

PSSA Performance Trends from 2014-15 to 2021-22

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Key Findings

- Between 32%-36% of students in grades 3-8 scored Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA ELA from 2014-15 to 2021-22.
- Between 17%-22% of students in grades 3-8 scored Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Math from 2014-15 to 2021-22.
- Between 32%-40% of students in grades 4 and 8 scored Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Science from 2014-15 to 2021-22.

Overview

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is a standards-based, criterion-referenced test administered to all School District of Philadelphia (SDP) students grades 3-8 near the end of the school year. All students are assessed in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math, while students in grades 4 and 8 are also assessed in Science. Students score in one of four performance groups depending on how well they did on the assessment: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic. This brief describes District-wide performance trends on the PSSAs in ELA, Math, and Science from 2014-15 to 2021-22.^{1,2}

¹ Includes results from the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessments (PASA). The PASA is designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are not able to participate in the PSSA. For more information see <https://www.philasd.org/era/pssa-pasa-information/>

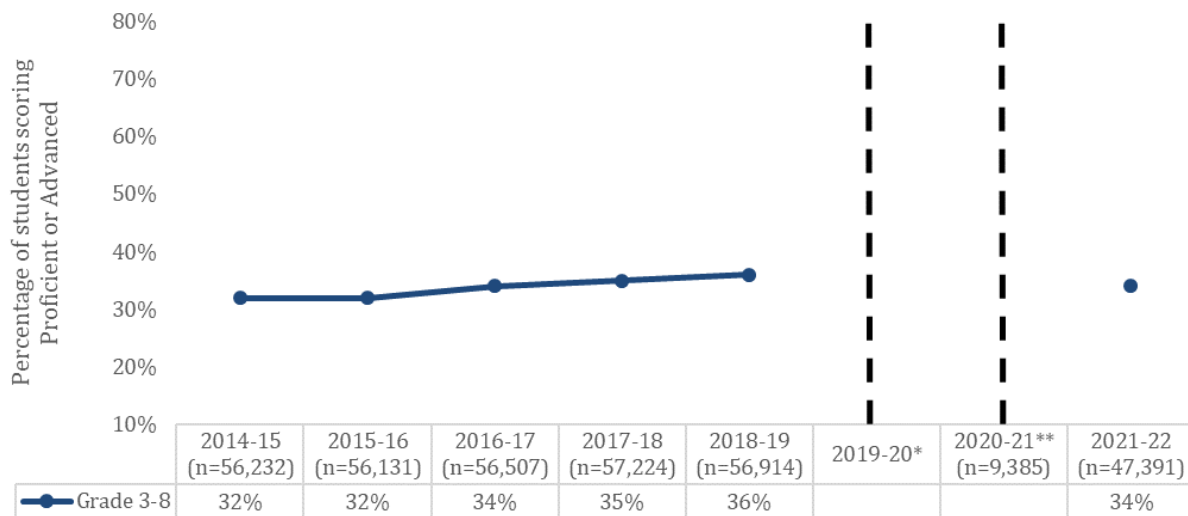
² Detailed data on SDP PSSA outcomes are available on our Open Data website: https://www.philasd.org/performance/programsservices/open-data/school-performance/#pssa_keystone

PSSA ELA Performance

The percentage of students in grades 3-8 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA ELA remained steady (32% to 36%) in each tested year since 2014-15.

In the 2021-22 school year, 34% of students grades 3-8 scored Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA ELA. This percentage remained relatively stable over the past seven years, ranging from 32% to 36% (Figure 1).³

Figure 1. The percentage of grades 3-8 students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA ELA from 2014-15 to 2021-22



Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone App, Performance Details, downloaded September 6, 2022.

Note: Includes all students in grades 3-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced.

