



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

Assessment Overview

2020-2021

April 15, 2021

Office of Evaluation, Research, and Accountability

This slide deck outlines all the major assessments that SDP students take in grades K through 12 during the 2020-21 school year. For each assessment, we provide information about:

- **Who** takes each assessment (i.e., grade band, specific student populations)
- **What** the assessments measure (e.g., skills, content)
- **When** each assessment is administered
- **How long** each assessment takes to complete
- How the District **uses the data** from the assessments

Note: This slide deck includes information for all District-wide assessments, including assessments that are administered District-wide to specific (but sizable) student populations, such as English Learners or students with IEPs. Schools may choose to administer additional programs for certain grades, subjects, or for blended learning (such as iReady or Lexia) and those are not included here.

Assessments serve several purposes:

- **Universal Screening, Benchmarking and/or Progress Monitoring Assessments** track District-wide performance and growth over time and provide teachers with student- and skill-level information to inform planning and instruction
- **State standardized assessments** are mandated and fulfill state or federal testing requirements that assess student proficiency and achievement
- **Non-required standardized assessments** are voluntary/elective standardized assessments and are not used for accountability purposes
- **Screeners** identify or place students who need specialized supports
- **Informational assessments** of student abilities help teachers plan instruction

Assessments in Grades K-2

Assessments: Grades K-2

Name of Assessment	Universal Screener, Benchmarking, and Progress Monitoring Within Year Assessments	State and/or Federal Standardized Annual Assessments	Specialized Screener	Informational Assessment
AimswEBPlus	X			
Naglieri (2nd only)			X	
Kindergarten Entry Inventory (KEI) (K only)				X
ACCESS (ELs only)		X		

Assessment Timeline: Grades K-2

September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Aimsweb Math + Reading Benchmark*				Aimsweb Math + Reading Benchmark				Aimsweb Math + Reading Benchmark	
							ACCESS (ELs Only)		
KEI (K Only)						Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (Grade 2 Only)			

- [Aimsweb](#): 11-66 minutes (math and reading combined)
- [KEI](#) (K only): 30 minutes
- [Naglieri](#) (2nd only): 30 minutes
- [ACCESS](#) (ELs only): 3 hours



Click the links to skip to a description of the assessment, including what it measures and how the District uses the data

*Continuous progress monitoring via AimswebPlus (K-5) or Star (6-12) takes place between benchmark assessment windows. Progress monitoring is administered at the discretion of the teacher.

Assessments in Grades 3-5

Assessments: Grades 3-5

	Screening, Benchmarking, and Progress Monitoring Within Year Assessments	State and/or Federal Standardized Annual Assessments	Specialized Screener	Informational Assessment
ACCESS (ELs only)		X		
AimswEBPlus	X			
PSSA/PASA Math		X		
PSSA/PASA ELA		X		
PSSA/PASA Science (4th only)		X		
NAEP (4th only, select schools)		X		

Assessment Timeline: Grades 3-5

September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Aimsweb Math + Reading Benchmark*				Aimsweb Math + Reading Benchmark				Aimsweb Math + Reading Benchmark	
							ACCESS (ELs Only)		
					NAEP (Grade 4, Select Schools)		PSSA/PASA Math, ELA PSSA/PASA Science (Grade 4 Only)		

- [Aimsweb](#): 47-72 minutes (math and reading combined)
- [PSSA](#) / [PASA](#): 2.5 to 5.5 hours (varies by subject)
- [ACCESS](#) (ELs only): 3 hours
- [NAEP](#) (Grade 4, select schools): 1.5 to 4 hours

*Continuous progress monitoring via AimswebPlus (K-5) or Star (6-12) takes place between benchmark assessment windows. Progress monitoring is administered at the discretion of the teacher.

