



## **Five Key Points Educators Should Know About the 2015 PSSA**

---

1. This past spring a new PSSA was administered in Pennsylvania’s classrooms, grades 3 through 8, in English Language Arts and Mathematics. This assessment was the first PSSA to be fully-aligned to the more rigorous PA Core Standards, which the State Board of Education adopted in fall 2013. The PA Core Standards are intended to better prepare commonwealth students for college and career readiness when they graduate.
2. On July 9, 2015, at a public meeting in Harrisburg, the State Board of Education approved “cut scores” for determining student performance levels on the 2015 PSSAs. The Secretary of Education recommended these cut scores, which a standards setting team of 58 Pennsylvania educators developed. These educators are subject matter experts who represented different geographic regions, levels of teaching experience, and urban, suburban, and rural communities. The team used a best practice methodology called “Bookmarking,” and the process was undertaken with fidelity and reliability.
3. The heightened difficulty of the PA Core and the limited time between final adoption and implementation of the new PSSA have resulted in fewer students scoring proficient or advanced. Other states have experienced similar results when making the transition to more rigorous standards. A thorough transition to the new standards requires time to develop new curriculum, train teachers, and provide resources to support the new curriculum. The 2014-15 school year marks year one of what will be a multi-year transition. With time, and as student and teacher familiarity with the new PA Core grows, student performance should steadily improve.
4. In regards to PVAAS, based on what has happened in other states during their transition to more rigorous standards, it is unlikely that there will be a substantial decrease in PVAAS growth measures statewide, even if there is a substantial decrease in the percentage of students testing in the Proficient range or higher.
5. Teachers and administrators have worked hard to update curriculum and align teaching with the new standards. The commonwealth’s students, families, and communities appreciate the important role that educators play in influencing the state’s future and appreciate their commitment to education.