

## New Benchmark Assessments are Coming!

PDE is expanding the suite of assessments to offer LEAs a custom benchmark assessment that is aligned to Pennsylvania standards. The Pennsylvania Firefly Student Progress Indicators are new, free, high-quality benchmark assessments that are designed for Pennsylvania and measure the same knowledge and skills as the PSSA and Keystone Exams. Firefly will be available for ELA grades 3–8, Mathematics grades 3–8, Algebra I, and Literature during the November 18 to April 18 pilot in 2024–2025. Only Reading scores will be reported for ELA in 2024–2025. The Firefly will be expanded to include Science and Biology in 2025–2026.

The Pennsylvania Firefly benchmark is a fully online, computer-adaptive assessment designed to be administered as single-session tests on the same platform as the summative assessments and the Classroom Diagnostic Tools (CDT). The tests will deliver grade-level content only and are designed to be administered in about one class period. Students can take each Firefly assessment up to three times during the test window. Taking the assessment multiple times will help measure progress toward end-of-year learning goals. LEAs have the flexibility to determine when to administer the Firefly assessments within the test window.

PDE is also developing suggested assessment schedules which will include the CDT and the Firefly benchmark assessments. The CDT and the Firefly are not interchangeable: each has its own uses and purposes, and each provides unique benefits. The CDT is a true diagnostic assessment that helps determine where to focus instruction to meet day-to-day learning goals; the Firefly benchmark is designed to be an interim assessment that supports end-of-year goals and will provide predictions in year two (2025–2026) as to how students will perform on the PSSA or Keystone assessments.

## DRC's Online Enrollment System

One of the most critical processes for ensuring a successful test administration is providing DRC with accurate enrollment and contact information during the established Enrollment windows in the DRC INSIGHT Portal. This is especially important this year as many LEAs begin to transition from paper to online testing.

- \* Enrollment for the 2025 Spring PSSA will be available September 30–October 3, 2024.
- \* Enrollment for the 2025 Spring Keystone Exams will be available December 4–9, 2024.

This is your opportunity to enter projected enrollment counts for testing, including accommodated material, and update contact information at both the district and school levels. The information collected from the enrollment system provides contact information for future communication, online forecasting details for infrastructure development, school-level materials quantities (including online manuals), and delivery locations.

**Your LEA's enrollments for PSSA Science will be pre-populated for 100% online testing.** This approach is in alignment with PDE's recommendation for LEAs to administer the 2025 Science assessments online to prepare for the 2026 transition to statewide online testing and the new STEELS standards. Sites that cannot administer the science tests online in 2025, including sites that have individual students who require paper or Spanish materials, must adjust the enrollments in the system to receive paper materials. For PSSA English Language Arts and Mathematics, enrollments are pre-populated by mode based on last year's actual usage.

The Online Enrollment System can be accessed via the [DRC INSIGHT Portal](#). After logging in, click on the applications dropdown, then select **Materials**. Next, click on **Enrollments**.

For additional details, the [DRC INSIGHT Portal User Guide](#) is available for download.

**Contact DRC PA Customer Service 1-800-451-7849**

**Email: [PAcustomerservice@datarecognitioncorp.com](mailto:PAcustomerservice@datarecognitioncorp.com)**

**DRC INSIGHT Portal: [pa.drcdirect.com](https://pa.drcdirect.com)**

**PSA Assessments Site: [sites.google.com/datarecognitioncorp.com/psa-assessments/home](https://sites.google.com/datarecognitioncorp.com/psa-assessments/home)**

## Transition to Statewide Online Testing

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has announced that all PSSA and Keystone Exams testing will transition to online in the spring of 2026. PDE is also encouraging LEAs to consider beginning the transition to online testing in 2025, whether it's for the entire district, certain schools, or even specific grades. There is no restriction on administering both paper and online tests at the district, school, grade, content area, or student level in 2025. However, in 2026, only students who require a paper test as an accommodation will be allowed to participate in a paper administration.