Assessments in Grades 6-8

Assessments: Grades 6-8

	Screening, Benchmarking, and Progress Monitoring Within Year Assessments	State and/or Federal Standardized Annual Assessments	Specialized Screener	Informational Assessment
ACCESS (ELs only)		X		
Star	X			
PSSA/PASA Math		X		
PSSA/PASA ELA		X		
PSSA/PASA Science (8th only)		X		
Keystones (7th and 8th only)		X		
NAEP (8th only, select schools)		X		

Assessment Timeline: Grades 6-8

September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Star Math and Reading*			Star Math and Reading		NAEP (Grade 8, Select Schools)	Star Math and Reading		Star Math and Reading	
							ACCESS (ELs Only)		
							PSSA/PASA Math + ELA PSSA/PASA Science (Grade 8 only)		
				Keystone Exams				Keystone Exams	

- [Star](#): 1-1.5 hours (math and reading combined)
- [PSSA](#) / [PASA](#): 2.5 to 5.5 hours (varies by subject)
- [Keystone Exams](#) (Grades 7-8): no time limit, usually takes 2-3 hours. Will not be offered in school year 2020-21; next administration will take place in 2021-22.
- [ACCESS](#) (ELs only): 3 hours
- [NAEP](#) (Grade 8, select schools): 1.5 to 4 hours

*Continuous progress monitoring via AimswebPlus (K-5) or Star (6-12) takes place between benchmark assessment windows. Progress monitoring is administered at the discretion of the teacher.

Assessments in Grade 9-12

Assessments: Grades 9-12 (slide 1 of 2)

	Screening, Benchmarking, and Progress Monitoring Within Year Assessments	State and/or Federal Standardized Annual Assessments	Specialized Screener	Informational Assessment
ACCESS (ELs only)		X		
Star	X			
Keystones		X		
Civics Test (12th only)		X		
National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) (CTE only)		X		
NAEP (12th only, select schools)		X		

Assessments: Grades 9-12 (slide 2 of 2)

	Screening, Benchmarking, and Progress Monitoring Within Year Assessments	State and/or Federal Standardized Annual Assessments	Non-required standardized assessments	Specialized Screener	Informational Assessment
Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) Exam (Elective; AP/IB only)			X		
Biology Benchmark (Biology students only)	X				X
PSAT/SAT/ACT (Elective)			X		

Assessment Timeline: Grades 9-12

September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Star Math and Reading*			Star Math and Reading		Civics Test	Star Math and Reading		Star Math and Reading	
							ACCESS (ELs Only)		
						NOCTI Written: March Performance: April			
		Bio Benchmark		Keystone Exams	Bio Benchmark			Keystone Exams	
							AP/IB Exam		
SAT/ACT									

- [Star](#): 1-1.5 hours (math and reading combined)
- [ACCESS](#) (ELs only): 3 hours
- [Keystone Exams](#): no time limit, usually takes 2-3 hours
- [Civics Test](#): 1 Hour
- [NOCTI](#) (12; select students): 6 hours total (3-hour written component, and 3-hour performance component)
- [AP/IB Exams](#) (select students): AP exams take place on one day for 3 hours; IB exams vary based on subject
- [Biology Benchmark \(9-12\)](#) (select students): 45 minutes
- [PSAT/SAT\(10-12\)](#) (elective): 3 hours and 50 minutes
- [ACT \(11/12\)](#) (elective): 3 hours and 30 minutes

*Continuous progress monitoring via AimswebPlus (K-5) or Star (6-12) takes place between benchmark assessment windows. Progress monitoring is administered at the discretion of the teacher.

Descriptions of Assessments



What is it?

The School District of Philadelphia uses aimswbPlus, a universal screening, benchmarking, and progress-monitoring tool from Pearson, to assess literacy and math proficiency for all K-2 students.

Who takes it? How long does it take?

All Kindergarten, first, and second grade students. Each subtest takes about 1-3 minutes; if a student takes multiple subtests, the total time (including BOTH literacy and math) spent can range from about 11 to about 66 minutes, depending on the subtests required for each grade.

What skills does it measure?

AimswbPlus Literacy assesses letter recognition, letter sounds, and blending for kindergarten. In first grade, the skills shift to oral reading fluency; and in second grade the skills assessed include identification of common words, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. AimswbPlus Math assesses number recognition and quantity conceptualization for kindergarten. In first grade, skills shift to number pair comparisons and math facts, and in second grade skills measured are mental computation, triad number comparisons, and math concepts.

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

Students in each grade take multiple “subtests”; each subtest measures a discrete literacy or math skill, and the subtests are then calculated into a “composite score.” Subtest scores help teachers identify students’ skill levels to inform classroom instruction. Composite scores help to track district-wide performance and growth.

