



UCASD Assessment Newsletter

MARCH 2023
Issue #3

Inside this Edition...

OF THE UCASD ASSESSMENT NEWSLETTER

Several of our students recently completed **Winter Keystone Exams**, and now many of our students are just 6 weeks away from the beginning of the Spring assessment season! The 2022-2023 school year is flying by, and we are so **incredibly proud** of our students' efforts so far this year.

To support students and families ahead of the **Spring PSSAs and Keystone Exams**, we wanted to dedicate this issue of the **UCASD Assessment Newsletter** to the onset of those exams.

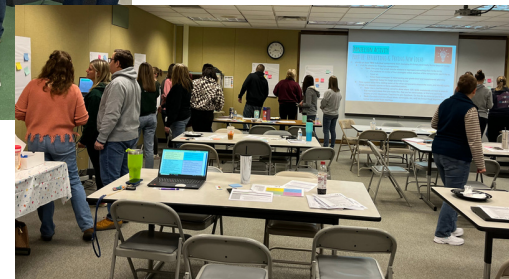
In this issue, we will:

- Share important information about the **upcoming testing windows**
- Share **resources** with families to help you and your family prepare for statewide assessments
- Highlight the great work **our faculty** is doing to prepare our students for **success on assessments and beyond!**

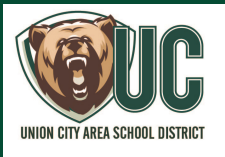
DATA DAY



Did you know?



We have a specific in-service day dedicated to analyzing state and local assessment data in order to **target students' greatest needs?** Teachers meet in small groups in grade-levels and departments to review and analyze updated, middle-of-the-year data and to **brainstorm and collaborate** on strategies for student success. Our teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators **work together** throughout the year to review data and support our students, and our **February 17 In-Service Data Day** was a great opportunity to network and **celebrate our kids' successes** so far this year!



Spring Assessment Update

PSSA

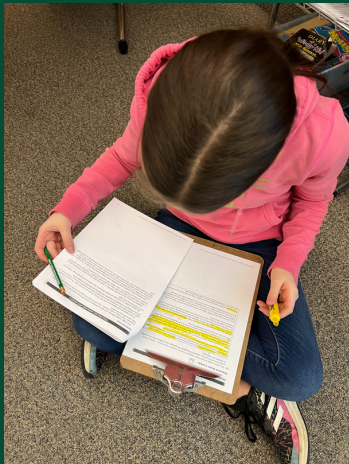
Students in Grades 3-8 complete the PSSAs annually in order to assess their **growth and proficiency** in Mathematics (Grades 3-8), English/Language Arts (Grades 3-8), and Science (Grades 4 & 8).

Our district receives both individual student score reports as well as building-wide and district-wide score reports so that we can **identify key needs** and use that data to drive instruction. We review PVAAS growth data in order to understand how our students are **progressing** in each content area from year-to-year. This data is incredibly helpful to our team as we continue to prepare students for **success beyond UCASD**.

Parents/Guardians receive copies of their students' score reports in the Fall.

UCASD Spring Assessment Dates PSSAs ~ Grades 3-8

Assessment	Dates
English Language Arts Grades 3-8	April 25, 26, 27
Mathematics Grades 3-8	May 2 & 3
Science Grades 4 & 8	May 4 & 5
Make-Up Days Grades 3-8	May 8, 9, 10, 11, 12



Did you know?

Our teachers help prepare the students for assessments by reviewing **test-taking strategies**, like highlighting and annotating the texts, in their classes. Students have opportunities to practice these skills in all content areas as they learn the content featured on the assessments. Pictured to the left, a 5th grade student uses a **PDE Item Sampler** (linked in the QR codes below) in to score a practice **Text-Dependent Analysis** (TDA essay) response.



