

A Summary of District-Wide Assessments Administered to School District of Philadelphia Students During the 2022-23 School Year

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Overview

This brief provides a summary of the major assessments administered in the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) and student participation in these assessments during the 2022-23 school year. After the disruptions due to Covid-19 in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, assessments were administered as usual in both 2021-22 and 2022-23, allowing for meaningful year-over-year analyses of participation.^{1, 2}

Interim assessments, summative end-of-course exams and state standardized assessments were among the assessments administered to SDP students in 2022-23. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) was not administered in 2022-23 because it is administered in even years.

Assessments included in this brief:

Interim Assessments

- Star
- Biology Benchmark

Summative End-of-Course Exams

- Civics Test
- NOCTI Assessments
- IB Exam
- AP Exams

State Standardized Assessments

- PSSA
- PASA
- Keystone Exams
- ACCESS & Alt. ACCESS for ELLs

Other Tests

- KEI
- NNAT
- PSAT 8/9
- PSAT/NMSQT
- SAT
- ACT

¹ Information about the Office of Assessment can be accessed here:

<https://www.philasd.org/era/assessment/>, and past and current assessment calendars can be accessed here: <https://www.philasd.org/era/assessment/calendar/>

² For the summary of SDP assessments administered in 2021-22, see:

<https://www.philasd.org/research/2023/04/24/a-summary-of-district-wide-assessments-administered-to-sdp-students-during-the-2021-22-school-year/>

For a summary of SDP assessments administered in 2020-21, see:

<https://www.philasd.org/research/2022/02/18/summary-of-district-wide-assessments-administered-to-sdp-students-during-the-2020-21-school-year/>

Interim Assessments

Star

SDP administers the Star assessment as a universal screener and progress monitoring tool for grades K-12. SDP administrators and teachers use Star data to track student progress throughout the year relative to state/Common Core standards, monitor progress toward Board of Education/Outcome & Implementation goals, and inform classroom instruction.^{3, 4}

The 2022-23 school year was the second year that SDP used the Star suite of assessments to measure grade-level skills in reading and math across all grades K-12.⁵ There were four assessment windows in the 2022-23 school year; Fall, Winter 1, and Spring were mandatory and Winter 2 was optional after having been mandatory in previous years. K-12 participation was higher in 2022-23 than it was in 2021-22 for all required assessment windows (Table 1).⁶

Two types of Star tests were administered during each assessment window: Star Curriculum-Based Measures (CBMs) and Star Computer Adaptive Tests (CATs). Star CBMs are 60-second assessments administered by a teacher to assess reading skills in grades K-5 and math skills in grades K-3. Star CATs are computer-adaptive tests which take students about 15-25 minutes to complete, and they are administered to assess reading (grades 3-12), math (grades 3-12), and early literacy skills (numeracy, reading comprehension, and word knowledge) (grades K-2). Students are eligible to move from the Star Early Literacy CAT to the Star Reading and Star Math CATs when they enter 3rd grade or when they reach a unified scale score of 852 on Star Early Literacy, whichever occurs first.⁷

The Office of Research and Evaluation has analyzed student participation and performance on Star assessments as well as the relationship between performance on Star assessments and state standardized tests.⁸

³ For a more detailed explanation of Star metrics and how they are used in SDP, see:

<https://www.philasd.org/research/2022/06/09/star-tests-in-the-school-district-of-philadelphia-a-summary-of-metrics-that-describe-achievement-and-growth/>

⁴ For further details regarding SDP Goals and Guardrails, see: <https://www.philasd.org/goalsandguardrails/>

⁵ SDP used aimswebPlus for grades K-5 and Star for grades 6-12 in the 2020-21 school year and implemented Star for all grades in 2021-22. Star has been administered in person at school since students returned to in-person learning in 2021-22.

