



PANTHER PRIDE NEWSLETTER

Clarifying the PSSA Report

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) recently informed school districts across the state that the number of students scoring proficient or advanced on the Spring 2015 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) tests was significantly lower than the previous year. There are several reasons for this, among them being the realignment of the assessment to meet the more rigorous Pennsylvania Common Core Standards adopted in 2013 for English/Language Arts and Mathematics and some material being tested a full grade level earlier than under the previous Academic Content Standards.

It is important to understand that a decline in PSSA performance level does not indicate that students are learning less. It is not useful to directly compare students' scores on the new assessments to students' scores from previous assessments because the new assessment was aligned to different standards. Contrary to the test scores, students and staff demonstrated tremendous gains in teaching and learning during the transition to the PA Common Core Standards. Transitions and changes in curriculum and development take time, and the 2014-2015 school year was only the first year for the new assessment. The results on the 2015 test are a snapshot in time and will set a benchmark for future academic growth. Official test data representing prior and past year's PSSA tests is below:

District Level MATH - All Students Proficient/Advanced					State Average Math
Grade Level	2012	2013	2014	2015	2015
Grade 3	91%	89%	86%	52%	49%
Grade 4	91%	88%	80%	54%	44%
Grade 5	84%	77%	84%	46%	43%
Grade 6	87%	88%	93%	50%	40%
Grade 7	92%	89%	81%	38%	33%
Grade 8	84%	90%	85%	26%	30%

District Level READING - All Students Proficient/Advanced					State Average Reading
Grade Level	2012	2013	2014	2015	2015
Grade 3	89%	82%	80%	67%	62%
Grade 4	78%	71%	72%	73%	59%
Grade 5	72%	68%	70%	60%	62%
Grade 6	77%	75%	73%	72%	61%
Grade 7	79%	76%	76%	55%	59%
Grade 8	82%	91%	88%	67%	58%

Bloomsburg students have consistently performed higher than the state averages. I anticipate this trend to continue, and I also expect a significant increase in test scores moving forward from this benchmark year. The ultimate goal of utilizing test data is to prepare our students for success after high school, specifically to be college- and career-ready.



Changes

BASD has implemented the following changes to content delivery beginning this academic year. In middle school level mathematics, we reorganized the curriculum to teach and assess topics in a more sequential manner so that tested standards are taught and reviewed prior to the test. I must emphasize that all course expectations are being taught, only in a different order. We also have adjusted the time to be spent on each standard by reviewing curriculum alignment above and below grade level, which indicated areas that were reviewed versus being taught as new concepts. This is a self-reflective look at our efficiency of operation in trying to teach and assess the most relevant concepts at a high-level to 1) support current and future learning, and 2) improve test scores.

Another aspect of improved teaching and learning is to refine our own assessments and develop common assessments among all subject-area math courses in grades 6-8. This allows for a high standard of preparation to meet the high expectation of learning math skills to meet the rigor of the PA Common Core.

Discussing the PSSA

In a letter from PDE, it is suggested that parents help their children understand how they performed on the assessments, including both areas of strengths and opportunities for improvement. Some key points parents may want to emphasize with their children when reviewing their scores together are:

- The standards for learning have changed and are now more demanding
- The test has changed. The test questions are aligned to the standards and many of the questions are more complex than in previous years.
- Parents may wish to ask their children to share how they felt about the tests and whether they found the questions to be challenging
- Parents should explain to their children that if test scores were not as high as expected, they should not be discouraged because the test was harder this year and that with continued effort, students will be able to meet the new expectations.
- Parents and teachers can help students think about what they will need to do to be successful while they are in school and after high school. It should be remembered that these tests help schools prepare students for life after graduation. Whether there are a few years until a student graduates from high school or many years, these tests help schools and teachers make sure students are ready for whatever post-graduate direction they choose.
- Students should be encouraged to continue to work hard in school and to let their teachers know if they need help.

Keystone Scores 2015

BASD students saw moderate success in the 2015 Spring Keystone Testing (mandated for graduation beginning with the class of 2017). Overall, 15 middle school students who took Algebra I realized a success rate of over 98%. First-time test takers in ninth grade earned a 43% success rate and Algebra retake students earned over a 66% success rate. What does all this mean? Students can take the Keystone multiple times; however, after two attempts, students may opt into a Project Based Assessment (PBA) and earn graduation credit through the PBA process. All students who do not pass the first time are required to take remediation courses unless they opt into the PBA. The keystones have caused a change to course selection for students at the high school, as remediation of modules must be documented.

One option we are evaluating is to develop a two year Algebra I course to give students more time to meet the lengthy list of standards expected to be mastered prior to the test. This may seem trivial; however, the Algebra I test contains Algebra II material. We will continue to offer before/after school camps and remediation to assist students in meeting the high expectations required under PDE requirements.

Literature scores were a respectable 78.7% with 108 students taking and passing the test on their first try. The remediation sequence for Literature will be the same as described in the aforementioned information regarding math. Grade nine and ten Biology Keystone scores were also a respectable 95.6% for ninth graders in honors biology, and 58.6% proficient or better in grade 10 biology.

