



# GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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## **Less Testing, More Learning: Governor Shapiro Takes Action to Reduce Reliance on Standardized Testing, Help More Students and Teachers Succeed**

*At the Governor's direction, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) will implement a three-part plan to overhaul Pennsylvania's state assessment system that includes moving PSSA and Keystone testing online.*

*These changes will save Pennsylvania millions of dollars, reduce the burden on students, families, and teachers, shorten the time students spend taking tests, and ensure schools get results faster.*





**Allegheny County, PA** – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** joined **Secretary of Education Dr. Khalid N. Mumin** at Northgate School District in Allegheny County to announce changes to the state’s system of school assessments that will reduce the amount of time students spend taking standardized tests, mitigate stress and anxiety around testing by adopting question types that match how students learn, help teachers spend more time teaching, and save the Commonwealth millions of dollars.

Governor Shapiro has heard from Pennsylvania students, parents, and teachers about the burden standardized testing places on them – and he is following through on his promise to reduce our reliance on those tests and ensure students and teachers have the flexibility they need to be successful.

The Shapiro Administration’s three-part plan to update the state’s standardized testing system includes implementing online testing over the next two years, adopting question types that allow students to use methods they are already familiar with – such as drag and drop, sorting and ranking, and graphic manipulation – and developing a free, optional benchmark assessment tool for schools to help educators better understand whether students are on track to succeed on end-of-year exams.

“I’ve made it a point to listen to the voices of students, teachers, and parents in my Administration, and I’ve heard loud and clear how much of a burden standardized tests can be,” said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. “The changes I’m announcing today will reduce that burden, shorten the amount of time students spend taking tests, and ensure schools get results faster so they can give students the support they need to succeed. Together, we can ensure that when our kids go to school they’re doing less testing and more learning.”

32% of schools in Pennsylvania have already begun to administer online assessments. Over the next two school years, the rest of our schools will transition from traditional paper-and-pencil testing to online testing for the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and Keystone Exams. By

2026, all assessments will be online and PDE will begin to introduce technology-enhanced items such as drag-and-drop, sorting, and graphic manipulation questions, which students are already accustomed to using on a daily basis. Paper-and-pencil assessments will still be available for students who need additional accommodations.

Online testing has several significant advantages over the current paper tests, including saving the Commonwealth \$6.5 million annually upon full implementation. The move to digital testing will also have significant environmental impacts, saving 85,788,522 printed pages annually and reducing our Commonwealth's carbon footprint through the reduction of printing, packaging, and shipping.

Additionally, online testing will ensure schools get results faster. Schools currently receive scoring reports throughout the summer months, making it difficult to use them for decision-making in student scheduling, course content alignment, and resource allocation. District educators, already overworked and wearing multiple hats, will save significant time by switching to online testing, ranging from 10-20 hours in small schools to dozens of hours or even days in larger schools.

Under the new system, educators will be able to deliver accommodations to students with disabilities more discreetly, and the addition of technology-enhanced items will further reduce testing time for students (and will potentially shorten the state's assessment window).

"One of the ways we can better serve both learners and educators is by examining the usage and efficacy of standardized tests," said **Secretary of Education Dr. Khalid N. Mumin**. "While Pennsylvania is among a group of states that take a relatively minimalist approach to statewide standardized testing and administers only the minimum number of assessments required by federal law, we have listened to feedback from the field and the public and have responded with a plan that will benefit schools, educators, and Pennsylvania's 1.7 million learners."

Taken together with the move to online testing, the Shapiro Administration's reforms could save students up to 30 minutes per test – for student who are taking multiple tests in a single year, that could mean up to 2 hours of time spent learning rather than testing.

PDE is also developing a free, optional benchmark assessment tool to be provided to schools if they choose. This tool can help educators better understand whether students are on track to succeed on the end-of-year exams, identify potential issues early so they may be addressed prior to the testing window, and respond to unique student needs to set them up for success.

"The Governor's plan to streamline how we administer standardized tests throughout the commonwealth will reduce our reliance on PSSAs and Keystone exams while ensuring students and teachers have the flexibility they need to be successful," said **Senator Wayne Fontana**. "As the Chairman of the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA), I understand the importance of ensuring our students are prepared for the next steps of their educations. The Governor's plan to reduce the burden of standardized testing in Pennsylvania will help achieve that."

"Every student, educator, and parent knows it's long past time to reform the way we administer federally mandated standardized tests in Pennsylvania," said **Senator Lindsey Williams**. "I welcome the Administration's efforts to do what we can at the state level to minimize time spent on testing and look forward to working with PDE to ensure this transition is smooth and equitable for students across all districts."

"Northgate has a strong history of taking a student-first approach to maximize the accessibility and efficiency of its programming, including standardized testing," said **Representative Emily Kinhead**. "While these tests are necessary to secure federal funds, most of the teachers, students, and staff

who tackle the PSSAs and Keystones every year feel strongly that they have become an obstacle to the larger objectives of our education system and need major reforms like this.”

"It was an honor to welcome Governor Shapiro to the Northgate School District, and we are incredibly pleased about the proposed changes to standardized testing," said **Dr. Caroline Johns, Superintendent of Schools at Northgate School District**. "Our district strongly focuses on supporting the whole child, and the new changes will give us more time and resources to do this. We thank the Shapiro administration for listening to the concerns and focusing on doing what is right for our students."

While states are given some flexibility to create or adapt assessments suited to their needs, under the Federal Every Student Succeeds Act, states must administer statewide assessments. All 50 states have an assessment program used to satisfy federal testing requirements, and in Pennsylvania's case, eliminating standardized testing entirely would put the Commonwealth at risk of losing \$600 million in federal funding for our schools.

The Shapiro Administration is committed to making sure students get the support they need to succeed – in school and beyond. The 2024-25 budget proposal builds on last year's progress to ensure all Pennsylvania children have the freedom to chart their own course and the opportunity to succeed, by investing in our public schools, teachers, facilities and more.

This year's proposal includes a nearly \$1.1 billion increase in basic education funding – the largest in Pennsylvania history. The 2024-25 budget proposal also includes \$300 million for school environmental repairs, \$100 million for mental health supports in schools, a \$50 million increase for special education funding, increases in career and technical education, a \$50 million annual investment in school safety and security improvements, and \$10 million for the Educator Talent Recruitment Account.

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