



February 12, 2021

Dear Colleague,

I'm writing today to provide an update on the Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) planning for statewide assessments required by the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We know this issue is top of mind and that direction is long overdue. We are sensitive to the pressures facing you and will proceed down one of two paths within the next two weeks:

1. If the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) changes direction and invites state waivers from school year 2020-21 assessment administration, PDE will carefully consider such an option and will likely quickly survey local education agency leadership to gather data that could inform such a waiver request. We are not requesting this information now because it is unclear what requirements USDE would include in a waiver process, should one become available.
2. If the USDE requires states to move forward with assessment administration, PDE will quickly issue guidance that balances, to the greatest extent possible, the complexities of statewide testing during the pandemic and safety considerations for students, staff, and families. In the event Pennsylvania moves forward with Spring testing, the testing windows would be:

PSSA: April 19 - May 28, 2021

PASA: March 8 - May 7, 2021

Keystone Exams: May 17 - June 25, 2021

Within these windows, schools would not be required to test all students in a cohort at one time. Schools could test smaller groups for the sake of social distancing, thorough cleaning, and other prescribed safety protocols. Any school that remains in a remote or hybrid learning situation in March, and cannot safely provide face-to-face Keystone exams during the extended Winter Keystone window, would plan to test those students during the Spring window.

We remain committed to sharing all that we know, even when that information is limited. We continue to monitor developments every day, and will do our best to communicate a definitive path forward by the end of February.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matthew S. Stem". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Matthew S. Stem

Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education