



September 8, 2015



Governor announces one-year pause in the use of SPP scores



Today Gov. Tom Wolf and Education Secretary Pedro Rivera announced that the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) has approved Pennsylvania's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver which allows for a one-year pause in the use of the state's School Performance Profile (SPP). The waiver in using the 2015 PSSA scores to calculate SPP and teacher effectiveness ratings was requested due to sweeping changes to the assessment that took effect in the 2014-15 school year.

The SPP is a significant part of Pennsylvania's obligations under the federal accountability system established by the ESEA. The SPP was first used in the 2012-13 academic year to provide students, families, school districts, and the general public with information to review the performance of Pennsylvania schools using a common measure. The SPP relies heavily on student scores on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), measuring both achievement and growth. The PSSA, administered in grades 3- 8 in English Language Arts and math, was fully-aligned to the more rigorous PA Core Standards for the first time in 2015, and the results on the most recent assessment cannot fairly be compared to those in previous years.

The 2015 PSSA was a brand new assessment, aligned for the first time to the new and more rigorous PA Core Standards, adopted by the State Board of Education in 2013. Performance level scores for the new 2015 PSSAs, adopted by the State Board in July, resulted in significant drops in student performance across the state.

The waiver means schools that administer Keystone Exams will continue to receive SPP scores. That means the only schools that administered PSSAs in 2015 that will have SPP scores will be those that also administered Keystone Exams. The Keystone Exams will be the only test used to help establish the SPP scores.

In the absence of SPP scores this year for most schools with grades kindergarten through 8, PSSA achievement scores will not be part of the evaluations of teachers and principals in these schools. Evaluations will continue to include student growth scores.

Secretary Rivera said that the pause in use of the SPP is part of a broader discussion regarding potential revisions to the SPP. The governor has directed PDE to consider how the tool could be adjusted to be a more comprehensive measure of school and student performance beyond single, high-stakes test performance.

In its approval of the one-year waiver, USDE noted the progress Pennsylvania has made toward improving students' college and career readiness. According to a press release, USDE said, "The state is taking important steps toward ensuring that every child has the opportunity they deserve but needs more time to make adjustments to its flexibility plans in order to fully meet its commitments. To that end, the state is receiving a one-year renewal while it continues finalizing its plans for the future."

Find out more about the new PSSA cut scores by joining PDE and PSBA tomorrow, Sept. 9, from noon - 1p.m., for a free webinar titled "Understanding the New PSSA Cut Scores." The webinar will explain how the new cut scores were set, and how the scores should be viewed by schools, students, parents and communities. [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

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