*Students did not take the PSSA/PASA exams due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

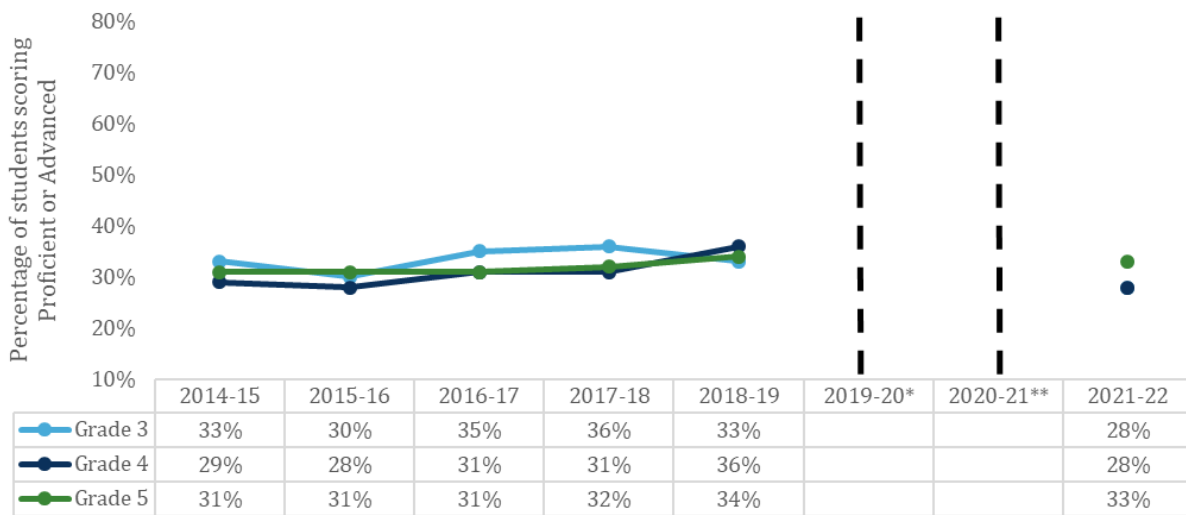
**Results not reported because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the COVID-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school.

³ For more information on 2020-2021 assessments, see <https://www.philasd.org/research/2022/02/18/%20summary-of-district-wide-assessments-administered-to-sdp-students-during-the-2020-21-school-year/>

Looking at performance by grade level, the percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA ELA between the 2018-19 and 2021-22 school years decreased for grades 3 and 4 and increased for grade 8.

In grades 3-5, between 28%-36% of 3rd and 4th graders scored Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA ELA between the 2014-15 and 2021-22 school years; for 5th graders, between 31%-34% scored Proficient or Advanced. Focusing on the 2018-19 and 2021-22 school years for this grade band, grades 3 and 4 had the largest decrease in the percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced, approximately five and eight percentage points, respectively (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The percentage of grades 3-5 students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA ELA from 2014-15 to 2021-22, by grade level



Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone App, Performance Details, downloaded September 2, 2022.

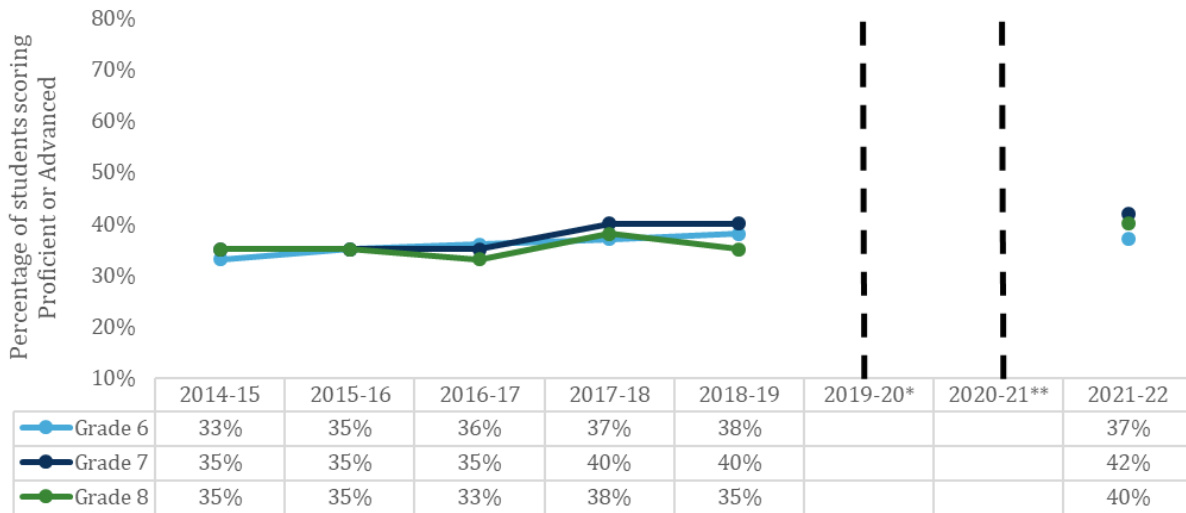
Note: Includes all students in grades 3-5 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced. See Table A1 in the appendix for counts.

