

OnHand Schools' Tips to Improve your PSSA...

Testing Environment

What to do with only a few days until the PSSA?

Have a discussion between administrators and teachers about what is the best way to administer the PSSA in your school. Everyone will have a number of suggestions. Some will be very pragmatic, while some will be unrealistic. Read on for some of OnHand Schools' testing environment suggestions, gathered from years of working with teachers and administrators all over the state.

How can we limit distractions?

This can be as simple as turning off the bells and telling the maintenance department not to cut the grass. In general, you want to limit any unnecessary noise and possible distractions. If your district is able to run a split schedule, have the students that are being tested come to school at the regular time. Non-tested students can show up after the test is done for the day. Perhaps you could even isolate the testing students in a separate wing of the building. You should be able to come up with many ideas as a team to improve the testing environment in your schools.

Who should monitor the PSSA Exam?

If at all possible, have your teachers monitor their own students. Even better, have Math teachers monitor the PSSA Math Exam, and Reading/English teachers monitor the PSSA Reading Exam. Like it or not, the student results of the PSSA reflect directly on your performance. If a student is not on task, or not taking the test seriously, then he or she must be told. The chances are much greater than the student will respond to the encouragement to stay on task and work hard on their PSSA Math Exam if the teacher monitoring it is his/her own Math teacher.

How long can students take on the test?

If a group of students will need extra time, place them in a room together. The PSSA is not a timed test. Be sure to give students as much time as they need to finish it. If you have a student that needs more time, be sure that you have a plan in place to accommodate their needs.

How important is the PSSA to the student?

The fact is that as students get older, they find it harder to see the relevance of the PSSA. It is your job to stress the importance of the test. Do not be afraid to tell your students that just as they are evaluated by you; you are being evaluated by how they perform on the PSSA. You have spent the year developing a rapport with your students. Leverage that relationship. You want them to do well, and they- for the most part- want to please you. As them to do their best because it reflects directly on your evaluation as a teacher. Typically, most will respond.

Good Luck!

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