



Illinois State Board of Education

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www.isbe.net

James T. Meeks
Chairman

Tony Smith, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Education

March 13, 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian:

We appreciate your investment in your child's education and want to share with you some information about state and federally required assessments.

Federal law requires the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to administer certain assessments to **all students** who attend public schools in the state, including students who attend charter schools.

According to federal law:

- Students must take an achievement exam in reading/language arts and mathematics each year from **third through eighth grade**. In Illinois, students take the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exam.
- Students must take an achievement exam in reading/language arts and mathematics once in high school. In Illinois, **high school juniors** take the SAT.
- Students must take an achievement exam in science three times from third through 12th grade. In Illinois, students take the **Illinois Science Assessment in fifth grade, eighth grade, and after completing Biology I in high school**.
- Students identified as English Learners must take an English language proficiency exam once per year until English proficiency is reached. In Illinois, **English Learners take ACCESS**.
- Students with the most severe cognitive disabilities must take alternate assessments in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science. In Illinois, **students with severe cognitive disabilities** take the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment (DLM-AA).

These are the only ISBE-required student achievement assessments.

Assessments help improve standards, curriculum, and instruction at the classroom, school, district, and state levels. Assessments play a role in helping ISBE and school districts identify areas where schools need targeted support. The average amount of time spent on accountability assessments represents **less than 1 percent of the school year**.

However, we want educators and students to devote as much time as possible to learning, not testing. We are working with districts and schools to evaluate local testing programs and reduce the amount of testing for students, where we can.

We encourage students to do their best on all assessments.

Individual districts and schools may have local policies for students who refuse to take assessments on testing days, but federal and state law does not authorize districts or schools to excuse students from testing. ISBE does not provide guidance on “opting out” because such an option would violate the law.

School districts must administer assessments to at least 95 percent of students and at least 95 percent of each student demographic group or face lower public school recognition status, which leads to increased state oversight and puts districts’ state and federal funds at risk. Individual high school students who had the opportunity to but chose not to take the required state accountability assessments (the SAT and the Illinois Science Assessment) lose their eligibility to receive a regular high school diploma. (Current high school seniors who may not have had the opportunity to take one of the required assessments will not be prevented from receiving a regular diploma.)

We encourage students to complete as much of each assessment as they can. If at any point a student feels they no longer can or wish to continue, they may indicate this to the test administrator.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the ISBE Division of Assessment and Accountability at (866) 317-6034 or visit www.isbe.net/Pages/Assessment.aspx.

We thank you for your dedication to supporting and serving all Illinois students.

Sincerely,



A. Rae Clementz
Assessment and Accountability Division
Illinois State Board of Education