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In grades 6-8, between 33%-38% of 6th grade students scored Proficient or Advanced between 2014-15 and 2021-22. For 7th grade students, between 35%-42% scored Proficient or Advanced; for 8th grade students, the percentage scoring Proficient or Advanced ranged from 33% to 40%. Focusing on the 2018-19 and 2021-22 school years, grade 8 saw a five-percentage point increase in students who scored Proficient or Advanced, while the percentage of 6th and 7th grade students scoring Proficient or Advanced remained stable across the two school years (Figure 3).

Figure 3. The percentage of grades 6-8 students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA ELA from 2014-15 to 2021-22, by grade level



Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone App, Performance Details, downloaded September 2, 2022.

Note: Includes all students in grades 6-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced. See Table A2 in the appendix for counts.

*Students did not take the PSSA/PASA exams due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

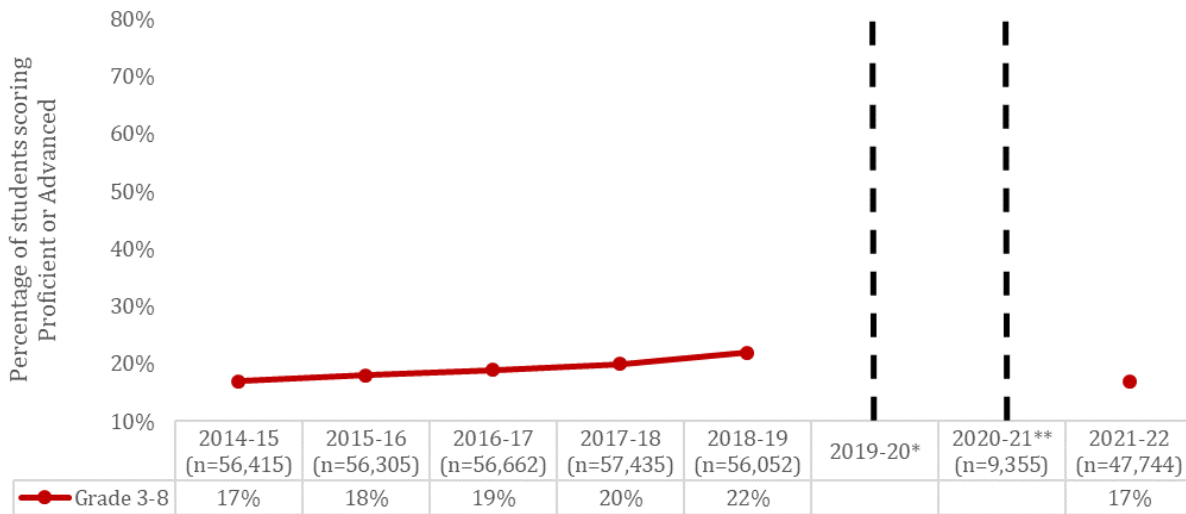
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PSSA Math Performance

The percentage of students in grades 3-8 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Math increased steadily for each tested year from 2014-15 through 2018-19 then declined in 2021-22.

The percentage of students in grades 3-8 who scored Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Math ranged from 17% to 22% between the 2014-15 and 2021-22 school years (Figure 4). This percentage increased steadily from 2014-15 to 2018-19 where it peaked at 22%, then declined to 17% in 2021-22.

Figure 4. The percentage of grades 3-8 students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Math from 2014-15 to 2021-22



Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone App, Performance Details, downloaded September 6, 2022.

