

SUMMARY OF 2002 PENNSYLVANIA SYSTEM OF SCHOOL ASSESSMENT
(PSSA)
READING, MATHEMATICS AND WRITING
SCHOOL-BY-SCHOOL SCALED SCORES
NOVEMBER 2002

INTRODUCTION

In an effort to further inform Pennsylvanians about the quality and characteristics of schools and other educational institutions in Pennsylvania, this report provides 2002 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) reading and mathematics performance level results and participation rates for individual schools throughout the Commonwealth. Additionally, this report provides reading, mathematics, and eleventh grade writing scaled-score school level results. Parallel district performance level and scaled score results are provided as well.

The PSSA is a statewide test, which is administered as required under the Chapter 4 Regulations of the State Board of Education as well as various Pennsylvania Statutes. The test is designed to assess academic levels of students, schools, and districts as well as to assist in identifying their strengths and weaknesses and foster improvements in academic achievement. The basis of the PSSA is the content contained in Pennsylvania's Academic Standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and Mathematics.

The reading and mathematics PSSA is administered to students in grades five, eight and eleven, and was most recently administered in April 2002. The writing assessment is administered to students in grade 11 and was most recently administered in February 2002. All public school students are required to participate in the assessment unless they are excused by their parents for religious reasons. Information of previous test administrations can be found on the Department's website at <http://www.pde.state.pa.us>. (The sixth and ninth grade writing PSSA was administered in October 2001 and those results are provided on the Department's website in the School Profiles section.)

Performance levels were reported established for the April 2001 reading and mathematics PSSA. These performance levels, designated as advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic, are criteria based measures that represent how well a student is achieving in a particular area of Pennsylvania's academic standards. The performance levels were established by committees of Pennsylvania educators. The initial performance level reporting for writing is based upon February 2002 eleventh grade assessment results. (More detailed information concerning Performance levels may be found on the Department's website at http://www.pde.state.pa.us/a_and_t/lib/a_and_t/mathandreadingperformancelevelhandbook.pdf.)

READING THESE REPORTS

These reports contain PSSA performance level (reading, mathematics and writing) and scaled score (reading, mathematics, and writing) as well as participation rate results, by school, for public schools, including charter and vocational technical schools. Commensurate district PSSA results are also reported. These reports also include the PSSA results for intermediate units (IUs), approved private schools (APSs), and private residential rehabilitative institutions (PRRIs). These three types of schools are required to administer the PSSA. The students in these educational institutions are also public school students.

A. Overview of IU, APS, PRRI, and Nonpublic / private school PSSA participation

IUs provide a wide variety of educational program services to special needs students with disabilities within 29 regions in Pennsylvania. The students served by IUs typically have severe disabilities, which occur at relatively low incidence in the general school population.

APSs provide specific special education programs for students with disabilities such as cerebral palsy, neurological impairment, or serious emotional disturbance who cannot be adequately served by their school district or intermediate unit. An Approved Private School is a private school licensed by the State Board of Private Academic Schools.

PRRIs are residential facilities for court placed juveniles who are declared legally delinquent under the Juvenile Act. Educational services are provided to the PRRI students as part of their total rehabilitative package of services pursuant to a contract with the school district or IU.

Non-public and private schools are not required to participate in the PSSA. However, the Department offers these educational institutions the option of voluntarily participating in the PSSA provided they agree to include their results in Department reports and publications. One hundred-twenty five non-public and private schools, and twenty-three other schools such as Licensed Private Academic Schools, Juvenile Correction Facilities, and Private Residential Rehabilitation Institutes participated in the 2002 assessment.

B. Data file presentation and statewide results

There are two types of PSSA data files reported: School files and a District file.

The School Files

In the IU breakdown school files the presentation is by districts / educational institutions (including Vocational Technical – Career and Technical Centers) and arranged alphabetically within county and schools alphabetically within the district. The intermediate unit (IU) number is provided in the column headed as **IU**. APSs and PRRIs as well as non-public and private school educational institutions are listed along with all other schools alphabetically by county. In the school level EXCEL files that include all IUs, the results are arranged in alphabetical order by county.

There are separate school files for performance levels and scaled score results (for mathematics and reading). The reading and mathematics school detail performance level files format displays each school by grade level combination for which there are PSSA results. **“Performance Levels”** indicate the percentage of students within each criterion-referenced reading and mathematics academic achievement level for 5th, 8th, and 11th grades, and for 11th grade writing. The advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic performance level criteria were determined by Pennsylvania educators along with parent and business representation.

