



Illinois State Board of Education

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Jesse H. Ruiz
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Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

Date: August 11, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: High School District Superintendents
Unit District Superintendents
Regional Superintendents
ISC Executive Directors

FROM: Joyce Zurkowski, Division Administrator, Assessment Division

SUBJECT: Elimination of the Fall Retake for the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) and Exemptions from the PSAE Diploma Requirement

This memorandum summarizes two legislative changes brought about by SB2014, regarding the administration of the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) and allowable exemptions from the PSAE diploma requirement, which is currently awaiting the Governor's signature. Once signed by the Governor, SB2014 will become effective immediately. Please carefully review these changes, and discuss implementation with your staff, especially high school principals and directors of guidance who are responsible for maintaining student records.

Elimination of PSAE Fall Retake

Beginning with the 2009-2010 school year, the PSAE will be administered only in the Spring of each school year. The PSAE Fall Retake and all Grade 12 ACT test vouchers will be eliminated, effective immediately.

These changes provide significant financial savings for the State. Because only the Spring administration is required or utilized for federal accountability purposes, the financial savings does not jeopardize any school district's standing with regard to Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Eliminating the Fall Retake for the PSAE also reduces the severe strain on local school district resources needed to implement the test at the beginning of the school year. Counselors, in particular, are consumed with scheduling students' courses and late student enrollment issues during the days immediately before and after the start of school. And, eliminating the need for Grade 12 test vouchers required for the national ACT removes an additional level of complexity.

PSAE Diploma Requirement

As indicated in the Illinois School Code, students must take the PSAE in order to receive a regular high school diploma, unless that student is exempted from taking the exam.

Eleventh graders, unless they are exempt, are required to take the PSAE in the spring. Students absent from Day 1 or Day 2 of the initial test dates should participate on the make-up date(s) for the day or days they missed.

NEW for 2010: Students classified as being in grade 12 in the spring who have not satisfied the PSAE diploma requirement, because they have not taken the PSAE and were not exempt from taking the PSAE when they were in grade 11, will be allowed to participate in the spring administration of the PSAE. Students absent from Day 1 or Day 2 of the initial test dates should participate on the make-up date(s) for the day or days they missed. With this change, students are essentially afforded a total of four opportunities to take the PSAE and satisfy the diploma requirement in their 11th and 12th grade years. Scores achieved by these grade 12 students will not count towards AYP for the school, district, or state.

PSAE Diploma Requirement: Students Who Are Exempt

Students who were exempt from taking the PSAE in grade 11 are exempt from the PSAE diploma requirement.

Upon SB2014 taking effect, the exemptions to taking the PSAE in grade 11 will include:

- the student's individualized educational program developed under Article 14 of the School Code identifies the Prairie State Achievement Examination as inappropriate for the student (i.e., the student is eligible to take the IAA),
- the student is enrolled in a program of Adult and Continuing Education as defined in the Adult Education Act. 105 ILCS 5/2-3.64 (c).
- the student is served in any locked facility that has a state-assigned RCDTS (region/county/district/type/school) code;
- the student attends a public university laboratory school under Section 18-8.05(K) of the School Code;
- the student is beyond the age of compulsory attendance (other than students with IEPs) whose programs do not culminate in the issuance of regular high school diplomas (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.30 (a)(4)(A)); or
- the school district is not required to test the individual student for purposes of accountability under federal No Child Left Behind requirements because at the time of the grade 11 administration of the State assessment, the student is:
 - participating in residential programs that provide psychological treatment or treatment for drug or alcohol abuse;
 - jailed or in a locked-down facility;
 - residing in or attending facilities located out of state or out of country (This includes Illinois students who were in foreign exchange programs.);
 - hospitalized because of medical emergencies or procedures (i.e, medically exempt); or
 - homebound (i.e., homebound exempt), at which time, districts shall examine the circumstances of each case individually to determine whether administration of the state assessment to the homebound student is feasible and appropriate (This does not necessarily mean that the student is receiving “homebound instruction”; but that the student is unable to attend school, and the reasons therefore must be assessed individually to determine whether administration is feasible and appropriate.).

PSAE Diploma Requirement: Students Who Are NOT Exempt

Students who attend alternative programs and schools are not exempt from the PSAE diploma requirement.

Students who are administratively transferred to an alternative school program created under Article 13A of the School Code (the Safe Schools Law) or who participate in a program funded under Article 13B of the School Code (the Alternative Learning Opportunities Law) must take the PSAE. The PSAE scores these students earn are to be reported to and counted for AYP purposes at the home high school they attended (or would have attended) had they not been transferred to a safe school program or, in the case of students attending an alternative learning opportunities program, the home school they attended (or would have attended or still do attend).

Students who attend an alternative school created and operated by a Regional Superintendent of Schools under Section 18-8.05 of the School Code must take the PSAE if they 1) are dually enrolled in a local school district and an alternative school and 2) will be receiving a regular high school diploma from the district. The PSAE scores these students earn are to be reported to and counted for AYP purposes at an identified home school in the district.

Determination of Participation for Awarding a Regular High School Diploma

District superintendents are responsible for determining whether students have taken the PSAE and informing students of the grade 12 spring administration if they have not.

Acceptable Proof that a Student Has Taken the PSAE

Proof that a student has taken the PSAE includes:

- The student's Assessment Record in ISBE's Student Information System indicates Assessment Data for PSAE,
- The student's name appears on a PSAE School Roster,
- The student's name appears on a PSAE label on the student's transcript,
- The student's name appears on a PSAE Individual Student Report, or
- Due to the unavailability of the above prior to the awarding of a regular high school diploma, for grade 12 testers only, the student's name appears on a local PSAE testing roster, on which the student's attendance is marked as present for testing.

Questions

Questions about PSAE test administration should be directed to Megan Forness of my staff at 217/782-4823 or mforness@isbe.net. This memorandum is posted on the ISBE Web site at www.isbe.net/assessment/psae.htm.