AimswEBPlus 3-5

What is it?

The School District of Philadelphia uses aimswEBPlus, a universal screening, benchmarking, and progress-monitoring tool from Pearson, to assess literacy and math proficiency for all 3-5 students.

Who takes it? How long does it take?

All third, fourth, and fifth grade students. Each subtest takes about 1-3 minutes but some take longer; if a student takes multiple subtests, the total time (including BOTH literacy and math) spent can range from about 47 to about 72 minutes, depending on the subtests required for each grade.

What skills does it measure?

AimswEBPlus literacy in third grade assesses identification of common words, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. In fourth and fifth grade, the skills assessed include identification of common words, oral and silent reading fluency, and reading comprehension. AimswEBPlus Math in third through fifth grades assesses mental computation, triad number comparisons, and math concepts.

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

Students in each grade take multiple “subtests”; each subtest measures a discrete literacy or math skill, and the subtests are then calculated into a “composite score.” Subtest scores help teachers identify students’ skill levels to inform classroom instruction. Composite scores help to track district-wide performance and growth.

Star 6-12

What is it?

Computer-adaptive assessments that measure students' reading and math skills, monitor achievement and growth, and track understanding of skills aligned to state standards and Common Core State Standards.

Who takes it? How long does it take?

All 6th-12th grade students. Students can spend a maximum of 45 - 90 seconds on each reading question and a maximum of 3 minutes on each math question (there is no minimum). Students taking both the math and reading Star assessments may take approximately 1-1.5 hours to complete both.

What skills does it measure?

Star Reading assesses students' skills in vocabulary, reading comprehension, analyzing literary text, understanding author's craft, and analyzing argument and evaluating text. Star Math assesses students' skills in numbers and operations, algebra, geometry and measurement, and data analysis, statistics, and probability.

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

Star provides both performance metrics and growth metrics. Star data informs instructional reading levels for grades 6-8, and help to identify students in grades 6-12 who need intervention. Composite scores help to track district-wide performance and growth.

Biology Benchmark

What is it?

The Biology Benchmark is designed to be a low-stakes, formative assessment. It is designed by SDP to inform instruction, as the content tested aligns to that which is specified in the Biology curriculum. This assessment is offered as a recommended resource to Biology teachers, to help track student progress, inform instruction, and to prepare for the Biology Keystone. It does not, however, predict performance on the Keystone Exam.

Who takes it?

Any 8-12 grade students who are scheduled to take the Biology Keystone.

What skill does it measure?

Benchmarks consist of 20 multiple-choice questions and one constructed response assessing the student's content knowledge in Biology.

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

Benchmark scores are reported as raw scores and percent correct only and there is no "passing" score. Teachers use the data to evaluate their students' skill-level performance and create a plan to address any deficiencies. They cannot validly predict performance on the Keystones, nor can they be used to show growth over time.

PSSA

What is it?

The annual Pennsylvania System School Assessment is a standards-based, criterion-referenced assessment which provides students, parents, educators and citizens with an understanding of student and school performance related to the attainment of proficiency of the academic standards.

Who takes it?

Every Pennsylvania student in grades 3 through 8 is assessed in English Language Arts and Math. Every Pennsylvania student in grades 4 and 8 is assessed in science.

What skills does it measure?

These standards in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science and Technology identify what a student should know and be able to do at varying grade levels.

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

Individual student scores and growth, provided only to their respective schools, can be used to assist teachers in identifying students who may be in need of additional supports, and school scores provide information to schools and the District for curriculum and instruction improvement discussions and planning. The District uses this data as a component of student academic performance in school accountability metrics. This assessment is part of the Pennsylvania state assessment system and is used for federal, state and local accountability purposes.

PASA

What is it?

The Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) is a statewide alternate assessment designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to participate meaningfully in the Pennsylvania State Assessment System (PSSA) or Keystone Exams, even with accommodations. The PASA is a series of individually administered image-based, multiple-choice test items given by the child's teacher or another certified test administrator who knows the student well.

Who takes it?