⁶ To compare Star participation and performance between 2021-22 and 2022-23, see:

<https://www.philasd.org/research/2023/12/01/end-of-year-analysis-of-participation-and-performance-on-the-star-assessments-at-the-school-district-of-philadelphia-2022-23/>

⁷ To learn more about the Star Unified Scale, see: <https://renaissance.widen.net/s/w6p9f5pcpm/r63395>

⁸ To access ORE reports on Star outcomes, see:

<https://www.philasd.org/research/category/assessments/star/>

Table 1. Testing cycles/assessment windows, participation numbers, and participation rates for Star Math and Star Reading (including Early Literacy) assessments for 2022-23

Cycle	Assessment Window	Number of Eligible Students (Math)	Math Assessment Participation Rate	Number of Eligible Students (Reading)	Reading Assessment Participation Rate
<i>Fall</i>	9/6/2022 – 9/30/2022	115,980	88.4%	114,477	89.8%
<i>Winter 1</i>	1/4/2023 – 1/27/2023	116,662	87.4%	114,187	88.8%
<i>Winter 2*</i>	3/6/2023 – 3/24/2023	116,671	27.5%	113,829	27.8%
<i>Spring</i>	5/1/2023 – 6/9/2023	116,613	83.5%	113,485	84.8%

*Optional

Source: Qlik Academic Screeners Application, v.3.5.5, Participation Details Sheet, accessed 2/16/2024

Notes: Participants include students enrolled in SDP K12 schools and Alternative schools. Footnote 5 on page 6 of this December 2023 report⁹ contains an explanation for which Spanish-language tests are included in participation metrics. Students with IEPs are exempt from Star testing, but if any do take the test, they are included in these numbers.

Biology Benchmark

The Biology Benchmark is an online instructional assessment administered to students in grades 8-12 who are enrolled in a Biology course. Aligned with the Biology scope and sequence, it has traditionally been offered to Biology teachers as a recommended resource for informing instruction. In 2022-23, the Fall assessment window took place November 7–November 18, the Winter window took place January 17–February 10, and the Spring window took place March 20–March 31 (Table 2). The Biology Benchmark takes 45 minutes to complete, and has been required since the 2021-22 school year, which is also the first year that the Spanish version of the test became available.¹⁰

⁹ https://www.philasd.org/research/wp-content/uploads/sites/90/2023/12/2022-23-Participation-and-Performance-on-the-Star-Assessments-at-SDP_December-2023.pdf

¹⁰ For 2021-22 and 2022-23, some students were assigned to the “English” or “Spanish” groups despite having taken different parts of the test in different languages, to help ensure that the two groups are mutually exclusive.

Table 2. Biology Benchmark assessment participation by assessment window, year, and language, for 2019-20 through 2022-23

Assessment Window	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22		2022-23	
			English	Spanish	English	Spanish
Fall	6,482	3,739	English	6,056	English	6,429
			Spanish	193	Spanish	238
			Total	6,249	Total	6,667
Winter	6,018	4,173	English	5,175	English	5,903
			Spanish	151	Spanish	199
			Total	5,326	Total	6,102
Spring	cancelled	3,788	English	5,312	English	5,190
			Spanish	215	Spanish	212
			Total	5,527	Total	5,402

Source: SchoolNet, Assessment Dashboard (modified), accessed 3/1/2024

Note: Participants include students enrolled in SDP K12 schools and Alternative schools.

End-of-Course Exams

Civics Test

The Civics Test is a mandatory state standardized annual assessment that is administered to students in grades 9-12 who are enrolled in Social Science, Civics, AP US Government/Politics, and IB History courses. The test has been administered in SDP since the 2020-21 school year. In the 2022-23 school year, there were three assessment windows: October 31–November 23 (for certain Opportunity Network schools), January 17–February 24 (for all other schools), and April 24–June 15 (for students with spring block schedules and for make-up testing). Slightly fewer students took the Civics test in 2022-23 (6,273) than in 2021-22 (6,349) (Table 3).

