

**Video Script**  
**Preparing Diverse Students**  
**For the PSSA**

VIDEO

Segment 1:  
School hallway: Students are walking by as camera focus is on group of four students

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Jennifer: What was Mrs. Smith saying about a big test we have to take next week. What's up with that?

Melissa: Oh yeah, it's called an assessment. I took it in fifth grade. It was a test on reading, math, and writing skills. All eighth graders are taking it and so are the kids in eleventh grade. It's called PSSA.

Jennifer: PSSA, what is that?

Melissa: Pennsylvania System of School Assessment.

Sabrina: It's stupid man. It's probably one of those fill in the circle tests. Don't worry about it. It doesn't matter, cause it doesn't count in your grades.

Melissa: Maybe it doesn't count for grades, but it is important. My friend Itzabel took the test too, and my teacher was talking about it. Itzabel can tell you why it's important.

Sabrina: Yeah, Itzabel the brain. I can hardly wait.

Melissa: Hey, just because she's smart doesn't mean you should put her down. She really works

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Segment 2

hard.

Dino: Hi, I'm Dino.

Zuri: And I'm Zuri. We're here to guide you through this program.

Dino: There's a lot of information here for you and some fun too!

Zuri: I remember when I took the PSSA in eighth grade. Just like Sabrina, I thought, "It's stupid, and it doesn't matter."

Dino: Well, it does matter and it is important. It's an assessment of reading, math, and writing. The Department of Education uses the PSSA to check your progress in fifth, eighth, and eleventh grade.

Zuri: Your scores are sent to your parents and your school. They use it to see how well you are learning the state Academic Standards.

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Dino: You may not know it now, but teachers have been preparing you for the PSSA all along. It's a test of what you learn and practice in your classes every day.

Segment 3  
School Cafeteria

Jennifer: I'm getting nervous about this test. I think I'm getting sick in my stomach.

José Luis: That's the food making you sick.

(laugh)

Jennifer: (rolling her eyes) I'm serious! I even get

VIDEO

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nervous for regular tests.

Sabrina: I still don't see how this test matters.

Who cares? Maybe I won't come to school on test day. I'll get the flu or something.

Melissa: Come on, get serious because it really does matter. Listen, our teacher just told us how to use the word READY to help us on the PSSA.

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Each letter stands for something.

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Lee: R is for Rest. Be sure to get enough sleep

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before the test. E is for Eat. Have a good breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day of the test. She says it helps make our brains work better.

José Luis: (pointing to food on tray) This stuff ain't gonna help your brain. (all laugh again)

Itzabel enters.

Melissa: Hey girl....the next one is A for Act confident. The teacher says being confident helps us feel better and be less nervous.

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Itzabel: Oh, the READY word? D is for Dress comfortably every day of the PSSA. If you're comfortable you're more relaxed.

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Lee: and Y means You'll do great....or You can do it...something like that.

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Itzabel: Just relax. That's the idea. Relax and don't worry.

José Luis: I'd feel a lot better if someone would

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tell me the answers!

Segment 4

Dino: The READY word is the first strategy you want to remember and put to work for you.

Zuri: There are more tips in the next segment. See if you can spot them.

Segment 5

Jasmine: What do you remember about the reading part of the PSSA?

Yamiles: The reading section has stories and then you answer questions about the stories.

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Itzabel: Our reading teacher said it's best to read the questions before you read the story. That way you'll be thinking about the questions as you read the story.

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Cindy: And you can use a pencil or highlighter to mark parts of the story that go with the questions. It makes the answers easier to find.

Melissa: You can even write notes beside the story if that will help you. That's what I did.

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Itzabel: There are lots of things we learn in reading class we need to remember when we take the PSSA. You remember Prediction? It's when you try to guess what's going to happen in the story while you're reading.

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Cindy: When I read a story, I try to picture in my mind what I'm reading about. That's called Visualizing.

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Melissa: And while you're reading you have to check to make sure you're understanding what you're reading. Ask yourself, "What did I just read?" Because it's really easy to space out.

(laugh)

José Luis: That's me, every time I read.

Itzabel: Then you should read it again. If you get lost, go back and reread.

Jasmine: What happens when you see a word you don't know?

José Luis: I just skip it.

Cindy: Sometimes I use Spanish when I don't know a word in English.

Itzabel: Well, you can't skip it because there are vocabulary questions on the test too. And Spanish doesn't always work.

Yamiles: Look at the rest of the sentence or paragraph and what it's talking about. This helps you understand the word, and if it's part of a vocabulary question, you've already figured it out.

