

# A testing 'cheat sheet'

*Confused about the alphabet soup of tests given to students in kindergarten through 12th grade? Here's a short guide to the myriad tests in Pennsylvania schools.*

Test	Subject	Who takes it?	When is it taken?	Purpose of test	Results
PSSA Pennsylvania System of School Assessment	Reading, math (grading 3, 5, 8, 11); writing (grades 6, 9, 11)	Nearly all public school students	Reading, math and 11th-grade writing in the spring; other writing tests in the fall	Assesses whether students and schools meet state standards	52% proficient or better in math; 60% in reading
NAEP National Assessment of Educational Progress	Most academic subjects	National sample in selected grades	Reading and math, every 2 years; other tests given periodically	Compares national and state achievement	Varied. Steady growth in math, grades 4 and 8
TIMSS Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study	Math, science	Sample of students, grades 4 and 8, in 38 countries	Four-year cycle. Most recent results are from 1999	Compares science and math achievement across countries	U.S. 8th-grade math and science above international average, but 14 countries performed significantly better
PIRLS Progress in International Reading Literacy Study	Reading	Sample of fourth-graders in 35 countries	Latest results 2001; next test 2006	Compares reading achievement across countries	U.S. significantly better than average; three countries - Sweden, Netherlands and England - scored significantly higher
SAT	Verbal, math	College-bound high school students. 73 percent of Pa.'s class of 2003 took the test; 48 percent nationwide	Usually in high school; can be taken repeatedly	Colleges use to assess applicants	Pa. average in 2003 was 500 in verbal and 502 in math; U.S. average was 507 verbal, 519 math
ACT Assessment	English, reading, math and science	College-bound high school students. 8 percent of Pa.'s class of 2003 took the test; 40 percent nationwide	Usually in high school, can be taken repeatedly	Colleges use to assess applicants	Pa. average in 2003 was 21.5; U.S. average 20.8
Iowa, Stanford, Terra Nova, Metropolitan, California Achievement, New Standards and other standardized tests	Math, reading, writing, science, social studies, depending on test	Most students; test and grade level selected by district	Usually yearly	Track individual and overall student progress and deficiencies	Varied. Individual scores usually given to parents