Illinois State Achievement Test and the Prairie State Achievement Examination

Understanding the ISAT and PSAE

Students in Illinois take two different assessments during their school years. In grades 3-8 the assessment is called the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT). At the high school level it is called the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE). The Illinois State Achievement test assesses students’ knowledge in Reading and Mathematics in grades 3-8 and Science in grades 4-7. The Prairie State Achievement Examination tests students in the 11th grade in Reading, Mathematics and Science.

The state assessments are designed to determine how students are achieving based on the Illinois State Frameworks for learning. These frameworks describe the content area skills students should be developing through their education. For students in grades 3-8 scores are used to determine levels of proficiency and where there is a need for increased instructional support. Additionally, the scores are reported by school to determine the school’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). For students with disabilities and students who are limited-English speakers there are accommodations offered. All students in the state of Illinois must take these assessments as a condition of receiving a high school diploma.

For students across all grade levels, the Writing Assessment is not being given in the 2011-2012 school year.

Taking the ISAT and PSAE

Students take the Illinois State Achievement Tests (ISAT) during grades 3 through 8 in Reading and Mathematics. The Reading Assessment covers topics including: reading comprehension/reading strategies and Literature. The Writing Assessment is based on the learning standard of being able to write for a variety of purposes, although it is not being administered during the 2011-2012 school year.

The Mathematics Assessments covers topics that include: number sense, measurement, algebra, geometry and data analysis (statistics & probability). The Science Assessment is based on the following learning standards: the scientific process, life science, physical science, earth and space science and science, technology and society. All the ISAT Assessments are given during a testing-window in March. Schools and districts will provide specific times and dates.

The Illinois State Achievement Tests (ISAT) are scored on a scale that provides a definition for student performance levels. There are four levels of achievement: Exceeds Standards (Level 4), Meets Standards (Level 3), Below Standards (Level 2) and Academic Warning (Level 1). The numerical scores are on a scale from 120 – 410, although the maximum number score is lower in earlier grades. Test results will provide the precise scoring range per assessment. Students scoring in Level 1 and Level 2 will have their scores analyzed to see how and where additional instruction is required.

For high school students, the Prairie State Achievement Examination has three sections. The ACT ® is a series of three tests in Mathematics, Science and Reading. There is an Illinois State Board of Education-created Science Assessment. Lastly there are two WorkKeys® assessments (Applied Math and Reading for Information.)

There are four levels of achievement: Exceeds Standards (Level 4), Meets Standards (Level 3), Below Standards (Level 2) and Academic Warning (Level 1). The numerical scores are on a scale from 120 to 200. Students scoring in the Exceeds Standards (Level 4) category in a content area receive a Prairie State Achievement Award.
The questions on the Illinois State Achievement Tests (ISAT) in Reading, Mathematics and Science are in multiple-choice, short-response and extended-response formats. These assessments are given in March over three 45-minute sessions, an additional 10 minutes is offered to all students and students requiring timing accommodations will receive their necessary accommodations.

The Prairie State Achievement Examination has been developed to provide a lot of data to schools and teachers about the ability and achievement of the students. The assessment measures a student’s proficiency with the content described on the Illinois Learning Standards.

The Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) Reading test is a combination of the ACT® Reading and the WorkKeys® Reading for Information Assessment. The PSAE in Mathematics uses the ACT® Mathematics and the WorkKeys® Applied Mathematics. The PSAE in Science uses the ACT® Science and an Illinois State Board of Education developed Science Assessment. Each individual section can take from 35-60 minutes. The assessments are given in April over a three day period.

The Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) Reading test is aligned to the content laid out in the Illinois State Frameworks. The areas covered are reading for understanding, vocabulary development, reading strategies and comprehension.

The ACT® in Mathematics covers topics on pre-algebra, elementary and intermediate algebra, coordinate and plane geometry, and trigonometry. The WorkKeys® Assessment in Mathematics covers the areas of quantity, money, time, measurement, proportions and percentages, and averages.

The ACT® in Science asks multiple-choice questions on biology, chemistry, physics, earth and space science, and scientific reasoning and process. Questions are posed using data representations, research summaries and conflicting viewpoints. The Illinois State Board of Education developed portion of the assessment is aligned to the content of the Illinois State Frameworks.

**Get Your Child Ready for the ISAT and PSAE**

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