Note: Includes all students in grades 3-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced.

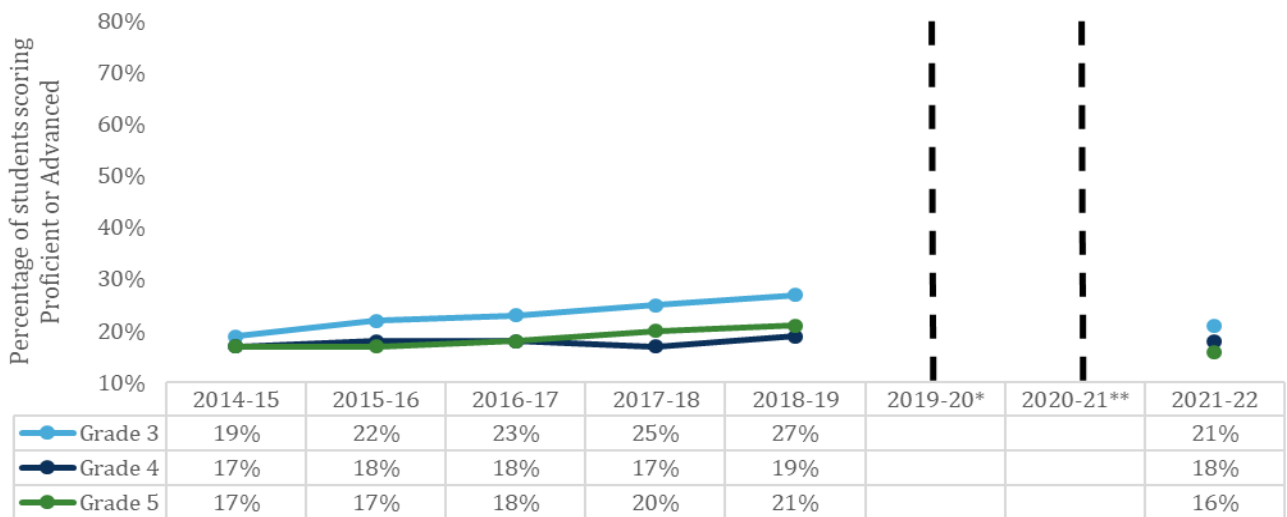
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Looking at performance by grade level, for each tested year since 2014-15, between 13% and 27% of students in grades 3-8 scored Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Math, with most grades experiencing declines between the 2018-19 and 2021-22 school years.

In grades 3-5, between 19%-27% of 3rd grade students scored Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Math through the 2014-15 and 2021-22 school years. For 4th grade, between 17%-19% of students scored Proficient or Advanced, and for 5th grade, between 16%-21% scored Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Math. Within this grade band, grades 3 and 5 experienced declines in the percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced between the 2018-19 and 2021-22 school years (about six and five percentage points, respectively) while grade 4 remained relatively stable with 18% to 19% of students scoring Proficient or Advanced (Figure 5).

Figure 5. The percentage of grades 3-5 students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Math from 2014-15 to 2021-22, by grade level



Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone App, Performance Details, downloaded September 2, 2022.

