

July 13, 2015

Dear Educator,

This week, the State Board of Education approved the new PSSA cut scores for our students as the next step in a process that began several years ago. Now, as we prepare to receive official student and district PSSA data in the coming weeks it is important to remember a few things:

1. The PA Core Standards that were adopted in 2013 were expected to be much more rigorous.
2. The PSSAs in English Language Arts and Mathematics administered this past spring were comprised solely of the new, more challenging standards.
3. Our new, more rigorous standards have resulted in lower standardized test scores, particularly in Mathematics.

It is important to note that these anticipated results represent a snapshot in time of student progress on a more rigorous assessment. The PA Core standards that were adopted in 2013 set the bar high, purposefully, in order to better prepare our students to be college and career ready when they graduate, and be successful in the 21st century work force. Our students haven't changed, but the assessment has.

At PDE we understand there are secondary impacts of these scores, and we're committed to helping you --- the state's educators, school administrators, and stakeholders -- in improving student achievement and communicating the new assessments and the results in your communities. Further, I assure you that we understand that standardized test results should not be the sole indicator of a student's or school's success, and will be part of a larger conversation on accountability, and how we best serve our students.

You can see the new PSSA cut scores and preliminary impact data by visiting PDE's website: <http://www.education.pa.gov/>, under the K-12 tab: Assessment and Accountability. We will be reaching out again in a few weeks with additional materials you may find useful in your discussions around this year's results.

I thank you for your continued dedication to making a positive difference in the lives of our students and the future of our commonwealth. Please do not hesitate to contact my office with questions.

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