National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) Assessments

NOCTI assessments are administered to Career and Technical Education (CTE) program students in grades 11 and 12 and consist of a written pre-test in the fall and a post-test in the spring that includes a performance test. Students in grade 12 must take the NOCTI test to graduate with a CTE credential, and they may also be eligible to earn free college credits with a passing NOCTI grade. The Pre-Test was administered online March 27–April 14. The post-test written exams were administered online April 11–April 13, and the post-test performance tests were administered April 17–April 24. The proportion of eligible 12th grade students who took the exam in 2022-23 was 24.5%, 2.7 percentage points lower than 2021-22 (27.2%) (Table 3).¹¹

Prior to 2022-23, the NOCTI pre-test was administered to 12th graders in the fall. The pre-test was moved to the spring of 11th grade to allow schools access to students' scores in the fall before they take the post-test in the spring of 12th grade.

¹¹ The participation levels in this section might not match the numbers from Assessment Briefs from previous years because they have been updated with the latest available information.

International Baccalaureate Exam (IB)

Students in grades 8-12 enrolled in college-preparatory IB courses must take the IB exam(s) near the end of the term. IB exams can also consist of multiple assessments/projects throughout the school year, such as internal assessments administered by teachers. Students who perform well may be eligible to earn college credits. For 2022-23, the assessment window was April 27–May 19. The proportion of students who took the exam has remained consistent from 2019-20 through 2022-23, with 4-5% of eligible students participating each year (Table 3).

Advanced Placement (AP) Exams

Advanced Placement (AP) courses provide an opportunity for high school students to earn college-level credits, and SDP offers AP courses in multiple subjects. The College Board administered end-of-course Advanced Placement exams between May 1–May 12 and May 17–May 19 to students in grades 9-12 who were enrolled in AP courses in the 2022-23 school year. The percentage of eligible students who participated in the exams has increased slightly over the past few years. In 2022-23, 14.6% of eligible students participated in the exams (Table 3).¹²

Table 3. End-of-course exam participation rates for 2019-20 through 2022-23

Assessment	2019-20		2020-21		2021-22		2022-23	
	# Assessed	% of Eligible Students	# Assessed	% of Eligible Students	# Assessed	% of Eligible Students	# Assessed	% of Eligible Students
Civics Test*	N/A	N/A	5,543	-	6,349	-	6,273	-
NOCTI	15	0.7%	176	7.6%	1,222	27.2%	1,085	24.5%
International Baccalaureate Exam (IB)	378	4.4%	404	4.3%	363	4.3%	374	4.1%
Advanced Placement Exam (AP)	3,784	10.9%	3,802	10.4%	4,269	12.4%	5,049	14.6%

*Number of eligible students not available for the Civics Test.

Source: Qlik Postsecondary Readiness Application, v.1.1.3, Details Sheet, and SchoolNet Assessment Dashboard (modified), accessed 2/16/2024

Notes: Participants include students enrolled in SDP K12 schools and Alternative schools in Grades 9-12 for Civics, AP, and IB assessments; NOCTI includes those students only in grade 12. The Civics Test was not administered in 2019-20.

¹² The participation levels in this section might not match the numbers from Assessment Briefs from previous years because they were updated with the latest available information.

State Standardized Assessments

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)

The PSSA is a standardized, state-mandated assessment that measures proficiency in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science. Students in grades 3-8 are assessed in ELA and Math, while only grades 4 and 8 are assessed in Science. Scores are categorized as Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. The PSSA is untimed, and can take 2.5-5.5 hours to complete. PSSA data is used to inform instruction, curriculum, and accountability metrics at the local, state, and federal levels. In 2022-23, assessments were administered between April 24–May 12, including make-up tests. The number and rate of students participating in the PSSAs was fairly consistent between 2021-22 and 2022-23 (Table 4).

Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA)

The Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) is an alternative assessment designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to participate meaningfully in the PSSA or Keystone exams, even with appropriate accommodations. It is administered to students in grades 3-8 and 11 for ELA and math, and grades 4, 8, and 11 for science, and may take 3-6 hours to complete. The assessment window in 2022-23 was March 13–May 5. Table 4 combines 4th and 8th grade PASA data with PSSA data to demonstrate overall participation in these assessments for 2022-23 compared to 2021-22.

