



Mount Carmel Area School District

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What are the Keystone Exams?

From PDE: "The Keystone Exams are end-of-course assessments designed to evaluate proficiency in academic content."

Who will participate in the Keystone Exams?

From PDE: "Beginning in 2012-2013 the Algebra I, Literature, and Biology Keystone Exams will replace the 11th grade Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) tests in mathematics, reading, and science for purposes of satisfying No Child Left Behind (NCLB)/Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements. Therefore, all students in grade 11 must participate in the Algebra I, Literature, and Biology Keystone Exams. Additionally, students in any grade who are enrolled in or have completed a Keystone related course should participate."

Which MCASD students take the Keystone Exams and when will they take them?

From MCASD: All MCASD students who have completed Algebra 1, Biology, and Honors English to English 10) will be taking those corresponding exams in the May testing window. Re-tests for non-proficient students and those completing the courses in the spring will be conducted in May of 2015.

The PSSA testing window is April 13th through April 24th, 2015. This year all students in grades 3-8 will take the assessment in Math and Language Arts. The Science assessment is scheduled April 27th through May 1st. Only students in grades 4-8 will be assessed.

How long does a Keystone Exam or PSSA's take a student to complete?

From PDE: "There is no time limit for a student to complete a Keystone Exam. Each Keystone Exam should take the typical student 2 to 3 hours to complete. There are two modules on each test, and each module (or Test Session) of the Keystone Exam should take 1 to 1.5 hours to complete."

From MCASD: PSSA Reading and Math were generally scheduled during a six-day testing window that includes AM sessions only. PSSA Writing generally was completed during a separate two-day period and PSSA Science typically took 3 hours to complete.

How do the Keystone Exams impact graduation requirements?

From MCASD: “All students must demonstrate proficiency on all state required assessments and/or local assessments aligned with the academic standards.” Therefore, at MCASD, with the class of 2014 and beyond, students must earn a Proficient or Advanced score on the Algebra 1, Biology, and Literature Keystone Exams. An opportunity to retest will be given to juniors who have not yet achieved proficiency sometime in the second or third marking periods in order to graduate.

How are we preparing our students for the Keystone Exams at MCASD?

From MCASD: Our teachers have reviewed the eligible content, state standards, and sample questions to ensure that our courses are aligned with the Keystone tests. They are developing practice packets for students who completed the tested course prior to this school year. They are also incorporating preparation/refreshers materials into their subject related classes. In addition, an activity period has been added to remediate students who are not proficient.

Will my student be permitted to use their calculator?

From PDE and MCASD: Students are permitted to use calculators on the Algebra Exam, but they must provide their own. Scientific calculators and graphing calculators are optional, but recommended. Non-calculators such as cell phones, smart phones, cameras, PDA's, laptops, minicomputers, pocket organizers, etc. are not permitted. Calculator memory must be completely cleared prior to testing, and students should back up any programs that need to be saved.

Will my student be permitted to use their cell phone?

From PDE and MCASD: Students are NOT permitted to have cell phones, cameras, or any other electronic devices in their possession during the administration of the exams. All devices must be placed in a locker prior to reporting to the testing session. Because of test security, students found in possession of an electronic device during test administration risk having the exam invalidated.

What types of questions are on the Keystone Exams?

From PDE: The Keystone Exams will include multiple choice questions and constructed response or open-ended questions. For each Keystone Exam, approximately 60% to 75% of the total score will be from multiple-choice questions and 25% to 40% of the total score will be from constructed-response questions.

How are the written responses to constructed-response questions scored?

From PDE: The written responses for constructed response questions are scored by evaluators trained in applying a predetermined scoring system. Scores are based on content only. Spelling and punctuation are not included as part of the scoring process. Most constructed response questions require students to show their work or explain their reasoning. These Keystone exam questions will ask students to explain, analyze, describe, or compare. Some questions will also require students to perform calculation or create graphs, plots, or drawings.

May parents see the Keystone Exams?

From PDE: Parents and guardians may review the Keystone Exams if they believe they may be in conflict with their religious beliefs by making arrangements with the school test coordinator once the exams arrive at each school. Confidentiality agreements must be signed, and no copies of the Keystone exams or notes about exam questions will be permitted to leave the school. If after reviewing the Keystone Exams, parents or guardians do not want their child to participate in one or all of the district superintendent or charter school AO prior to the beginning of the exam(s) to request excuse their child from the exam(s).

For additional information about the Keystone Exams, visit the SAS website at <http://www.pdesas.org>