Algebra 1 - First Time Test Takers			
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Not Proficient	0%	0%	2.9%
Proficient/Advanced	0%	100%	97.1%

Algebra 1 - First Time Test Takers			
	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11
Not Proficient	56.9%	50%	0%
Proficient/Advanced	43.1%	50%	0%

Biology - First Time Test Takers		
	Grade 9	Grade 10
Not Proficient	4.4%	41.4%
Proficient/Advanced	95.6%	58.6%

Literature - First Time Test Takers	
	Grade 10
Not Proficient	21.3%
Proficient/Advanced	78.7%

Flood Mitigation Report

BASD entered into an agreement with Borton-Lawson Engineering to study the flood mitigation plan for the BASD secondary schools and maintenance building. The goal was to provide a review of flood mitigation options so we can ascertain which flood proofing plan would be 1) affordable, 2) hold up against the pressures of flood waters, and 3) have a high percentage of success against such pressures. The two options evaluated were 1) flood proofing, which consists of temporary barriers, backflow prevention in pipes with two way flow capability, and compacting soils to prevent seepage, and 2) a flood wall with a proposed elevation of 485 feet which is 2.3 feet higher than the Tropical Storm Lee high water mark. Estimated costs for the first option is less than \$700,000 with a very low rating for success while option two in 2015 dollars amounts to an estimate of \$4.1 million dollars and a high rate of success as determined by the Army Corps of Engineers. To date, the district is considering partnering with the Town of Bloomsburg to help with cost reduction and to tie other neighborhood homes into the project. We will continue to evaluate other options.

1 to 1 Ready to Go

The high school 1:1 technology initiative with Surface Pro 3's is ready to roll out! The first wave of devices will be given to seniors in mid-October, followed by juniors, sophomores, and the freshman. The devices will be distributed in one-week increments by class, with training for students at the time of delivery. Additional training will take place in the days after initial delivery with consistent follow-up throughout the year by classroom teachers. Please remind your child/children of the awesome responsibility to care of their device.

To assist students, we started a student tech club. The club is comprised of students who are extremely tech savvy and will be able to assist students with their device in class and during study halls. The students will assist in functional use of device in addition to how it shall be used for instructional purposes. Students in the tech club were required to apply using a formal application process. Based on the applications, interviews were conducted to ascertain the level of computer/technology knowledge, trustworthiness, and confidentiality of each applicant. These students will be given a schedule to assist in all capacities of collection, distribution, and troubleshooting with their peers in the 1:1 initiative. Students not chosen will utilize their skill sets to assist classmates during instructional time as needed. In all, we have 22 students in the tech club.

Other technological successes in preparing for the 1:1 journey have included seven successful teacher in-service days (going back to January 2015) in preparation for the instructional use of devices in the classroom. We have provided training for teacher-to-student use to enhance instructional practice in the areas of applications, blogging, classroom management systems, Discovery Ed, One Note, project-based learning, hardware and software support, SAMR model, and Surface Pro 3 features.

The function and management of the devices will be monitored closely to determine return on our investment. Investment is defined in terms of 1) teaching and learning and 2) financial impact on initiative. In review, I have included links to remind all stakeholders of applicable 1:1 policies and procedures:

- 009 - District-Issued Device Responsibility List
- 224 - Care of School Property
- 252A - District-Provided Technology Resources: Student Use, Rights and Responsibilities: Student E-mail Accounts and Web and Cloud-Based Storage and Web and Cloud-Based Applications
- 252B - District-Issued Devices: Student Use, Rights, and Responsibilities
- 352 - Employee Device Security Procedures and Training (Administrative Employees)
- 452 - Employee Device Security Procedures and Training (Professional Employees)
- 552 - Employee Device Security Procedures and Training (Classified Employees)
- 893 - Remote Access, Monitoring, and Tracking of District-Issued Devices

The aforementioned policies can be accessed by clicking on the following link:

<http://bloomsburgasd.schoolwires.com/domain/57>

From the Superintendent

Dear BASD School Community:

I want to thank you for your kindness and generous support during my tenure as superintendent. It has been an honor and privilege to work with your children and the school community at large. We accomplished much in all aspects of school operations, including but not limited to teaching and learning, curriculum and assessment, budget, policy, school plant, high-level professional development, and winning extra- and co-curricular programs. As I begin this next phase of my career, I will always remember the experiences in Bloomsburg and most especially the people who made it special. I continually marvel at the professionalism and work ethic of our staff and administration in doing what is right for students. Bloomsburg has a great district and much to be proud of and I wish you and your children continued success! Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Sincerely,

Cosmas C. Curry
Superintendent



Dr. Curry and students (left to right) Ryan Bohenek (Grade 9), Zach Jones (Grade 10), and Melanie Sponenberg (Grade 10) observe work that Zach has created on the computer in the High School Library.