

PSSA English Language Arts Test Design

The PSSA English Language Arts test plan shown in the following table is organized by grade and broken down between Multiple-Choice (MC), Evidence-Based Selected Response (EBSR), Short Answer (SA) [Grade 3 only], and Text Dependent Analysis (TDA) [Grades 4–8 only]. Core items are also distinguished from items that serve the role of psychometric use (PU) and field test (FT). The following tables summarize the ELA test design.

Standard Operational ELA High-Level Test Plan per Form

Grade	Selected Response							Constructed Response (CR)				Total Core Items	Total Core Points (Raw)	Total Core Points (Weighted)
	Passage-Based Multiple Choice (MC)		Stand Alone MC			Evidence-Based Selected Response (EBSR)		Passage-Based Short-Answer (SA)		Text Dependent Analysis (TDA)				
	Core	Embedded FT	Core	Psychometric Use	FT	Core	Embedded FT	Core	Embedded FT	Core*	Embedded FT			
3	20 (4 pass.)	8 (1 pass.)	9	1	2	4	2	2	1	0	0	33 SR 2 CR	45	45
4	23 (4 pass.)	8 (1 pass.)	9	1	2	6	2	0	0	1	1	38 SR 1 CR	51	63
5	23 (4 pass.)	8 (1 pass.)	9	1	2	6	2	0	0	1	1	38 SR 1 CR	51	63
6	23 (4 pass.)	8 (1 pass.)	9	1	2	6	2	0	0	1	1	38 SR 1 CR	51	63
7	23 (4 pass.)	8 (1 pass.)	9	1	2	6	2	0	0	1	1	38 SR 1 CR	51	63
8	23 (4 pass.)	8 (1 pass.)	9	1	2	6	2	0	0	1	1	38 SR 1 CR	51	63

*TDA core items presented on grades 4 through 8 are weighted by 4.

Item Reduction

Starting with the 2023 assessment, the PSSA ELA tests have fewer items than in previous administrations. This item reduction is due to the elimination of psychometric equating block items from ELA forms. These items were previously used to compare items across administrations and are no longer needed due to changes in the test design.

English Language Arts PSSA Test Content Blueprints

The content blueprints for the PCS-based ELA assessment are shown in the following tables. The blueprints are organized around three Reporting Clusters (Reading, Conventions of Standard English [Writing], and Text-Dependent Analysis [Reading/Writing]) based on the expressed emphasis contained within the PCS. As stated in the released PDE Assessment Anchor and Eligible Content documents, the Reporting Categories are as follows:

- A = Literature Text
- B = Informational Text
- D = Conventions of Standard English
- E = Text-Dependent Analysis

The first two Reporting Categories (Literature Text and Informational Text) are understood to be the “Genre Reporting Categories.” The Genre Reporting Categories A and B for ELA are also mapped as part of a dual-alignment into Core Competencies Reporting Categories. There are three concepts prevalent throughout the PCS-ELA Standards, and these themes appear in both Literature Text and Informational Text that will appear on the PCS-based PSSA ELA test. The following table shows how the results of specific PCS-based Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content provide a second layer of reporting. These three additional (dual) Reporting Categories are as follows:

- A–K/B–K: Key Ideas and Details [Key Ideas]
- A–C/B–C: Craft and Structure, and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas [CSI]
- A–V/B–V: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use [Vocabulary]

Revised Assessment Anchor Reporting Categories

Previous Reporting Category C (Writing) has shifted from the statewide accountability test to the local level. English Language Arts Standard 1.4 Writing continues to be assessed by the ELA PSSA test within reporting categories D (Conventions of Standard English) and E (Text-Dependent Analysis) but is not reported separately.

PCS-Based Reporting Summary Table

ELA Reporting Framework, Clusters, and Categories			Reporting Category Code
Reading	Genre	Literature Text	A
		Informational Text	B
	Core Competencies	Key Ideas and Details [Key Ideas]	A-K/B-K
		Craft and Structure, and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas [CSI]	A-C/B-C
		Vocabulary Acquisition and Use [Vocabulary]	A-V/B-V
Conventions of Standard English (Writing)			D
Text Dependent Analysis (Reading/Writing)*			E

*TDA core items presented on grades 4 through 8

PCS-based PSSA ELA Blueprint: Dual Reporting for Reporting Categories A and B

Genre Reporting Categories	Core Competencies Reporting Categories		
	Key Ideas and Details (Key Ideas)	Craft and Structure, and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (CSI)	Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (Vocabulary)
A: Literature Text	A-K.1.1.1	A-C.2.1.1	A-V.4.1.1
	A-K.1.1.2	A-C.2.1.2 –G6, 7, and 8 only	A-V.4.1.2
	A-K.1.1.3	A-C.2.1.3 –G6, 7, and 8 only	
		A-C.3.1.1	
B: Informational Text	B-K.1.1.1	B-C.2.1.1	B-V.4.1.1
	B-K.1.1.2	B-C.2.1.2	B-V.4.1.2
	B-K.1.1.3	B-C.2.1.3 –G6, 7, and 8 only	
		B-C.3.1.1	
		B-C.3.1.2	
		B-C.3.1.3 –G3, 4, and 5 only	