Students who are in the identified tested grades participate in the PASA. Like the general assessment or PSSA, the PASA is administered in grades 3 through 8 English, language arts, and math. The PASA science is taken in grades 4 and 8. Students must also be deemed eligible to participate in the PASA by the individualized education program (IEP) team in accordance with the PASA eligibility criteria.

What skills does it measure?

These standards in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science and Technology identify what a student should know and be able to do at varying grade levels.

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

Performance on all state assessments, including the PASA, is one way for schools, teachers, and parents to gauge how students and schools are performing in regard to proficiency of the academic standards. Assessment results are one measure that IEP teams may consider when determining future academic instructional needs. Scores provide a better representation of how the child is performing based against grade-level standards and alternate eligible content that are reduced in depth, breadth, and complexity. This assessment is part of the Pennsylvania state assessment system and is used for federal, state and local accountability purposes.

ACCESS

What is it?

ACCESS for ELLs is the required instrument for the annual assessment of English language proficiency. Access for ELLs is a standards-based, criterion referenced English language proficiency test designed to measure English language learners' proficiency in English.

Who takes it?

ACCESS is taken annually by English language learners in Kindergarten through Grade 12.¹

What skills does it measure?

It assesses social and instructional English as well as the language associated with Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies within the school context across the four language domains. The test rates students' English proficiency in four language domains: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

Students receive a scale score in each domain, which is then translated to a level (1.0-6.0) representing English Language Proficiency (ELP), with a 5.0+ considered proficient. A composite ACCESS score combines the domain scale scores and also ranges from 1.0 to 6.0. The scale score required for students to reach proficiency varies by grade level. This information informs the goals set for ELs in order to ensure that they are making progress towards English proficiency. (Note: The W-APT produces a simplified score for EL identification purposes, not a proficiency level score.) This assessment is part of the Pennsylvania state assessment system and is used for Federal, state and local accountability purposes.

¹Newly entering EL students in Grades 1-12 without a previous ACCESS score take the WIDA Screener at the time of enrolling in SDP. Newly entering Kindergarten students whose English learning needs are assessed take the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT).

National Assessment of Academic Progress (NAEP)

What is it?

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas. NAEP is a congressionally mandated project administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences (IES).

Who takes it? How long does it take?

4th, 8th, and 12th graders in select schools participate in NAEP as a part of the random sample. 4th and 8th grade students are currently assessed at the national and state levels in mathematics and reading every 2 years and in other subjects periodically. 12th grade students are assessed every four years in mathematics and reading.

What skills does it measure?

Subjects include civics, economics, geography, mathematics, music and visual arts, reading, science, technology and engineering literacy, U.S. history, and writing.

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

NAEP results are reported for the nation and, in most cases, for states, as well as for selected urban districts that participate in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA). Results are reported as scores and as percentages of students reaching NAEP achievement levels—Basic, Proficient, and Advanced.

Keystone Exams

What is it?

The Keystone Exams are end-of-course assessments designed to assess proficiency in the subject areas of Algebra I, Literature, and/or Biology. They will be part of state-mandated requirements for graduation (starting with the Class of 2023), wherein students must either demonstrate proficiency on each Keystone Exam, or else must complete alternate requirements.

Who takes it?

Students in grades 7 - 12 enrolled in a high school level Literature, Algebra I, or Biology course are expected to take the Keystone for that subject.

What skills does it measure?

Subject-specific content in Algebra I, Literature, or Biology. Questions are aligned to PA Core Standards and assess whether students are college and career ready in each subject area.

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

Student scores are categorized as Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, or Advanced. Student scores need to be categorized as proficient or advanced to demonstrate proficiency on the exam. The District uses this data as a component of college and career readiness in school accountability metrics, graduation requirements, and to identify which schools are in need of academic supports. This assessment is part of the Pennsylvania state assessment system and is used for Federal, state and local accountability purposes.

The National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI)

What is it?

NOCTI is contracted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Bureau of Career and Technical Education (BCTE) for Career and Technical Education (CTE). CTE programs have specific NOCTI exams approved by BCTE that allow students to demonstrate knowledge and skills within their CTE occupational program. Each NOCTI consists of a written component, and a performance component.

Who takes it?

All 12th grade students enrolled in a state-approved CTE program, who are scheduled to graduate in June of their senior year and have received a minimum of 50% of the technical hours required in their chosen CTE program.