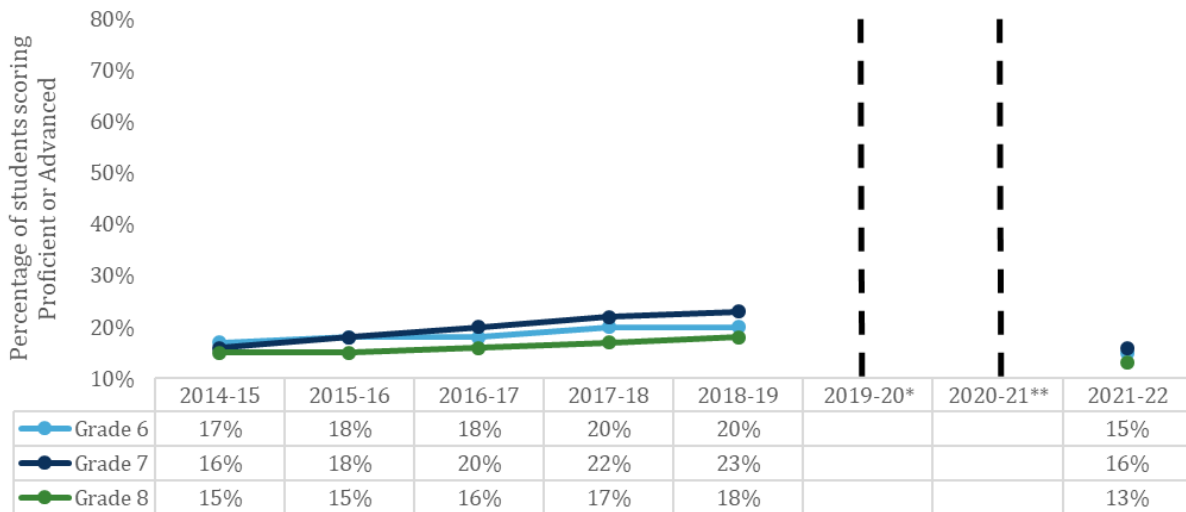
Note: Includes all students in grades 3-5 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced. See Table A3 in the appendix for counts.

*Students did not take the PSSA/PASA exams due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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In grades 6-8, between 15%-20% of 6th grade students scored Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Math between the 2014-15 and 2021-22 school years. For 7th grade students, between 16% and 23% scored Proficient or Advanced; for 8th grade students, between 13% to 18% scored Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Math. Focusing on the 2018-19 and 2021-22 school years, all grades within this grade band experienced declines in the percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced that ranged from five to seven percentage points. The largest decline was seen for grade 7, which experienced a percentage point decline of seven points (Figure 6).

Figure 6. The percentage of grades 6-8 students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Math from 2014-15 to 2021-22, by grade level



Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone App, Performance Details, downloaded September 2, 2022.

Note: Includes all students in grades 6-8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced. See Table A4 in the appendix for counts.

*Students did not take the PSSA/PASA exams due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

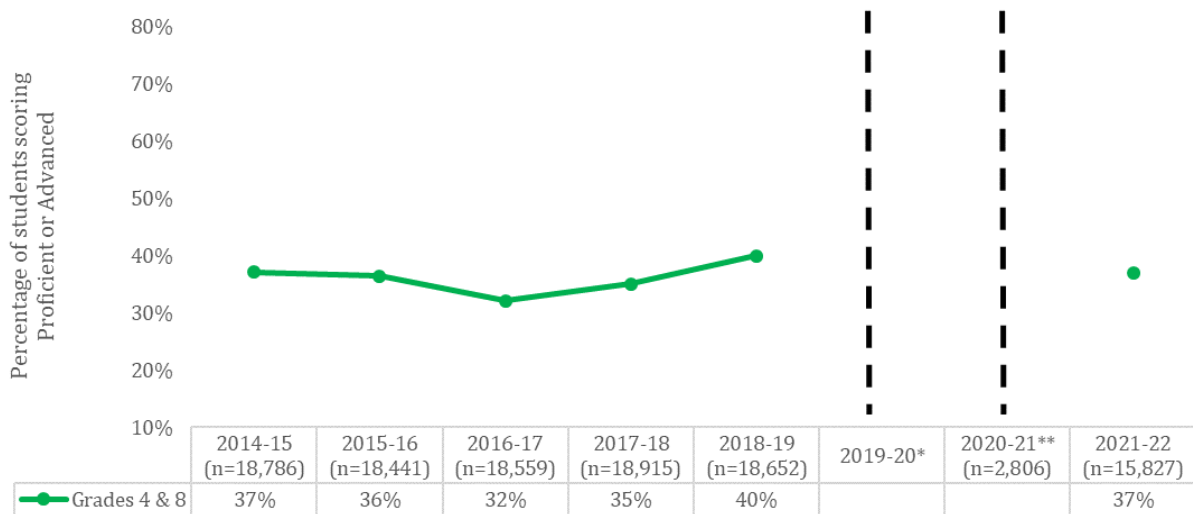
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PSSA Science Performance

For each tested year since 2014-15, the percentage of students in grades 4 and 8 who scored Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Science ranged from 32% to 40%.