PCS-based PSSA ELA Blueprint: Reporting Information for Reporting Categories D and E

Reporting Categories	Descriptors		
	Grammar and Usage	Capitalization, Punctuation, and Spelling	Conventions
D: Conventions of Standard English (Writing)	D.1.1.1	D.1.2.1	D.2.1.1
	D.1.1.2	D.1.2.2	D.2.1.2 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only
	D.1.1.3	D.1.2.3	D.2.1.3 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only
	D.1.1.4	D.1.2.4 –G3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 only	D.2.1.4 –G5, 6, 7, and 8 only
	D.1.1.5	D.1.2.5 –G3, 5, and 8 only	D.2.1.5 –G6, 7, and 8 only
	D.1.1.6	D.1.2.6 –G3 only	D.2.1.6 –G8 only
	D.1.1.7		
	D.1.1.8		
	D.1.1.9 –G3, 7, and 8 only		
	D.1.1.10 –G8 only		
	D.1.1.11 –G8 only		
E: Text Dependent Analysis (Reading/Writing)	Analysis, Reflection, and Research		
	E.1.1.1 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only		
	E.1.1.2 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only		
	E.1.1.3 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only		
	E.1.1.4 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only		
	E.1.1.5 –G4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 only		
	E.1.1.6 –G5, 6, 7, and 8 only		

The English Language Arts blueprints are provided in the following two tables.

PCS-based PSSA ELA Blueprint: Percent of the Core by Reporting Category by Grade

Cluster	Reporting Category	Grade					
		3	4	5	6	7	8
Reading	A	33%–47%	24%–37%	24%–37%	24%–37%	24%–37%	24%–37%
	B	33%–47%	24%–37%	24%–37%	24%–37%	24%–37%	24%–37%
Conventions of Standard English (Writing)	D	20%	14%	14%	14%	14%	14%
TDA (Reading/ Writing)	E*		25%	25%	25%	25%	25%
All Areas Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* Reflects the impact of weighted values for TDA items

PCS-based PSSA ELA Blueprint: Points by Reporting Category by Grade

Cluster	Reporting Category	Grade					
		3	4	5	6	7	8
Reading	A	15–21 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts
	B	15–21 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts	15–23 pts
Conventions of Standard English (Writing)	D	9 pts	9 pts	9 pts	9 pts	9 pts	9 pts
TDA (Reading/ Writing)	E*		16 pts	16 pts	16 pts	16 pts	16 pts
All Areas Total Core		45 pts	63 pts	63 pts	63 pts	63 pts	63 pts

* Reflects the impact of weighted values for TDA items

ELA Test Development Design

At grade 3, the PCS-ELA core can be described as:

20 core passage MC items	20 points
9 core standalone MC items	9 points
2 core 2 pt EBSR items	4 points
2 core 3 pt EBSR items	6 points
2 core 3 pt SA items	6 points
<hr/>	
Total	45 points

As shown in the operational layout tables below, the PSSA ELA tests include three (3) sections. Due to the different roles of Short Answer (SA) and Text-Dependent Analysis (TDA) items, the design for grade 3 differs from the design for grades 4 through 8. SA items are used at grade 3 only, and TDA prompts are used at grades 4 through 8 only.

ELA Operational Section Layout Plan for Grade 3 per Form

Section	Content Emphasis	Number of MC/EBSR per Form	Number of SA	Estimated Number of Passages	Estimated Section Testing Time (in minutes)
1	Conventions of Standard English (Writing) and Reading	14–18 MC 1–3 EBSR	1	2	50–60
2	Reading	8 MC 2 EBSR	1	1	35
3	Conventions of Standard English (Writing) and Reading	14–18 MC 1–3 EBSR	1	2	50–60

At grades 4 through 8, the PCS-ELA core can be described as:

23 core passage MC items	23 points
9 core standalone MC items	9 points
3 core 2 pt EBSR items	6 points
3 core 3 pt EBSR items	9 points
1 core 4 pt TDA (weighted x4)	16 points
<hr/>	
Total	63 points

ELA Operational Section Layout Plan for Grades 4 through 8

Section	Content Emphasis	Number of MC/EBSR per Form	Number of TDA	Estimated Number of Passages	Estimated Section Testing Time (in minutes)
1	Conventions of Standard English (Writing) and Reading	21–24 MC 4–5 EBSR	0	3	70–80
2	Reading and Text Dependent Analysis (Reading/Writing)	8 MC 2 EBSR	1	1	70
3	Conventions of Standard English (Writing), Reading and Text Dependent Analysis (Reading/Writing)	11–14 MC 1–2 EBSR	1	1	70–80