The transition to online testing is meant to offer benefits for students and educators alike. Online testing will align the student testing experience with their regular classroom/homework experiences. Online testing will streamline the assessment process and reduce the administrative burden of receiving, distributing, collecting, and returning paper materials. It will provide enhanced security measures that reduce the chances of cheating and ensure a fair testing environment for students and educators. Online testing also promotes environmental sustainability by reducing paper waste and the carbon footprint associated with traditional paper-based exams.

DRC has a wide array of resources available on the DRC INSIGHT Portal to support transitioning to and maintaining online testing. The documents can be found by selecting "Technology" as the document type for all administrations under General Information >> Documents. In addition, PDE will be consolidating resources for the transition to online testing on the PDE website. You can access the materials from the "Online Assessment Resources" option from the Assessment and Accountability page <https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/Pages/default.aspx>. These resources, coupled with DRC's customer service support, will help to ensure that all LEAs experience a successful transition to the new era of summative testing.

## Technology Enhanced Items for All Subjects

The introduction of Technology Enhanced (TE) items will expand to all subjects this spring (*TE items appeared only on the PSSA Science and Keystone Biology tests last year*). The items will appear on the online tests and will replace a small number of traditional multiple-choice items. These innovative item types will allow students to utilize features such as click-to-respond, drag-and-drop, and text highlighting to interact with test content in a way that takes advantage of the online format. **Note:** Technology Enhanced items have been included in the Science Classroom Diagnostic Tools (CDT) tests since 2019.

The PSSA and Keystone Exams Online Tools Training (OTT) will be updated to include Technology Enhanced items for all subjects in the November release. All schools that administer the assessments online should be providing an opportunity for students to interact with the OTTs prior to the administration of the assessment. The OTTs are available through the DRC INSIGHT test engine throughout the entire year. Please contact a DRC Customer Service representative if you have any questions about accessing the OTTs.

## Testing Devices and Software

If supportive software has been added to the devices on which your students will take the state assessment (e.g., Grammarly), it's important that you have a plan for disabling the software during the administration of any assessment. DRC's INSIGHT test engine blocks student access to standard system applications when the test is launched. However, add-on software that is not part of a device's standard operating system must be disabled by the school prior to testing.

It's also critical that schools understand PDE's policy for students who use one-to-one devices for testing. Any one-to-one student device that will be used for testing must be configured to the school's Central Office Services - Service Device (COS-SD). This configuration prevents unauthorized student access to an active test administration outside of the building that houses the COS-SD.

For more information and support for either of these topics, please access the *Technology User Guide* or the *PDE Policy for One-to-One Devices* from the DRC INSIGHT Portal. Technology staff should call DRC Customer Service if additional information is needed.

## Device Support Awareness

Because each updated release of the DRC INSIGHT online testing system is configured to work within the security and functionality features of the newest operating systems, LEAs should ensure ALL devices are running on the most current version of the device's operating system. If testing devices are running on "obsolete" operating systems, the device will not be able to deliver the online tests with the needed level of functionality to provide the expected student test experience or the level of security the assessments demand. The DRC INSIGHT system requirements and other documentation related to device support are readily available within the DRC INSIGHT Portal.

## Section-Specific Test Tickets

Historically, students testing online used the same test ticket/password to access all sections of their test. This required Test Administrators and Coordinators to collect and re-distribute the test tickets to administer each subsequent test section. Starting with the 2024/2025 Winter Keystone Exams, the test tickets produced from the DRC INSIGHT Portal will be separate for each module of the Keystone Exam or section of the PSSA tests. To increase the efficiency of the new process, a student's test tickets will appear within the same PDF output for that test session.

The impetus for the change was to ensure that students only log into the module or section that is being administered. Having test tickets that access a single link will prohibit students from accidentally logging into the wrong session. The single-section test tickets will also eliminate the need for school personnel to inspect and securely store multi-section tickets. The result will be an easier material-handling process and the elimination of avoidable mistakes that often need to be reported to PDE.

## A New Grade for PSSA Science

As part of the Commonwealth's transition to the new STEELS standards (Science, Technology & Engineering, Environmental Literacy & Sustainability), the 2025 PSSA Science test will be administered in grade 5 and grade 8—no longer grades 4 and 8. This spring's Science assessment will be administered as a census field test in which all students are required to participate. All accommodated paper forms needed to support student participation (Spanish, large print, Braille) will be available for LEAs to order in the Enrollment System.