The percentage of students in grades 4 and 8 who scored Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Science ranged from 32% to 40% between the 2014-15 and 2021-22 school years (Figure 7). This percentage increased steadily from 2016-17 to 2018-19 where it peaked at 40%, then declined to 37% in 2021-22.

Figure 7. The percentage of grades 4 and 8 students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Science from 2014-15 to 2021-22



Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone App, Performance Details, downloaded September 8, 2022.

Note: Includes all students in grades 4 and 8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced.

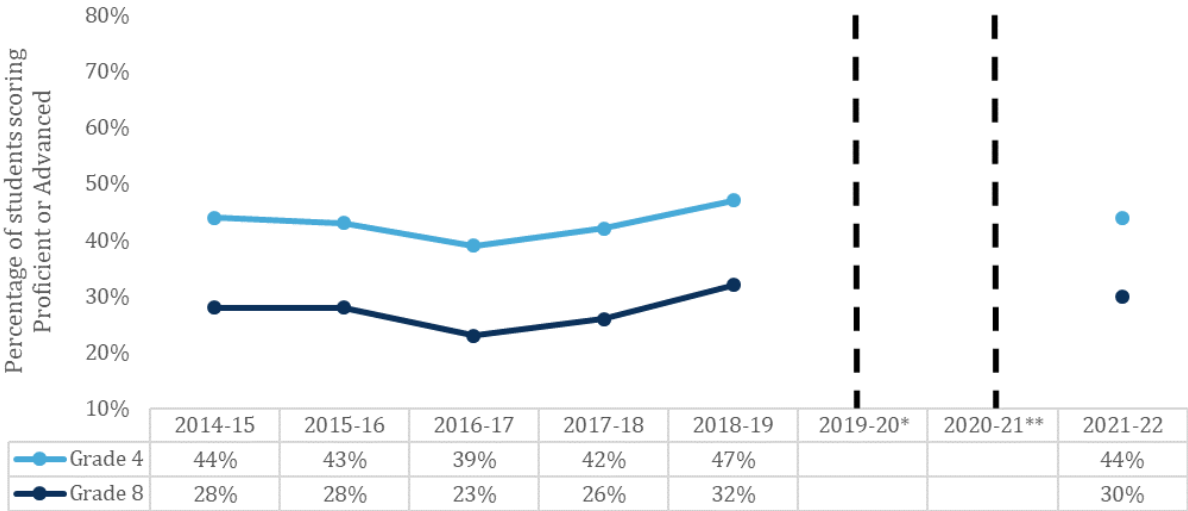
*Students did not take the PSSA/PASA exams due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Looking at performance by grade level, trends in PSSA Science performance across each tested year since 2014-15 mirrored trends for the combined group of 4th and 8th graders, although 8th grade had a consistently lower percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced than 4th grade.

When looking at 4th and 8th grade performance separately, we find that between 23%-47% of 4th and 8th grade students scored Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Science in each tested year since 2014-15. While trends for each grade closely mirrored that of the combined group of 4th and 8th graders, grade 8 consistently had a lower fraction of students who scored Proficient or Advanced compared to students in grade 4 (Figure 8).

Figure 8. The percentage of grades 4 and 8 students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA Science from 2014-15 to 2021-22, by grade level



Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone App, Performance Details, downloaded September 8, 2022.

Note: Includes all students in grades 4 and 8 who took the PSSA/PASA in the year referenced. See Table A5 in the appendix for counts.

*Students did not take the PSSA/PASA exams due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Appendix

Table A1. Number of students scoring Proficient or Advanced out of the number tested on the PSSA ELA from 2014-15 to 2021-22, grades 3-5

School Year	Number of 3 rd grade students who		Number of 4 th grade students who		Number of 5 th grade students who	
	Scored Proficient or Advanced	Took the PSSA	Scored Proficient or Advanced	Took the PSSA	Scored Proficient or Advanced	Took the PSSA
2014-2015	3641	10919	3026	10628	3095	9859
2015-2016	3386	11163	3005	10592	3006	9822
2016-2017	3819	10890	3326	10789	3057	9800
2017-2018	3803	10660	3346	10732	3227	10178
2018-2019	3353	10314	3724	10298	3404	10065
2020-2021*		2068		1939		1853
2021-2022	2301	8195	2273	8209	2670	8103

Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone App, Performance Details, downloaded September 2, 2022.

