



# 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 testing? Many 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, students can be tested in other grade levels.

**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 child is tested in the fall with tests such as the TerraNova, Stanford, or Iowa, they will be given the test of the grade level recently completed. (For example, a 3rd grader tested in the fall would take the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade test.) However, due to the design and norming of some standardized tests, testing is better administrated in the spring.

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

The PA Department of Education has established a list of nationally normed standardized tests that satisfy the homeschool law requirements. (See list below.) The parent chooses which approved test they feel is best for their child.

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

Preparation can begin at a young age. Teach them to follow directions, to pay attention to details and to correct mistakes. This is especially true for math. Routinely expose your child to "working out" math problems and to "solving" word problems. Reading comprehension can 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 older and independent learners. Language art skills (grammar, spelling, vocabulary, punctuation, word usage etc.) can be developed through correction of writing assignments and completing worksheets.

Quiz/test 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 accustomed to doing. (This definitely applies to the SAT, which is often required as part of the college admission process.)

As a parent, don't show stress or made them nervous. Encourage them to do their best and, if in grades 3, 5, or 8, tell them they are going to take a test 'because the law requires it'.

Test on off years so they gain from the experience of taking standardized tests.

If your child needs more formal preparation, practice testing materials can be found on-line or at educational bookstores.

*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](http://www.iTestEval.com). This article first appeared in the Harrisburg Area Homeschoolers Assn. Fall 2008 Newsletter.*

## 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 (CTPIV)**

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

### **Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)**

- 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 (MAT)**

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

**PA System of School Assessment (PSSA)**-Based on statewide standards and administered by your local school district.

### **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 (SAT)**

- 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 (TN)**

#### **TerraNova Survey edition (TNS). 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.*

### **Woodcock Johnson III (WJIII)**

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