

# Questions & Answers Concerning the ISAT Reading Assessment

(Updated 11.30.09)

## **What is the structure of the ISAT reading assessment?**

The reading assessment consists of 51 items. Session 1 consists of 30 multiple-choice items. Within session 1 are six shorter passages - the passages in session 1 consist of a variety of stimulus material (i.e., short story, advertisement, instructions, poetry). Each shorter passage has five multiple-choice items. These items represent an abbreviated form of the *Stanford 10 Achievement Test*. The items in session 1 produce each student's national percentile rank for reading.

Session 2 contains two longer passages that are developed by ISBE [There are a few passages in the bank of passages that are paired-passages (i.e., sample passage in the 2009 grade 3 sample book, "The Chickenpox Party")]. Each passage in session 2 has ten multiple-choice items. One passage in this session will have an extended-response item.

Session 3 consists of three passages: two passages are shorter (i.e., short story, advertisement, instructions, poetry) and have 5 multiple-choice questions each. The third passage is longer and has 10 multiple-choice questions and one extended-response item. These passages and items are pilot material and do not contribute to a student's score.

## **How does the extended-response item relate to a student's overall score?**

The reading assessment extended-response item represents 10% of a student's overall scale score. A rough estimate of the value of the extended-response item – it is equal to approximately six multiple-choice items. If a student receives a score of "2" on the extended-response item, the resulting score is similar to the student receiving credit for three multiple-choice items.

## **Can a student receive a score of "2" on the reading extended-response item and still get enough multiple-choice items correct to reach the "meets" category?**

Yes, in fact, there are students at every grade that receive a score of "1" on the reading extended-response item and do well enough on the multiple-choice items to reach the "meets" and even "exceeds" category.

## **How are the passages selected and items developed for the ISAT reading assessment?**

The passages and items/questions in session 1 are selected and developed by Pearson Education, Inc. The passages in session 2 are selected by Illinois educators and ISBE staff. Some of the items/questions in sessions 2 and 3 are also developed by Illinois educators and ISBE staff.

## **What is the process used for developing items for the ISAT reading assessment?**

Most of the items that appear in sessions 2 and 3 of the ISAT reading assessment are developed and reviewed by Illinois educators. This process spans five months and includes two separate groups of Illinois educators. At the first meeting, the passages are selected. Then, this same group of Illinois educators is given approximately eight weeks to develop items for the passages that were selected. The group is reconvened for three days, and

members review, edit, and rewrite all items that were developed. The items are then presented to a second, independent group of Illinois educators for a final review. After this review is completed, ISBE staff and the test development contractor staff perform a final review of the items before the items are placed on the assessment for pilot testing. A similar process is followed for all ISAT content areas.

## **What are important aspects of a student response to an extended-response item?**

Most students write a summary/retelling of the passage. A response that is strictly a summary/retelling of the passage cannot receive a score higher than a “2.” One important question scorers ask when evaluating a student response is – *What has the response stated that is not in the passage? How has the student related/tied it back to the passage?*

Below is an excerpt from *Mosaic of Thought* by Ellin Keene and Susan Zimmerman (p. 161–163, copyright 1997, Heinemann). This text outlines ways proficient readers demonstrate a more complete/thorough understanding of text.

To infer, in a pure sense, is to build meaning. We build meaning by doing something with the text.

Inferring is the process of creating a personal meaning from text. It involves a mental process of combining what is read with relevant prior knowledge (schema). The reader’s unique interpretation of text is the product of this blending.

When proficient readers infer, they create a meaning that is not necessarily stated explicitly in the text. The process implies that readers actively search for, or are aware of, implicit meaning.

When they infer, proficient readers

- draw conclusions from text;
- make reasonable predictions as they read, . . .
- create dynamic interpretations of text . . .
- use the combination of background knowledge and explicitly stated information from the text to answer questions they have . . .
- make connections between conclusions they draw and other beliefs or knowledge;
- make critical or analytical judgments about what they read.

When proficient readers infer, they are more able to

- remember and reapply what they have read;
- create new background knowledge for themselves;
- discriminate and critically analyze text and authors;
- engage in conversation and/or other analytical or reflective responses to what they read.

One way to help students move beyond a summary/retelling response is to work with students on self-questioning strategies. Below are some questions developed by Doug Buehl - the complete lesson plan can be found at the Web link below.