The scaled score files format (for mathematics and reading) is slightly different in that it shows all PSSA grade levels for each school even if the school does not have PSSA results at a particular grade (because of the school’s grade level configuration). **“Scaled scores”** are reported in reading, mathematics, and writing. Scaled scores are included because of their ease of interpretation and because they allow comparisons of school results with district and statewide average scaled scores. Additionally, scaled scores provide one overall summary figure at the school (and district) level. (For the 11th grade writing assessment, the performance levels and scaled score are in the same file.)

Average Scaled Scores heading indicates the school scaled score in mathematics and reading for 5th, 8th and 11th grades, respectively, as well as for the 11th grade writing.

Participation Rates heading in the school file detail scaled score presentation indicates the percent of 5th, 8th and 11th grade students in the school who responded to the PSSA and received a score for mathematics and reading. Parallel information is provided for 11th grade writing. For reading and mathematics, the participation rate information is not reported in the performance level sections as it is already provided in the scaled score sections. For these two content areas, the participation rate data may be found in the school detail scaled score files.

The District Files

The District EXCEL files are also alphabetical within county and the intermediate unit number is shown in the column headed as **IU**. The district file contains all educational entities that have a unique administrative unit number that participated in the PSSA. The district files provide both scaled score and performance level PSSA data for grade 5, 8, and 11 reading and mathematics and grade 11 writing.

Statewide Results

The 2002 statewide performance level percentages (rounded) by content and grade are as follows: (ADV = advanced, PRO= proficient, BASIC = basic, BB =Below Basic). **Statewide statistics are based on public schools.**

Mathematics Performance Level 2002

	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
ADV	25.8	17.6	22.7
PRO	27.3	34.1	26.9
BASIC	21.7	21.3	21.4
BB	25.2	27.0	29.0

Reading Performance Level 2002

	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
ADV	18.2	20.4	15.7
PRO	38.8	38.4	43.3
BASIC	22.7	20.7	21.3
BB	20.3	20.5	19.7

Writing Performance Level 2002

	Grade 11
ADV	13.7
PRO	56.4
BASIC	15.5
BB	14.4

The 2002 statewide scaled score averages (rounded) are as follows:

	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
Mathematics	1320	1320	1320
Reading	1320	1310	1320
Writing			1330

The 2002 statewide district scaled score ranges for each subject and grade are as follows. (These score ranges are based upon the 501 school districts):

	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
Mathematics	1080-1520	1100-1540	1080-1550
Reading	1070-1530	1080-1500	1090-1480
Writing			1080-1570

The 2002 statewide school scaled score ranges for each subject and grade are as follows:

	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
Mathematics	740-1690	970-1540	890-1650
Reading	770-1640	880-1520	820-1560
Writing			860-1650

Overall, the statewide PSSA participation rate in 2002 was approximately 97% with the results varying slightly by content and grade level.

C. Interpreting the results

For reading and mathematics the 1996 PSSA is the base year. Because the 1997 through 2002 assessments were statistically equated (or linked) with the 1996 assessment reference year, the scaled scores from these years can reflect growth from 1996. For example, if a 2002 scaled score is higher than 1996 (or 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001) it can be interpreted as improvement from that year. Since the statewide writing assessment model and scoring guide changed in 2000, PSSA writing results from previous years are not directly comparable to the 2000 results and beyond.

In some cases in the scaled score sections, test data is not listed for a school. This occurs when a school does not have students in the grade(s) tested. For example, an elementary school that does not have fifth, eighth, or eleventh graders would not participate in the reading or mathematics PSSA. In addition, some educational institutions serve special populations, such as IUs, APSs, and PRRIs, and their results should not be viewed relative to schools with heterogeneous populations. Additionally, because each one of these educational institutions is highly unique, they should not be viewed relative to each other.

Further, the size of the school / educational institution should also be considered in interpreting the results from year to year. That is, institutions with a lesser number of children will tend to show more variability in scores from year to year. Schools that have

less than 10 students assessed are noted by a double asterisk (**).

Also, in some cases, schools did not have a percent participation rate in one, both or all three subject areas commensurate with the No Child Left Behind Act. Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110), the acceptable participation rate is designated as 95 percent. The participation rate serves as an aid to interpreting how adequately the results represent the school population for the assessed grade levels.

In September 2002, each educational institution received detailed analyses of their performance on the PSSA. To fully understand these scores and receive detailed information on a program, please contact the institution directly. Individuals are also encouraged to contact the IU, APS, or PRRI of their interest to further understand the uniqueness of that particular educational program and the special student population served.

These results are also available online at www.pde.state.pa.us.