



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) FOR FAMILIES

New ISAT Scoring/Transition to PARCC Assessments

Q. What changes are coming to the Illinois Standards Assessment Test (ISAT)?

A. Illinois is changing how the ISAT is scored by raising performance expectations for elementary and middle school students (grades 3-8). The change in ISAT scoring is similar to changing a grading scale where from 90-100 was considered an A to now 94-100 is considered an A.

Q. Why is it necessary to change how the ISAT is scored?

A. The previous lower ISAT expectations did not adequately measure students' ability to succeed after high school. We've known for a while that many students who took the ISAT in 3rd-8th Grades and were classified as "meeting standards" did poorly when they took the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) and the ACT in high school. New expectations will align to the new learning standards (Common Core State Standards) focused on success in college and the workforce.

Q. How will my child's ISAT scores be affected?

A. Your child will have to score higher in order to be categorized as "meeting" or "exceeding" standards. As a result, some students who previously met standards will now be classified as needing improvement. The higher expectations of the new ISAT cut scores will cause a decrease in the number of students who meet or exceed standards. This drop is a result of raising expectations, not a reflection of student or teacher performance.

Q. What if my child's ISAT scores drop?

A. These new expectations do not mean that our students know less than they did before or are less capable than they were in previous years. Instead, it means that we are expecting more of students so that they are truly on track to being prepared for college and career by the time they finish high school.

Q. How will the new performance expectations benefit my child?

A. We will know sooner whether or not kids are on track for college and careers. We also will be able to provide the appropriate supports and interventions for students at an earlier point in their education, thus boosting a student's chances for success in college and the workforce.

Q. Why will performance expectations not change for the science assessments?

A. Illinois schools have not yet implemented new learning standards for science. New science standards, called the Next Generation Science Standards, are scheduled to be finalized in spring 2013. Performance expectations will change for science assessments after the Next Generation Science Standards have been implemented.

Q. What resources are available to prepare for these changes?

A. The Illinois State Board of Education will send out an analysis of the 2012 ISAT scores later this school year using the new performance expectations. The analysis will allow districts, schools and families to determine where their students stand in college and career readiness performance levels. After reviewing the data, educators and families will have better information and can provide additional supports for their students if needed.

Q. Will schools still have to make Adequate Yearly Progress?

A. The state has submitted a comprehensive waiver application to the federal No Child Left Behind Act that proposes using multiple measures to evaluate public schools. The growth model will replace the current status determinations for Adequate Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind. Schools will instead be assessed on outcomes.

Q. How long will the state continue to use the ISAT?

A. New assessments called PARCC will replace the ISAT in Math and English Language Arts. The transition is scheduled for the 2014-2015 school year and will include a computer-based assessment that will provide more timely results.

Q. How will the PARCC tests differ from the ISAT?

A. The PARCC assessments will align to the Common Core State Standards and will provide information to ensure students are mastering the appropriate skills and content necessary for college and career readiness. Unlike the ISAT, which is given once a year, the PARCC assessment will be administered more than once during the school year so that teachers will receive real-time information about how well their students are learning.

Q. How will my child benefit from the PARCC exams?

A. These assessments will provide teachers, parents and students a clearer, more detailed picture of students' strengths and areas that need improvement. Educators and parents will be able to tailor their attention to a student's individual needs.

Q. Do other states use the PARCC tests?

A. The PARCC (Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) is a group of 23 states plus the U.S. Virgin Islands that are collaborating to develop a common set of K-12 assessments in English and Math based on college and career readiness. The PARCC states include Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Tennessee.