Dear Family,

Every year, Pennsylvania public school students take tests in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science. This year there was a new assessment in ELA and math that was developed to meet the more challenging demands of the PA Core Standards, which were adopted in 2013. The tests’ more rigorous standards included more complex, multi-part questions, and required more thoughtful reasoning by students. These standards were adopted to better prepare students to be successful in college, postsecondary training, or in the 21st century work force.

The Student Report you’ll receive explains how your child performed on the 2014-15 assessment. If your child’s scores are different than in prior years, this reflects the fact that they are being measured by a different assessment. The student report will help you understand your student’s scores and provide recommendations for your child. If your student did not take one of the tests, part of the report will be blank.

These scores represent a snapshot in time and are meant to determine a baseline for measuring future growth. Comparing your student’s scores and level of performance on the new assessment with those from previous years is not a valid comparison and may not provide an accurate depiction of their learning.

You can help your child grow academically by reviewing their PSSA results with them, looking at both their strengths and their opportunities for improvement, and by continuing to encourage them to do their best in school. You may also find it helpful to speak with their teacher.

Your contribution to your child’s education is critical, and I hope that the Department of Education, the commonwealth’s schools, and families can all work together to educate and prepare Pennsylvania’s next generation for postsecondary success.

Yours truly,

Pedro A. Rivera
Secretary of Education
What do the Performance Levels mean?
This section provides a general description of the Pennsylvania Performance Levels. Student performance on the PSSA falls into four performance levels: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic.
**What is your student’s Performance Level?**
This indicates your student’s Performance Level for the given subject.

*Please Note: If your student was not tested because the subject is not applicable, “Not Applicable (NA)” will be displayed. If your student did not receive a score, “No Score (NS)” will be displayed.*

**What is your student’s score?**
This indicates your student’s PSSA score for the given subject. Additionally, the arrow on the bar graph indicates where your student’s score falls within a performance level. The scores are organized by subject and appear on pages 2 and 3 of the Student Report.

Because each subject has its own individual scale, student’s PSSA scores should not be compared across tested subjects.

**How did your student perform in each reporting category?**
This indicates the total points possible and your student’s performance within each reporting category.

**Strength Profile.**
The Strength Profile provides you with an indication of your student’s performance within each of the reporting categories. The profile measure takes into account the difficulty of the items and can be used to help identify areas in which your student needs to improve and where he or she has performed more successfully.
**Minimum/Maximum Scaled Scores.**
The minimum and maximum scaled scores represent the minimum and maximum scores your child could have received on each assessment. Each PSSA test has a minimum score that stays the same across years. However, the maximum score for each test can vary depending on the difficulty of the test each year (a more difficult test in any given year will have a higher maximum score).

**Standard Error of Measure.**
This range reflects the standard error of measurement (SEM) for your student’s PSSA score. Specifically, it provides reasonable bounds for the range of scores that your student might receive if he or she took an equivalent version of the test. (That is, your student took a test that covered exactly the same content, but included a different set of items.) As an example, if the PSSA score was 1750 and the SEM band was 1700 to 1800, then your student would be likely to receive a score somewhere between 1700 and 1800 if a different version of the test had been taken.
Score Reporting Category Descriptions

The back page of your student’s report contains the description of each reporting category that is assessed on the PSSA. Reporting Categories are aligned to the state’s standards and used as a tool for instructional practices in schools.

Reporting categories will be different for each grade.

### English Language Arts

- **Key Ideas and Details**
  - Students refer to two ideas or details in passages to summarize important ideas or events, determine a theme or main idea, and draw an evidence to support over generalizations and understanding.

- **Craft and Structure (Category of Knowledge and Skill)**
  - Students demonstrate understanding of a文 by comparing points of view and textbook accounts of similar events, making connections within and between texts, referring to text features to support information, and analyzing use of evidence to support overall integration of literary aspects of text.

- **Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**
  - Students demonstrate understanding of vocabulary and linguistic language in literary and informational texts.

- **Types of Writing**
  - Students write opinion, informative, or narrative essays demonstrating effective techniques as appropriate for types and purpose.

- **Language**
  - Students demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling and use knowledge of language and its conventions for effect.

### Test-Dependent Standards

- **Informational Text**
  - Students read and respond to informational passages, focusing on the information and evidence presented on maps, charts, diagrams, and other visual aids.

### Mathematics

- **Numbers and Operations in Base Ten**
  - Students develop number sense by understanding place value, relative sizes of numbers, and properties of operations. They practice estimating, doing mental calculations, and developing fluency in multiplying whole numbers.

- **Numbers and Operations—Fractions**
  - Students learn the meaning of fractions by exploring relationships between fractions and division. They also learn how to use fractions to represent and compare fractions and to add and subtract fractions.

### Science

- **The Nature of Science**
  - Students use reasoning skills to develop solutions for everyday problems. They understand the scientific method and use it to help explain natural and human-made systems.

- **Biological Sciences**
  - Students evaluate causes and functions of organisms, describe ecological behaviors within living systems, and recognize the interdependences between humans and the natural world.

- **Physical Sciences**
  - Students describe the characteristics of physical properties of matter and basic energy forms and sources. They describe how energy can change form and apply the scientific principles of force and motion.

- **Earth and Space Sciences**
  - Students identify and describe Earth features and processes that shape the environment. They recognize processes and changes associated with weather, climate, the atmosphere, and the Earth’s biosphere.