What skills does it measure?

Each test consists of an online, multi-choice exam (Written), and an exam that allows students to demonstrate their skills by performing individual jobs or tasks that demonstrate the skills needed for the specific occupation (Performance).

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

Students are categorized in Basic, Competent or Advanced levels according to their test scores. Students who achieve at the Advanced level receive the Pennsylvania Skills Certificate, and students who achieve at the Competent level receive the Pennsylvania Certificate of Competency. The CTE office oversees the 120 CTE programs offered in over 30 high schools, and uses this data to support, improve and promote program offerings. In addition, the District uses NOCTI data as a component of career readiness in school accountability metrics.

Civics Assessment

What is it?

The Civics Assessment is a new test, developed in response to PA Act 35. The administration of the test is mandated by the State, though the test's content and scoring criteria are the responsibility of SDP.

Who takes it? How long does it take?

SDP must administer this test to all students (one time) prior to graduation, at any point between grades 8 and 12. In practice, it is administered to students enrolled in *Social Science, Civics, IB History*, and *AP US Government and Politics* courses. The test requires one hour to complete.

What skill does it measure?

This test is designed to assess students' understanding of civic responsibility and engagement, as well as principles of local, state and federal government.

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

Test administration data must be reported to the state. In addition, test results are used by SDP to identify schools with model Civics instruction, and/or needs for support.

Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) Exams

What is it?

The Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate® (IB) exams are both summative assessments for either an AP or IB course, respectively. Many colleges will grant college credit for students who pass AP and/or IB courses. IB exams can be comprised of multiple assessments and projects over the course of school year, while each AP exam is a single summative exam.

Who takes it?

All 9-12 grade students who are enrolled in an AP or IB course offered by the District.

What skill does it measure?

Both exams are focused on subject-specific content related to the student's course work.

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

Students who take an AP or IB course receive a course grade that counts towards their final high school GPA. Students who score at least a 3 on an AP exam, or a 4 on an IB exam, may also be eligible for college credit. The District tracks the number of schools that offer these courses as well student participation and performance. This data is used as a component of college and career readiness in school accountability metrics.

PSAT/SAT/ACT

What is it?

The SAT and ACT assess academic readiness for college and are required entrance exams by most colleges and universities. The SAT consists of a Reading test, a Writing/Language test, and a Math test, while the ACT consists of subject area tests in English, Math, Reading, Science, and Writing. The PSAT provides practice for the SAT.

Who takes it?

Students in 10th and 11th grade are eligible to take the PSAT. Students in 11th and 12th grade are eligible to take the SAT or ACT.

What skill does it measure?

The SAT assesses students' literacy, numeracy, and writing skills that are needed for academic success in college as well as how they analyze and problem solve. The ACT assesses students' general education knowledge and their ability to complete college-level work.

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

Scores are used to determine if students would be successful at the college/university they applied to. The District tracks student scores and participation rates. The District uses SAT and ACT data as a component of college readiness in school accountability metrics.

The Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test

What is it?

The NNAT is a nationally normed, non-verbal, culturally neutral test of academic ability.

Who takes it?

All second-grade students.

What skills does it measure?

The test is comprised of a series of visual puzzles that are administered online in 30 minutes.

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

SDP recommends students who score at or above the 90th percentile on the NNAT be further evaluated for giftedness.

The Kindergarten Entry Inventory (KEI)

What is it?

The Pennsylvania Kindergarten Entry Inventory (KEI) is a Kindergarten readiness tool developed by the PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) that Kindergarten teachers use to assess every incoming Kindergarten student within the first 45 days of school. It is not a universal screener, assessment, or diagnostic exam.

How is it administered and who takes it?

Teachers use a checklist to observe student skills and behaviors.

What skills does it measure?

Social and Emotional Development, English Language Arts, Mathematics, Approaches to Learning through Play, and Health, Wellness, and Physical Development.

What data does it give us and how do we use it?

Teachers assign students one of four skill levels (not yet evident, emerging, evident, or exceeds) in each of the 30 indicators on the KEI. They use this data to better understand what gaps in knowledge their students may have. The District does not use this data.

