



STANDARDIZED TESTING

What you need to know

By Shelly Taylor

As homeschool parents, we all have questions concerning our child taking a standardized test. Are standardized tests required in Pennsylvania? If so, at what age or grade? Must my child take the PSSA at the local school or are there other options available to me? How do I prepare my child for standardized tests? Most of these questions can be answered by Act 169, PA's homeschool law.

Who is required to be tested?

Students in grades three, five and eight. At the discretion of the supervisor, other grade levels can be tested.

What subjects must be tested?

Reading/language arts and mathematics are required. At the discretion of the supervisor, other subjects may be included.

Can a parent or guardian test their child?

No. The supervisor shall ensure that the nationally normed standardized tests or the Statewide tests shall not be administered by the child's parent or guardian.

When shall I have my child tested?

Children can be tested anytime during the school year; however, the most popular time would be in the fall and spring. If your children are tested in the fall with the TerraNova, Stanford, or Iowa test, they will be given the test of the grade level recently completed. (For example, a 3rd grader tested in the fall would take the 2nd grade test.) However, due to the design and norming of some standardized tests such as the WRAT, testing is better administrated in the spring.

What nationally normed standardized tests does the Dept. of Education accept?

In addition to the PSSA, the PA Department of Education has established a list of nationally normed standardized tests that satisfy the homeschool law requirements. (see sidebar)

What preparation can we give our children before taking a standardized test?

Preparation can begin at a young age. Teach them to follow directions and to pay attention to details and to correct mistakes. (This is especially true for math). Reading comprehension will naturally be part of their reading, science, social studies etc. programs. A child is never too young to start understanding what has been read. After reading a story or assignment with your child, ask them questions to see if they understood what was read. Continue this process, in a more in-depth level, for independent students.

Quiz them as often as you feel is necessary so they get a sense of sitting still, not talking, and the need to do something they may not be accus-

tomed to doing. (This definitely applies to the SAT college preparation.)

Tell them they are going to take a test because the law requires it. Encourage them to do their best but it's only something that is required by law.

If your child needs more formal preparation, test preparation books, such as *Scoring High*, can be found at an educational bookstore.

Shelly Taylor is PA certified and has been evaluating/testing students since 1996. For more information on standardized tests and to read a copy of the homeschool law, Act 169, in its entirety, visit Shelly's website at www.iTestEval.com.

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Accepted Achievement Tests in Pennsylvania

California Achievement Test (CAT)

- Reading- vocabulary, comprehension
- Language- mechanics, usage and structure, spelling
- Mathematics- computation, concepts, problems

Comprehensive Testing Program (CTPIII)

- Reading - comprehension
- Language - verbal ability, vocabulary, mechanics, writing process
- Mathematics - computation, concepts/principles, reason

Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills

- Reading-vocabulary, comprehension
- Language-mechanics, expression, spelling
- Arithmetic-computation, concepts, application
- Study Skills-references/graphic materials

Iowa Test of Basic Skills

- Reading-word analysis, skills, comprehension
- Language-mechanics, spelling, vocabulary
- Mathematics-computation, concepts
- Work study-map reading, graphs and tables
- Skills-knowledge and use of references

Metropolitan Achievement Test

- Reading-comprehension
- Language-mechanics, spelling, vocabulary
- Mathematics-computation, concepts, problem solving
- Science-facts, concepts
- Social Studies-facts, concepts, using maps and charts

Peabody Individual Achievement Test - Revised (PIAT - R)

- Reading -recognition, comprehension, reading aloud
- Written Expression-writing skills
- Spelling Skills Tested
- Mathematics-computation, concepts, problem solving

Stanford Achievement Test

- Reading - vocabulary, comprehension, listening
- Language - mechanics, usage and structure, spelling
- Mathematics - computation, concepts, problems
- Science/Environment
- Social Studies - facts, concepts, using maps and charts

TerraNova - Survey ed. fulfills state requirements

- Reading - vocabulary, comprehension
 - Language - mechanics, usage and structure, spelling
 - Mathematics - computation, concepts, problems
- Note: The supplemental "Plus" edition offers reading, vocabulary, spelling, language/mechanics, math computation, science, social studies.

Wide Range Achievement Test - Revised (WRAT - 4)

- Reading-verbal word recognition
- Written Computation
- Mathematics
- Spelling

Woodcock - Johnson Test of Achievement (WJ - R)

- Reading-basic reading skills, comprehension
- Mathematics-basic math skills, math reasoning
- Written Language-writing expression, punctuation, spelling, usage