computer?

**A** Each Online Tools Training for the Keystone Exams will include at least one constructed-response question. Students will have the opportunity to practice typing responses in a narrative format, graphing functions, and entering equations using the Equation Builder in order to become familiar with the features available during an actual Keystone Exam administered online.

**Q** How long will it take to complete an Online Tools Training for the Keystone Exams?

**A** It is recommended students are given at least 30 minutes to go through all questions in each course of the Online Tools Training for the Keystone Exams. Additional time should be scheduled for students to become familiar with the features of the online assessment software.

## ONLINE CALCULATOR

- Q** What types of calculators will be available for students to use on the online Keystone Exams pertaining to Math courses?
- A** The Keystone Exams pertaining to Math courses will have a basic calculator and a scientific calculator as part of the tools available for the online version. A graphing tool allowing students to only graph functions will also be available for online versions of the Keystone Exams pertaining to Math courses. An Online Calculator Manual describing the functions available on each calculator is posted on the [PA eDIRECT website](#). Click on 'Documents' under the 'General Information' tab. Students are strongly encouraged to practice using all of the online calculators and tools when completing the Online Tools Training.
- Q** Can students use their own calculators instead of the online calculators when taking the Keystone Exams pertaining to Math courses?
- A** Students may use their own calculators. A list of approved calculators and the calculator policy are posted on the [PA eDIRECT website](#). Click on 'Documents' under the 'General Information' tab.
- Q** Will there be separate non-calculator and calculator sections on the Math Keystone Exams as there are on the PSSA?
- A** No. A student may use a calculator for answering all questions on the Keystone Exams pertaining to Math courses.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

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### PAPER & PENCIL KEYSTONE EXAMS:

- Q** What accommodations will be available for the Keystone Exams?
- A** Similar to the PSSA, appropriate accommodations will be permitted and based on determinations made by the student's teacher(s) or Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. Accommodations guidelines will be available in spring 2011.
- Q** Can a student have a question read aloud, similar to the accommodation available for the PSSA?
- A** Consistent to accommodations guidelines, questions on the Keystone Exams for Math and Science courses only may be read aloud as long as other students' testing is not interrupted and it is part of the regular course instruction.
- Q** Will any of the Keystone Exams be translated into a different language?
- A** Paper/pencil versions of the Math and Science Keystone Exams only will be translated into Spanish.

## ONLINE KEYSTONE EXAMS:

- Q** Will there be an audio version?

**A** Audio versions will be available for the online Math and Science Keystone Exams.
- Q** Will there be a magnifier students can use on the online version?

**A** A magnifier will be available for students for the online versions of all Keystone Exams.

## RETESTING

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- Q** Can students retake a Keystone Exam?

**A** Yes. The regulation allows students who do not score “proficient” or above to retake the Keystone Exam (or Keystone Exam Module) at the next available testing date.
- Q** If retesting, will students have to retake the entire Keystone Exam or just the Keystone Exam Module they didn’t pass?

**A** Students will have the option to retake the entire Keystone Exam or a specific module. Based on advice from the state’s Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), it is in the student’s best interest to retake the entire exam since the new score will be based on the two highest module scores.
- Q** How many Keystone Exam retests for each subject will be offered each school year?

**A** Students will have the opportunity to take the test up to three times each year. For each Keystone Exam, there will be a testing and retesting opportunity given in the winter, spring, and summer.
- Q** Can a student who scores “proficient” or “advanced” retake a Keystone Exam?

**A** The regulation does not preclude “proficient” or “advanced” students from retaking a Keystone Exam at the district’s discretion.
- Q** How will the student’s grade be affected by retaking the entire Keystone Exam or a module within the Keystone Exam?

**A** Keystone Exam scores will be calculated by combining the highest individual module scores. Districts may then recalculate final marks to determine if students passed the course and meet requirements for graduation.
- Q** If a student retakes the exam the following year, does the student’s course grade change?

**A** Adjusting the grade after the retest is a local decision.

- Q If a student fails the course because of not passing a Keystone Exam, do they then have to take the whole course over? Can they advance to the next course in the sequence while waiting to retake the Keystone Exam?

A This is a district-level decision that should be guided by close examination of student performance across the course and on the Keystone Exam. For example, if a student performs just below proficiency on a Keystone Exam but achieves strong course marks otherwise, there may be evidence to support allowing that student to move ahead in their coursetaking. Teachers and administrators should encourage the student to retake the exam, and the teacher should meet with the student to develop an improvement plan ahead of the next test administration.

## SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION

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- Q What is supplemental instruction in the context of the new legislation?

A This provision of the regulation underscores what all of us are working toward for every child: proficiency in the state's academic standards. Districts, principals, and teachers will continue to decide which extra supports make sense for students—before or after school tutoring, peer tutoring, in-class assistance, homework assignments, differentiated supports, etc.

## ITEM AND SCORING SAMPLER

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- Q Will there be a resource, such as sample questions, that administrators, teachers, parents/guardians, and students can use to help prepare for the Keystone Exams?

A An Item and Scoring Sampler for each Keystone Exam will be available to help students and teachers prepare for the Keystone Exams. This resource will include both multiple-choice and constructed-response sample questions as well as examples of how answers for constructed-response questions are scored.

- Q What types of questions will be included in the resource?

A Each Keystone Exams Item and Scoring Sampler will have multiple-choice questions and constructed-response questions for students to practice answering. All included sample questions will be aligned to the [Keystone Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content](#) found on the SAS website.

- Q When will the resource be available?

A The Item and Scoring Sampler will be available beginning spring 2011.

- Q Will the resource be online for parents/guardians to access?

A Yes. The Item and Scoring Sampler will be posted on the SAS website.



## COMMUNICATIONS

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- Q** Will information be available for districts and schools to customize and send to parents/guardians explaining the new requirements?
- A** Yes. PDE will provide template information on the SAS website to use in communications to parents/guardians. This information will be online beginning mid-November 2010.
- Q** In what formats will information for administering the Keystone Exams be available and when?
- A** User Guides and Directions for Administration Manuals will be delivered as hard copies to the administration building of each school district. They also will be available on the PA eDIRECT website. Click on 'Documents' under the 'General Information' tab. User Guides and Directions for Administration Manuals will be available four weeks prior to the beginning of the administration window.

## PENNSYLVANIA INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (PIMS)

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- Q** How are Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS) course codes associated with the Keystone Exams?
- A** All of the Pennsylvania PIMS course codes are mapped to the available Keystone Exams. A list of specific courses mapped to corresponding Keystone Exams is available in the appendix of the *Keystone Exams Fall 2010 Field Test User Guide*. The *Keystone Exams Fall 2010 Field Test User Guide* is posted on the [PA eDIRECT website](#). Click on 'Documents' under the 'General Information' tab.