The QR codes above take you directly to the PDE webpages about each of these exams. From there, you can access the test design AND sample test questions on the PDE Item Samplers for each grade-level and content area! *If you'd like a direct link, you can also access these on our assessment page: www.ucasd.org/Student_Assessment.aspx*



Spring Assessment Update

KEYSTONE EXAMS

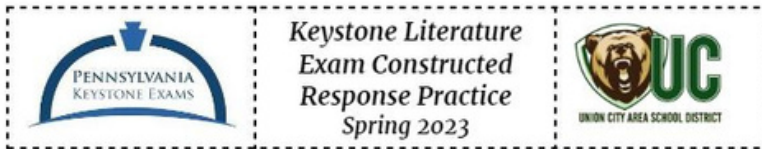
Keystone Exams are critical to our students for two purposes:

- Assessing and understanding our students' **proficiency and growth** in Algebra, Biology, and Literature
- Helping our students achieve one of the **Act 158 graduation pathways** (featured in *Assessment Newsletter Issue #2*)

High school students take the Keystone Exams in the Spring when enrolled in the following courses:

- **Literature Exam:** 10th Grade English -or- Language Arts Fundamentals II
- **Biology Exam:** Biology
- **Algebra Exam:** Algebra I -or- Math Fundamentals II

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class Period: _____



Week #1 Focus: Breaking Down a Prompt (Fiction)



#ProTip
Because you are permitted to look at questions in the section you are working on during the exam, sometimes it helps to read the prompt **prior** to reading the passage so that you can read for meaning. Simply ensure that you stay in the module that you are completing; the page numbers for each section are always listed on the board in the front of the room.

Things to Consider...

When reviewing a constructed response prompt and planning your response, it is best practice to:

- Review the Constructed Response Scoring Guidelines (on the back of this sheet)
- Highlight or circle key words in the prompt to ensure that you know what the writers are asking you to do. You'll use these words in your response to show that you are focused on the question being asked of ya!
- Sometimes it helps to reword the prompt in your own words, as this will help you create your **thesis statement**. We'll take a gander at thesis statements next week.

Before you start writing your response, make sure you:

- Read and annotate the passage
 - Highlight, circle, or underline key words and phrases that seem important
 - Take notes in the margins and put *stars* or marks next to sentences that relate to the prompt
- Review the prompt for understanding
- Review the **GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF SCORING GUIDELINES FOR LITERATURE** so that you know how to respond effectively and score the most points possible in your response.

Did you know?

Our teachers collaborate frequently to analyze assessment data and understand students' needs. This year, our team identified a key area of need for our students: **constructed response items**. These are open-ended questions that are heavily weighted on the exam. Our Spring test-takers are completing practice activities like the **bell-ringers** pictured to the left in order to help students practice the skills needed for success on these questions. **Thank you to all of our teachers who work so hard to prepare our students!**

Take a picture of the QR Code below to access dozens of **PDE Item Samplers** with sample questions, test design descriptions, and scoring rubrics! *If you prefer a direct link, these are also accessible on our assessment page:*

www.ucasd.org/Student_Assessment.aspx



Spring Keystone Testing - May 15-26, 2023

Assessment	Dates
Literature	May 15 & 16
Algebra	May 17 & 18
Biology	May 22 & 23
Make-Up Days	May 19, 24, 25, 26

DURING TESTING

Start the Day Right!

Knowing the testing dates for each assessment can help you ensure that your child gets plenty of rest the night before exams. Mark the dates on your calendar and ensure your child gets to school on time. Encourage them to eat breakfast before school or when they arrive.

Positive Support

Encourage your child to do well, but don't pressure him/her. It is important for your child to know to just do his/her best! Talking with your child can relieve stress about test-taking or may help them feel relaxed as exam days approach.



Supporting Students During Testing Season

BEFORE TESTING

PDE Parent Letters

Annually, PDE publishes a parent letter with a host of great information for families. We send this home in March and April and post it on our assessment page, but you can access it here:

<https://tinyurl.com/2023PSSAParentLetterPDE>

<https://tinyurl.com/2023KeystoneParentLetterPDE>

PDE Resources

The QR codes and the link to our District Assessment Page in this issue take you directly to the resource pages for the Keystone Exams and PSSAs so that you can access Item Samplers and test blueprints so that you can see exam questions and test design.

Score Reports

Watch for your child's score report in the Fall! Have a conversation with your child about their performance on the exams. **Ensure that they know we are proud of them for all of their hard work all year round** - in ALL of their classes and endeavours at UCASD!

Big Picture

Sometimes it helps to see how the entire student body performed on statewide assessments. You can visit the Future Ready PA Index to see how our district performed overall!

AFTER TESTING