Note: Includes students who took the PSSA/PASA.

*Results not reported because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the COVID-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school.

Table A2. Number of students scoring Proficient or Advanced out of the number tested on the PSSA ELA from 2014-15 to 2021-22, grades 6-8

School Year	Number of 6 th grade students who		Number of 7 th grade students who		Number of 8 th grade students who	
	Scored Proficient or Advanced	Took the PSSA	Scored Proficient or Advanced	Took the PSSA	Scored Proficient or Advanced	Took the PSSA
2014-2015	2776	8542	2883	8269	2784	8015
2015-2016	2990	8574	2810	8154	2771	7826
2016-2017	3154	8737	2947	8412	2621	7879
2017-2018	3300	8887	3440	8643	3066	8124
2018-2019	3560	9374	3396	8485	2901	8378
2020-2021*		1280		1192		1053
2021-2022	2781	7600	3212	7623	3054	7661

Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone App, Performance Details, downloaded September 2, 2022.

Note: Includes students who took the PSSA/PASA.

*Results not reported because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the COVID-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school.

Table A3. Number of students scoring Proficient or Advanced out of the number tested on the PSSA Math from 2014-15 to 2021-22, grades 3-5

School Year	Number of 3 rd grade students who		Number of 4 th grade students who		Number of 5 th grade students who	
	Scored Proficient or Advanced	Took the PSSA	Scored Proficient or Advanced	Took the PSSA	Scored Proficient or Advanced	Took the PSSA
2014-2015	2109	10966	1804	10657	1667	9893
2015-2016	2441	11226	1878	10674	1706	9835
2016-2017	2562	10985	1904	10856	1752	9862
2017-2018	2660	10740	1847	10807	2063	10198
2018-2019	2841	10390	2011	10346	2127	10084
2020-2021*		2065		1908		1838
2021-2022	1725	8306	1523	8299	1269	8169

Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone App, Performance Details, downloaded September 2, 2022.

Note: Includes students who took the PSSA/PASA.

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Table A4. Number of students scoring Proficient or Advanced out of the number tested on the PSSA Math from 2014-15 to 2021-22, grades 6-8

School Year	Number of 6 th grade students who		Number of 7 th grade students who		Number of 8 th grade students who	
	Scored Proficient or Advanced	Took the PSSA	Scored Proficient or Advanced	Took the PSSA	Scored Proficient or Advanced	Took the PSSA
2014-2015	1465	8578	1305	8301	1219	8020
2015-2016	1499	8587	1450	8162	1167	7821
2016-2017	1572	8744	1645	8397	1261	7818
2017-2018	1768	8892	1867	8656	1383	8142
2018-2019	1859	9390	1919	8505	1538	8337
2020-2021*		1285		1196		1063
2021-2022	1169	7660	1193	7680	1005	7630

Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone App, Performance Details, downloaded September 2, 2022.

Note: Includes students who took the PSSA/PASA.

*Results not reported because less than 20% of eligible students took the PSSA exams due to the COVID-19 pandemic and students enrolled in virtual or hybrid school.

Table A5. Number of students scoring Proficient or Advanced out of the number tested on the PSSA Science from 2014-15 to 2021-22, grades 4 and 8

School Year	Number of 4 th graders who		Number of 8 th graders who	
	Scored Proficient or Advanced	Took the PSSA	Scored Proficient or Advanced	Took the PSSA
2014-2015	4699	10734	2277	8052
2015-2016	4551	10623	2172	7818
2016-2017	4193	10840	1770	7719
2017-2018	4550	10795	2086	8120
2018-2019	4823	10347	2635	8305
2020-2021*		1854		952
2021-2022	3608	8264	2256	7563

Source: Qlik PSSA & Keystone App, Performance Details, downloaded September 8, 2022.

Note: Includes students who took the PSSA/PASA.

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