Jasmine: Do we have to write anything?

Itzabel: Yes. What you write has something to do

with the story you read.

Jasmine: You mean I have to write in English?

José Luis: No duh! What you think?

Yamiles: It's not that bad. You can use a dictionary.

Jasmine: How much we gotta write?

Yamiles: I think about a page, so you have to think about the question for a while. Don't just start writing anything that pops in your head.

Melissa: You have to plan what you write so that you can connect your thoughts with the story, you know, make it personal. I like this part of the reading test because you get to express yourself.

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Segment 6

Dino: Those were some important tips for the PSSA reading assessment. We'll help you review.

Zuri: Read the questions before you read the story. Mark important parts of the story or write notes to help you find answers.

Dino: Remember to use prediction and visualizing skills while you read. Be sure you are understanding while you read, and go back to reread if you need to.

Zuri: In the writing section, think and plan before you begin writing. You will be allowed to use a

dictionary and thesaurus for writing only.

Dino: And for English learners like us, the teachers can decide if we need extra help. They can give us extra time on the test, and even translate the directions.

Zuri: That's right. We might be allowed to use a dictionary of our own language for the writing part too. Ask your teacher about any extra help for English learners.

Dino: Now, you should talk about these reading tips and think of some others with your classmates. Pause this video and give it a try. You can also practice using the tips on a sample reading test.

### Segment 7

Zuri: Alright, now that you've got some ideas for the reading test, we'll go on to some tips for the PSSA math assessment.

Dino: Just like the reading part, the math section has two different kinds of questions; multiple choice questions, and other questions where you do a lot of writing.

Zuri: Listen while our friends explain.

### Segment 8

Sabrina: So, someone said this PSSA has math questions too. Do you know anything about that?

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José Luis: Aren't you the one who doesn't care about this test?

Sabrina: Well, yeah. But I really like math.

Jasmine: Not me. Math is very hard for me.

Sara: I know about the math test. On the multiple choice questions, it's best to answer the question before you look at the answer choices, so you don't get fooled by a wrong answer.

Lee: Fooled? How?

Melissa: Like, if the question asks "What is 2 times 4?" one answer choices might be 6. That's not 2 times 4, it's 2 plus 4. But you might answer 6 by accident.

L 1/3

Lee: Well, I guess you need to take your time and read carefully.

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Sabrina: Someone told me there are math questions that you have to do a lot of writing?

Sara: Well, there are problems you have to solve and show all the math steps, plus write sentences to explain what you did. And tell why you decided to solve it that way.

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José Luis: What do you write? I mean, math is math right?

Sara: You have to describe why you decided to solve the question the way you did, and tell what

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you were thinking. Sometimes you have to draw a picture or graph.

Lee: Sounds like a lot of work.

Melissa: Yeah, but don't skip it!! Ok José Luis? (looking at José Luis) You know, you can get some points if you try, even if you get the wrong answer. Don't leave it blank, whatever you do.

Sara: She's right. Those questions are a big part of your grade, so you need to do as much as you can.

Sabrina: Don't we have to memorize a bunch of formulas? Cause there are so many of them, it's impossible!

Sara: They give you a page with the formulas when you take the test, and they even let you use a calculator for some of the questions.

Segment 9

Dino: These guys know how to be successful on the PSSA! Did you catch some tips for the math assessment?

Zuri: Answer the math question before you look at the multiple choice answers. Take your time, and read carefully so you don't get tricked by any answer choices.

Dino: There are also math questions that are not

multiple choice. You need to show all the math to solve the problem. Make sure all your steps are written and explained.

Zuri: Write sentences explaining how and why you solved the problem the way you did.

Dino: Do NOT skip these questions! You might get some points if you try your best and do as much as possible, even if your answer is wrong.

Zuri: The written math questions are an important part of your grade, so give it a try. Remember, you can do it!

Dino: You'll have a page with the math formulas during the test, and for some questions you can use a calculator.

Zuri: Now, before trying out the math tips, our friends are going to share some more PSSA strategies. These are things you can remember for the multiple choice questions on both the reading and math.

Segment 10

Jennifer: Hey Cindy, have you taken the PSSA before?

Cindy: Yeah. I took it in fifth grade. Why?

Jennifer: I don't know. What is it like?

Cindy: The PSSA? Well, some of it is multiple

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choice questions. You know, the kind where you have a test book and a separate answer sheet with little circles.

Jennifer: I mean, is it really hard?

Patricia: Not if you know some tips on how to take the test. One thing you should remember is to answer all the questions, don't leave anything blank, please.

