

Keystone Exams Overview (revised July 2014)

In 2012, the Pennsylvania Department of Education eliminated the grade 11 PSSA assessments in Reading, Math, Science, and Writing. These tests had been in place to comply with the requirements outlined in the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. More specifically, student performance on these PSSA exams was a graduation requirement and part of the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measures required by NCLB. These assessments are now replaced by Keystone Exams.

Chapter 4 of the Pennsylvania School Code notes that students must demonstrate mastery of the PA Core Standards on the Keystone Exams. Keystone Exams currently exist for Algebra 1, Biology, and Literature. These exams are typically taken during the spring of the year in which a student is enrolled in the appropriate course, regardless of the grade he or she is in. For instance, a student will take the Biology Keystone Exam when he or she is enrolled in a Biology course in 9th or 10th grade. The Literature Keystone Exam is aligned to North Allegheny's 10th Grade English course.

If a student does not receive a score of "Advanced" or "Proficient" on a Keystone Exam, the student is permitted to take a re-test during designated windows established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Students may take the re-test as many times as desired prior to graduation.

If a student does not reach at least the "Proficient" level on a Keystone re-test in a particular subject, he or she must demonstrate mastery through another method in order to meet the graduation requirement. For students in the graduating classes of 2014, 2015, and 2016, the completion of the requisite "practicum course" satisfies the graduation requirement. Beginning with the class of 2017, the student must complete a Project Based Assessment developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Procedures for Students Who Do not Pass a Keystone Exam

If a student's Performance Level on the Algebra 1, Biology and/or Literature Keystone Exam is "Basic" or "Below Basic," the student may be offered a summer re-test (provided a re-test window is offered by the State and the District) option. If the student declines the summer re-test option, or it is not made available, additional opportunities for a re-test will occur during the next available testing window.

If a student's Performance Level is "Basic" on his or her first administration of the Algebra 1, Literature or Biology Keystone Exam(s), the student will be provided one of the following forms of remediation:

- Students who score in the top half of the basic range, as noted by the scaled score, will be provided an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) that the student will work on independently. The ILP will be developed in conjunction with a content area teacher and will be based on the specific assessment anchors where the student needs additional support. The student may also elect to voluntarily enroll in the appropriate Practicum course.
- Students who score in the bottom half of the basic range, as noted by the scaled score, will be required to enroll in the appropriate course titled English Practicum, Mathematics Practicum or Biology Practicum during the next scheduling window.

If the student's Performance Level is "Below Basic" on his or her first administration of the Algebra 1, Biology and/or Literature Keystone Exam(s), the student is required to enroll in the semester course titled English Practicum, Mathematics Practicum or Biology Practicum during the school day in the following school year for supplemental instruction.

Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) can participate in the re-test option and participate in other supplemental instruction, as determined by the IEP Team.

Procedures for Students Who Do Not Pass a Keystone Exam After Three Attempts

If a student does not reach at least the "Proficient" level on a Keystone Exam after three attempts, or by the end of the junior year, the student must demonstrate mastery through a local assessment aligned to the academic standards (graduating classes of 2014, 2015 and 2016) or a Project Based Assessment identified by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (graduating classes of 2017 and beyond).

- (Graduating Classes of 2014, 2015, 2016) The local assessment is embedded in the Mathematics Practicum, English Practicum and Biology Practicum courses. The students can either pass two benchmark assessments in the course, or they can complete the class with a final grade of 70% or higher.
- (Graduating Classes of 2017 and beyond) The Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for developing the Project Based Assessments. These will be facilitated by NASD staff members and communicated to the appropriate students.

A student is still permitted to take the re-test up until the time of graduation.

Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) can participate in the re-test option and participate in other supplemental instruction, as determined by the IEP Team.