



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

February 21, 2024

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
United States Department of Education
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Secretary Cardona:

I am writing to request a one-year waiver of certain Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) requirements to support Pennsylvania's development of a new science assessment aligned with the new Pennsylvania science content standards. The Pennsylvania State Board of Education ratified updated science standards during the 2022-23 school year, to take effect in 2025-26. Pennsylvania proposes to administer a census field test of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSAs), covering new science academic standards in spring 2025 for all eligible students enrolled in grades 5 and 8. This field test will serve to realign Pennsylvania's assessment to the newly adopted science standards and transition the assessment system from grade 4 to grade 5. The grade 11 Keystone Exam will continue to be administered as usual in 2024-25, with an embedded field test used to aid in the transition to the new content standards in 2025-26.

Correspondingly, Pennsylvania requests a one-year waiver for the PA Alternate System of Assessment Dynamic Learning Maps (PASA DLM) for spring 2025 for grade 5. The request will ensure the science alternate assessment aligns with the science general assessment in the transition from grade 4 to grade 5 administration, will eliminate duplicate testing of students with significant cognitive disabilities at the elementary level, and will allow for the transition to new science alternate content and assessment aligned to Pennsylvania's new science standards. In spring 2025, as the alternate assessment transitions to grade 5, science would be administered in grades 8 and 11 only. Students in grade 5 would have been previously assessed in spring 2024 and would have met the ESEA assessment requirement for science. In spring 2026, students in grades 5, 8 and 11 will participate in the science assessment with embedded field testing. In spring 2027, students in grades 5, 8 and 11 will participate in the science alternate assessment aligned to the revised science content standards and essential elements.

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Pennsylvania requests not to administer the current general science assessments and not report individual assessment field test results to parents, educators, or the public during the 2024-25 school year. Pennsylvania will hold districts and schools accountable for participation in the field test and report that data to the Department. We commit to a full operational administration of assessments and corresponding reports in 2025-26. Additionally, all assessments will be fully aligned to the new PA science standards in 2026-27.

I appreciate your continued support and remain committed to working with you. If you have any questions, please contact my staff at: ra-ed-pssa-keystone@pa.gov.

Thank you for your continued commitment to ensuring that all students have access to a high-quality education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Mumin', followed by a large, loopy flourish that extends to the right.

Khalid N. Mumin, Ed.D.
Secretary of Education

cc: Patrick Rooney, Director, School Support & Accountability Programs, USDE
Donald Peasley, Assessment Team Lead, USDE
Brian Campbell, Director of Curriculum Assessment and Instruction, PDE
Brian Truesdale, Chief of Assessment and Accountability, PDE