Table 4. Participation rates in PSSA and PASA assessments, by test subject and grade level, in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years

Test	Grade	Number of Students Tested, 2021-22	% of Eligible Students Tested, 2021-22	Number of Students Tested, 2022-23	% of Eligible Students Tested, 2022-23
PSSA – English Language Arts	3	8,063	93.7%	7,973	94.3%
	4	8,062	93.4%	7,971	93.6%
	5	7,943	93.9%	7,969	94.2%
	6	7,391	92.2%	7,412	93.7%
	7	7,365	92.2%	7,341	92.2%
	8	7,402	89.5%	7,328	91.2%
	Total		46,226	92.5%	45,994
PSSA – Math	3	8,172	95.0%	8,149	96.5%
	4	8,150	94.4%	8,136	95.6%
	5	8,007	94.8%	8,092	95.7%
	6	7,449	93.1%	7,540	95.5%
	7	7,416	93.0%	7,459	93.8%
	8	7,365	89.2%	7,358	91.7%
	Total		46,559	93.3%	46,734
PSSA – Science	4	8,117	94.2%	8,118	95.3%
	8	7,306	88.5%	7,324	91.3%
	Total		15,423	91.4%	15,442

Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone Application, v.2.3.1, PSSA Participation: Multi-Year Trends Sheet (modified), accessed 3/7/2024

Note: Participants include students enrolled in SDP K12 schools and Alternative schools.

Keystone Exams

Keystone exams are end-of-course state-standardized assessments designed to assess proficiency in Algebra I, Biology, and Literature. Scores are categorized as Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced, and the tests are not timed, but take approximately 2-3 hours to complete. In the 2022-23 winter session, students in grades 8-11 were tested January 4–January 18, and in the spring session, students in grades 7-11 were tested May 15–May 26. Under new Pennsylvania Department of Education guidelines that went into effect in 2022-23, students must either demonstrate proficiency on all three Keystone exam(s) or complete one of four other “pathways” to graduate, such as via the Keystone Composite Pathway: earning a score of Proficient or Advanced on at least one exam, Basic on the other(s), and a minimum composite score of 4452 across the three subjects.¹³ It was predicted that this change would lead to a greater focus on Keystone exams, which was evident in the number of test takers in 2022-23 compared to 2021-22. More students

¹³ For more information about the Five Pathways to Graduation, see: <https://www.philasd.org/collegeandcareer/graduationrequirements/#1707316956674-0be3aee3-420a>

participated in Keystone exams in 2022-23 than in 2021-22, by over 3,000 in Algebra I, over 2,000 in Biology, and nearly 2,000 in Literature (Table 5).¹⁴

Table 5. Number of students participating in the Keystone exams in 2021-22 and 2022-23, by subject and grade

Test	Grade	Number of Students Tested, 2021-22	Number of Students Tested, 2022-23
Keystone – Algebra I	Unspecified	2	2
	7	1	1
	8	1,194	1,358
	9	7,291	7,095
	10	3,689	5,042
	11	1,997	3,370
	12	140	558
	Total	14,314	17,426
Keystone – Biology	Unspecified	3	3
	8	31	-
	9	2,966	2,923
	10	4,106	5,078
	11	2,521	3,206
	12	170	697
	Total	9,737	11,907
Keystone – Literature	Unspecified	7	1
	9	244	268
	10	6,143	6,685
	11	2,438	2,878
	12	150	838
	Total	8,982	10,670

Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone Application, v.2.3.1, Performance Details Table Sheet, accessed 2/26/2024

Note: Participants include students enrolled in SDP K12 schools and Alternative schools.