Technical Information about the Samples and Representativeness of Select Assessments

AimswEBPlus

- Over 31,000 students participated in the aimswEBPlus standardization study, with data collected during the 2013–2014 school year
- The standardization sample at each grade level reflects adequate representation across each demographic category, enabling the selection of normative samples that are representative of the U.S. population
- A perfect match to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013) by sex, race/ethnicity, and ELL status was obtained. This matching was done to improve precision and reduce bias in the norms.

For more information on the demographics of the Reading and Math national samples, see the [AimswEBPlus technical manual](#), pages 1-4.

Star

- During the norming period, a total of 5,814,221 US students in grades K–12 took current Star Reading and/or Early Literacy tests. Last renormed in 2017 using student assessment data from the 2014-15 school year.
- Steps were taken to ensure the resulting norms were nationally representative of grades K–12 US student populations with regard to certain important characteristics: geographic region, district socio-economic status, and district/school size.
- Item development meets established demographic and contextual goals that are monitored during development to ensure the item bank is demographically and contextually balanced. Goals are established and tracked in the following areas: use of fiction and nonfiction text, subject and topic areas, geographic region, gender, ethnicity, occupation, age, and disability.
 - Items are free of stereotyping, representing different groups of people in non-stereotypical settings.
 - Items do not refer to inappropriate content that includes, but is not limited to content that presents stereotypes based on ethnicity, gender, culture, economic class, or religion.
 - Items do not present any ethnicity, gender, culture, economic class, or religion unfavorably.
 - Items do not reference illegal activities, sinister or depressing subjects, religious activities or holidays based on religious activities, witchcraft, or unsafe activities.

For more information on the demographics of the Reading and Math national samples, see the [Star Reading technical manual](#), pages 94-95, and the [Star Math technical manual](#), pages 78-79.

PSSA

- At every stage of the item and test development process, procedures are employed that are designed to ensure that items and tests met Standard 7.4 of the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA, NCME, 2014), which states that test developers should strive to identify and eliminate language, symbols, words, phrases, and content that are generally regarded as offensive by members of racial, ethnic, gender, or other groups, except when judged to be necessary for adequate representation of the domain.
- The guidelines for bias, fairness, and sensitivity include instruction concerning how to eliminate language, symbols, words, phrases, and content that might be considered offensive by members of racial, ethnic, gender, or other groups. Areas of bias that are specifically targeted include, but are not limited to, stereotyping, gender, regional/geographic, ethnic/cultural, socioeconomic/class, religious, and biases against a particular age group (ageism) or persons with disabilities.
- To meet Standard 7.4, a series of internal quality steps are implemented:
 - Specific training is provided for test developers, item writers, and reviewers on how to write, review, revise, and edit items for issues of bias, fairness, and sensitivity (as well as for technical quality). Training also includes an awareness of and sensitivity to issues of cultural diversity.
 - External training is provided to the review panels of minority experts, teachers, and other stakeholders.

For more information on bias, fairness, and sensitivity reviews, see the [PSSA technical manual](#), pages 51-52.

Keystones

- All Keystone passages to be included in the pool of passages for possible use on the Keystone Literature Exam are reviewed and approved by PDE and the Pennsylvania Reading Content Committee (a committee of Pennsylvania educators). The passages are reviewed by Pennsylvania educators to judge whether each passage meets the criteria outlined above. All potential passages are also reviewed by the Pennsylvania Bias, Fairness, and Sensitivity Committee.
- A number of factors are taken into consideration when deciding whether a passage will be placed in the pool for possible use on the Keystone Literature Exam. The factors include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Does the passage stand the test of time as an example of literary fiction, literary nonfiction, and/or informational text, and is it judged by the committee of Pennsylvania educators as having sufficient quality?
 - Do the passages represent a range of reading levels appropriate to the grade level?
 - Are the passages free of issues of bias, fairness, and/or sensitivity?
 - Does the pool of passages represent diversity in the areas of gender, culture, ethnicity, urban/rural status, socioeconomic status, physical differences, and age?
- Vocabulary was also addressed at the Bias, Fairness, and Sensitivity Review, although the focus was on how certain words or phrases may represent possible sources of bias or issues of fairness or sensitivity

For more information on bias, fairness, and sensitivity reviews, see the [Keystones technical manual](#), pages 40-41.