

SHALER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Frequently Ask Questions

Keystone Exams

In July 2012, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) released additional important information about Keystone Exam implementation. As a District, we feel that it is important to keep our parents and community informed as to the educational changes that will impact their children. As a result, we have created a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the Keystone Exams is provided below.

Q: What are Keystone Exams?

Keystone Exams are state mandated end-of-course tests intended for students in the Class of 2017 and beyond to demonstrate proficiency in core subjects. The expectation is that all students will pass these tests in order to graduate. The Keystone Exams in Algebra I and Literature will be used to determine the high school's AYP status each year. The keystones will replace the PSSA for 11th graders.

Q: What subjects have a related Keystone Exam?

English Language Arts, Algebra I, and Biology are the first three Keystone Exams to be implemented. The state will be developing other exams as part of the graduation requirement in future years which include but are not limited to Composition (2019), and Civics and Government (2020). The state may also develop 5 Keystone Exams that will be available for voluntary use. These exams are Geometry, U.S. History, Algebra II, Chemistry, and World History.

Q: How are Keystone Exams related to high school graduation requirements?

Students graduating in 2017 (current 8th graders) and beyond must demonstrate proficiency in English Language Arts, Algebra I, and Biology. Students graduating before 2017 will be required to take the Keystone Exams for AYP purposes but their results will not be counted towards their graduation requirements.

Q: When do students take Keystone Exams?

Keystone Exams are attached to a particular course, not a student's grade level. The exam is administered like a final exam when the course is completed and when the exams are made available by PDE. For example, Algebra I is taken by both middle school and high school students. The Keystone Exam will be administered at the end of the Algebra 1 course regardless of the grade level of the student. This will be applied to students in the graduating class of 2017 and beyond. Starting the 2012-13 school year, all eleventh grade students will take the keystones.

Q: How soon will Keystone Exams be administered?

The Keystone Exams will be administered starting in the spring of 2013.

Q: My child took Algebra I last year. What happens if a student in the class of 2017 or beyond has completed a course before the test is offered?

The regulations state that students who complete a course before the Keystone is required for graduation will not need to demonstrate proficiency on the exams for graduation, however; students will be required to take the Keystone Exams while in high school to determine the school's AYP status.

Q: Does this mean that the state will be applying test results from middle school students to high school graduation requirements?

Yes. If a student completes a course aligned to a Keystone Exam during the middle school years, the proficiency outcome is used to determine eligibility for a high school diploma.

Q: Can an individual student opt out of a Keystone Exam?

No. The regulations do not permit this.

Q: Can a student earn credit for a course by passing a Keystone Exam without taking the course?

Shaler Area School District has no plans to enable students to earn credit for a course by examination.

Q: What happens if a student is not proficient?

Students who do not pass the Keystone Exam score must receive remedial instruction and must retake the Keystone Exam until a passing final course grade is achieved. After two unsuccessful attempts, students may be eligible to demonstrate proficiency through the completion of a project-based assessment that will be scored by a team of regional teachers.

Q: I have heard these tests are voluntary for Districts. Can a School District choose not to administer these exams?

The regulations permit school districts to use local assessments instead of Keystone Exams. The assessments must be deemed by an independent validation to address all required content, to be of comparable rigor, and to have comparable proficiency cut scores. The state is currently developing guidelines for local assessments. The Shaler Area School District does not have plans to administer or create local assessments to replace the keystones.

Q: Will there be testing accommodations for students with special needs?

As with the PSSA tests, students with special needs may take Keystone Exams with accommodations listed in a student Individualized Education Plan, subject to any limitations the state applies to a particular test.

Q: Will the scores be on the high school transcript?

Keystone Exam scores shall be listed by proficiency level on student transcripts.

Q: Will Keystone Exams replace the PSSA tests?

The Keystone Exams will replace the PSSA tests for eleventh grade students only beginning in the 2012-13 school year.

Q: Will my child be prepared for Keystone Exams?

District courses aligned with Keystone Exams are designed to address the requirements of these tests.

Q: I have further questions. Whom shall I contact?

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For further information please visit the links below:

[Pennsylvania Department of Education SAS Portal on Keystones](#)