Eric: You mean guess?

Patricia: Well, if you have to...

Cindy: Also, you can write on the test book if you want, but make sure you fill in the circle for your answer on the answer page. That's what they grade.

Jennifer: Why would you write in the test book?

Priscila: To cross out answer choices that are wrong, and to circle your answer choice. That way you can go back later to make sure you filled in the right circle on the answer page.

Patricia: Also, because sometimes you can't answer a question or you have to guess. So you can circle those questions, and go back to them later.

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Priscila: Another tip for multiple choice questions is read ALL the answer choices before you pick

one. Don't pick the first one that seems right, until you've read all the choices.

Jennifer: That makes sense. I already do all these things for multiple choice tests in my classes. That is easy.

Cindy: Then you'll have no trouble!

## Segment 11

Zuri: Those helpful tips are good for the PSSA reading and math questions. Let's hear them again.

Dino: The PSSA questions are in a test book, and you may write in that book. But don't forget to mark your answers on the answer page!

Zuri: Make sure you answer all the questions. You shouldn't leave any blank. If you don't know an answer, guess! Maybe you'll get it right!

Dino: Read all the answer choices before you pick one. Cross out the choices that you know are wrong. Circle the right answer, so you can check over your answers later.

Zuri: You can skip a difficult question, and move on to the next one. Circle that question in your test book so you don't forget it, and try it again later!

Dino: Ready to try out these tips? Here's your chance. Stop the video, and practice these

multiple choice strategies on a practice test.

Practice the math strategies too.

### Segment 12

Zuri: The last part of our program deals with the PSSA writing assessment. Now, I know, this is a little confusing because we talked about writing earlier since there was a writing part of the reading test.

Dino: This is something different. The PSSA writing assessment is given in sixth, ninth, and eleventh grades.

Zuri: Even if you aren't taking the writing test this year, you'll hear some tips that could also help on the writing section of the reading test. Just listen.

### Segment 13

Eric: Did you know that in eleventh grade we have to take a PSSA writing test too?

Sara: Yeah, I think I took that once.

Yamiles: Yes, we took it in ninth grade. It's given in sixth, ninth, and eleventh.

Eric: What is that like?

Patricia: You have to write essays, and there are a few different kinds.

Priscila: I know the kinds. They're narrative, persuasive and informational.

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Eric: Ok, what are those?

Patricia: Well, narrative is like telling a story, about your own experience or something you make up. Persuasive is when you try to make somebody do something, or change their opinion.

Priscila: And informational is like a report, when you explain and describe something, or give instructions.

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Eric: So what makes a good essay?

Sara: They have a guide, called a Domain Scoring Guide, that tells you how your paper will be graded in different areas.

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Patricia: You're graded on focus, content, organization, style, and conventions. Conventions are things like capital letters, periods, spelling and grammar.

Priscila: You can use that Scoring Guide when you write.

Yamiles: Hey Eric, remember before when we talked about a writing part of the reading test? We said that you have to think about it first, and not just write the first thing that pops in your head.

Eric: I remember. (nodding, pretending to yawn)

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Yamiles: Well, that goes for the writing test too.

Plan ahead, list some ideas and make an outline

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first.

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Patricia: I always make an outline before I write

because that's how I make sure it's organized.

Priscila: Plus, you always have to go back when you're done writing to check for mistakes.

Segment 14

Zuri: In the PSSA writing assessment, you will write different types of essays. The types are narrative, persuasive, and informational.

Dino: To write a good essay, you should look at the Domain Scoring Guide. You will be scored on focus, content, organization, style, and conventions.

Zuri: Think and plan before you begin writing. List your ideas, make an outline, and organize what you want to write.

Dino: When you're done writing, go back and read it over. Be sure that it makes sense to your reader, and check for any mistakes.

Zuri: You can stop the tape now to practice on the sample writing test. But don't forget to turn the tape back on. We have a few more things to say!

Segment 15

Dino: So, by now, you should know a lot more about the PSSA. We hope we've helped you

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understand why you have to take the PSSA, and what you should expect.

Zuri: When you take the PSSA, just try your best! Remember, we are English learners just like you, and we know you might be nervous about a test like this.

Dino: But relax! Take your time. And ask your teachers for any extra help that is given for English learners.

Zuri: They can give you extra time for the test, translate the instructions, and sometimes let you use a dictionary with your first language. Plus there are many more ways they can help you.

Dino: It's important for us English learners to show what we know, so don't pretend to be sick and miss school, like our friend Sabrina!

Zuri: And remember...

Dino and Zuri: Be READY!!