ACCESS & Alternate ACCESS for English Language Learners

Assessing Communication and Comprehension in English State to State for English Language Learners, better known as ACCESS for ELLs, is a 3-hour, statewide, mandatory standardized assessment of English language proficiency for ELLs in grades K-12.¹⁵ Alternate ACCESS is designed for ELLs in grades 1-12 with cognitive disabilities that prevent them from participating in the ACCESS. These assessments aim to measure proficiency in social and instructional English plus the

¹⁴ For more information about Keystone Exams, see: <https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/Keystones/Pages/default.aspx>

¹⁵ For more information on ACCESS for ELLs, see: <https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/access>, and the following provides information on the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s approach to educating ELLs: <https://www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/PACode/Pages/EducatingELs.aspx>

language associated with core coursework: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. ACCESS data is used to inform the goals set for English Learners' progress toward proficiency.

In 2022-23, ACCESS was administered January 4–February 17. This was the second year of full in-person testing administration since the Covid-related disruptions. The only students who took the test in 2020-21 were those who attended school in person, which amounted to 2,585 (including students who took Alternate ACCESS), while 13,942 eligible students were not tested. In 2021-22, 17,362 students were tested, and in 2022-23, 20,144 students took ACCESS and 321 took Alternate ACCESS. An additional 1,156 students were eligible but not tested.¹⁶

Other Screeners and Tests

Kindergarten Entry Inventory (KEI)

The KEI is an informational assessment developed by the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning. It is administered to kindergarteners by their teachers during the beginning of the school year; in 2022-23, the assessment window was August 29–October 17. It aims to measure the development of each student in the areas of Social and Emotional Development, English Language Arts, Mathematics, Approaches to Learning through Play, and Health/Wellness/Physical Development. Teachers use KEI data to inform their instruction and better understand their students' needs.

Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT)

The NNAT is a nationally-normed test that measures the academic ability of students. It is administered to all students in grade 2 and consists of visual puzzles to be completed in 30 minutes. In addition to measuring academic ability, it assists in identifying students who should be evaluated for giftedness. The assessment window in 2022-23 was April 10–May 19.

PSAT 8/9 and PSAT/NMSQT

The PSAT is a standardized test administered by The College Board as a practice for the SAT. There are two versions facilitated by SDP: the PSAT 8/9 and the PSAT/NMSQT (National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test). The PSAT 8/9 tests students in grade 9 in Reading, Writing, Language, and Math, and in 2022-23 it was administered September 26–January 27. The PSAT/NMSQT tests students in grades 10 and 11 in the same subjects and was administered on October 12, with October 25 as a make-up day.

¹⁶ The participation numbers for the ACCESS might not match the numbers from previous Assessment Briefs because they have been updated with the latest available information.

SAT

The SAT is a standardized test administered by The College Board that assesses students' readiness for college in the subjects of Reading, Writing/Language, and Math. Official scores on this test are required by most colleges and universities for admission. The testing duration of the PSATs and the SATs is 3 hours and 50 minutes. In 2022-23, exams were administered at school, during school hours, to students in grades 11 and 12 on October 12, with October 27 as a make-up day. Saturday exams were administered on August 27, October 1, November 5, December 3, March 11, May 6, and June 3.

ACT

The ACT is a standardized test administered by a nonprofit organization by the same name. It is a college-readiness assessment that examines students' knowledge and abilities in English, Math, Reading, Science, and Writing. The testing duration of the ACT is 3 hours and 30 minutes. Scores on this test may also be used for college admissions. In 2022-23, SDP administered the test to students in grades 11 and 12 on September 10, October 22, December 10, February 11, April 15, June 10, and July 15.

Conclusions

Following the Covid-induced disruptions to assessment administration in SDP in 2019-20 and 2020-21,¹⁷ assessments throughout the 2022-23 school year were administered as planned. The number of students participating in ACCESS continued to increase. Keystone exam participation increased since it became a significant part of Pennsylvania graduation requirements starting with the graduating class of 2023. In 2022-23, Star was administered to all K-12 students in three required windows with high participation rates, and Star data continued to inform classroom instruction and progress toward Board of Education/Outcome & Implementation goals.

¹⁷ See the previous summary briefs listed in footnote 2.