Individual student data and reports will not include Science results this spring. The data from the 2025 census field test will be used to produce the 2026 Science PSSA that will be fully aligned to the STEELS standards. As such, the 2025 PSSA District Student Data Files, Individual Student Reports (ISRs), Summary Reports, and Data Interaction will not include Science results. Instead, LEAs will receive aggregated Science data that will show how a student performed on the field test items in comparison to the entire testing population. The reports will be published separately from PSSA and accountability reporting. PDE will not be using Science performance within the required statewide reporting for 2025; however, PDE will continue to report Science participation in 2025.

If you have questions about the new STEELS standards, please contact PDE or your IU representative for more information. If you have questions about the science assessments, please direct those to DRC's Customer Service Team.

## DRC INSIGHT System Requirements

System requirements are available on the DRC INSIGHT Portal under the Documents section by choosing the document type of "Technology". Click the link below or enter it into the address bar to access the Documents section of the DRC INSIGHT Portal. <https://pa.drccdirect.com/default.aspx?leapp=General+Information>

## Enhanced Student Testing Experience

The DRC INSIGHT Test Engine has been updated with a new enhanced interface to improve the overall accessibility of the student testing experience. Students will experience a new look and feel that provides easier access to test features and tools as they navigate each assessment. Feature updates include:

- More accessible buttons. All buttons are now organized at the top of the page.
- Additional magnification options. Four magnification options are now available for all students.
- Added writing tools for ELA and Literature. Students can now indent and use italics if desired.
- Enhanced review page. The review page allows students to filter flagged and unanswered questions among all items.

Student training Online Tools and Tutorials are updated with these new features. They can be accessed using Google Chrome at <https://wbte.drccdirect.com/PA/portals/pa>.

## 2024-2025 IMPORTANT DATES

2025 PSSA Enrollment Window	September 30-October 3, 2024
Winter Keystone Testing Dates Collection Window	October 10-17, 2024
Winter Keystone Test Setup Window for Precode Labels	October 14-17, 2024
Winter Keystone Wave 1 Secure Materials arrive	By November 20, 2024
2025 Spring Keystone Enrollment Window	December 4-9 2024
Winter Keystone Wave 1 Testing Window	December 4-18, 2024
Winter Keystone Wave 2 Secure Materials arrive	By December 17, 2024
Winter Keystone Wave 2 Testing Window	January 6-17, 2025
Winter Keystone materials pickup date for report inclusion	January 22, 2025
Winter Keystone Match to Master Window	February 14-19, 2025
Winter Keystone Student Data Files posted	March 11, 2025
Spring Keystone Test Setup Window for Precode Labels	March 20-24, 2025
Spring Keystone Testing Dates Collection Window	March 17-28, 2025
PSSA Secure Materials arrive	By April 7, 2025
PSSA Testing Window ELA	April 21-25, 2025
Spring Keystone Secure Materials arrive	By April 28, 2025
PSSA Testing Window Math, Science, Make-ups	April 28-May 2, 2025
PSSA materials pickup date for early report inclusion	May 2, 2025
Spring Keystone Testing Window	May 12-23, 2025
PSSA materials pickup date for report inclusion	May 14, 2025
Spring Keystone materials pickup date for report inclusion	May 29, 2025
PSSA Student Data Files posted—Early Reports	June 2, 2025
Grades 3-8 Attributions Window	June 19-27, 2025
Spring Keystone Match to Master Window	June 19-24, 2025
PSSA Student Data Files posted	June 24, 2025
Spring Keystone Student Data Files posted	July 14, 2025
Grade 11 Attributions Window	July 23-25, 2025
Accountability District Student Data Files	August 18, 2025

### Resources and Training Google Site

The most frequently accessed resource and training materials are now on a Google site. This site supplements what is already available to you on the DRC INSIGHT Portal, and includes training videos as well as a FAQ section. The site is located at [sites.google.com/datarecognitioncorp.com/psa-assessments/home](https://sites.google.com/datarecognitioncorp.com/psa-assessments/home) or scan the QR code.