- How has this author changed what I understand?
- How has the author’s perspective influenced what he/she tells me?
- How is this similar to (or different from) other material I’ve read?
- How can I connect what the author is telling me to understand something better?
- What does this author want me to understand?
- What do I need to remember to make sense of this text?

[http://www.weac.org/news\\_and\\_publications/education\\_news/2007-2008/readiingroom\\_modeling.aspx](http://www.weac.org/news_and_publications/education_news/2007-2008/readiingroom_modeling.aspx)

Here are some additional stimulus statements that could be used.

This passage makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .  
I predict that \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .  
The setting reminds me of \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .  
The problem in this passage is \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .  
\_\_\_\_\_ (character) reminds me of \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .  
I think the main character feels \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .  
This passage reminds me of \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .  
This text in the passage shows that \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .  
The author shows that \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .

Comparisons:

List what is being compared  
List the elements of each thing that is compared  
Provide examples and explanations of how the things are alike  
Provide examples and explanations of how the things are different  
Explain why the similarities are important

Drawing a Conclusion or Making a Generalization or Inference:

State your generalization or conclusion  
Provide information that supports the conclusion or generalization  
Explain how the information supports the conclusion or generalization

For Evaluation:

State the problem or issue  
State your opinion or position  
Provide evidence that supports your position  
Explain how the evidence supports your position

## **How is an extended-response scored when the student's extension (personal connection) becomes the response?**

Sometimes when a student makes a personal connection to the passage/question, the student produces a narrative of an event (usually something that has occurred in the student's life). Students need to be cautioned about this type of response. Sometimes the personal narrative becomes the student's entire response. Making connections can be an effective strategy to demonstrate comprehension, but students must understand that the connection needs to answer the question. In other words, the reader should be able to see how this personal connection ties back and explains the passage/question. A response that is dominated by a narrative of a personal event and does not clearly connect back to the passage or explain the question usually receives a score of 2.

## **How long does a student's response to the extended-response item need to be?**

Students must produce a response that addresses the question and addresses the requirements of the rubric. In general, a student response that consists of a few sentences will have a sufficiency issue and be unable to meet the requirements of the rubric beyond a score of "2."

There is no requirement for the number of paragraphs that a reading extended-response must have.

## **How are the reading extended-response items scored?**

Each year, Illinois educators, ISBE staff, and staff members of the scoring contractor meet and review student responses for each pilot extended-response item. The purpose of this meeting is to evaluate the piloted extended-response items and to develop scoring guides for the extended-response items. The student responses to the extended-response pilot items are then scored and their performance reviewed.

After the passages and items have been selected for inclusion in the upcoming operational assessment, a second group of Illinois educators gather to review a larger sample of student responses for the upcoming operational extended-response items. This group of educators validates the scores assigned to the student responses during pilot scoring. The scoring contractor uses this group of student responses for training scorers and for quality control during the actual scoring of the operational items.

## **What specific rules apply to the administration of the ISAT reading assessment?**

There are only two types of posters that may not be displayed on classroom walls during ISAT testing.

1. Any poster that has step-by-step instructions for answering a reading extended-response question – for example, the Reading Student-Friendly Rubrics or the actual Reading Rubric.
2. Any poster that provides definitions for those root words and affixes listed in the Illinois Assessment Framework for Reading.

Students may not get out of their seats to refer to a poster or classroom display during testing.

Test Administrators should not make reference to posters or classroom displays immediately prior to or during testing. Likewise, posters or classroom displays should not be added to the classroom immediately prior to or during the two-week test window. Posters and displays should simply be part of the background classroom environment.

Unless it is used to provide an accommodation for a student with an IEP or Section 504 Plan, posters or classroom displays may not be moved to an alternative testing location. This may create an artificial environment and may lead students to believe that they should use these during testing.

Use your best professional judgment regarding other posters and classroom displays. For more information regarding professional testing practices, see the *Professional Testing Practices for Educators* document online at [http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/2010/isat\\_testing\\_practices.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/2010/isat_testing_practices.pdf).

## **Can a student have the ISAT reading assessment read to them under any circumstances?**

No. The purpose of the reading assessment is to measure a student's skills in reading. If the reading assessment were read to the student, the resulting score would be meaningless. The ISAT reading assessment can not be read to students as an accommodation.

## **Are there any areas in general that seem to be problematic for students?**

- ♣ Antonyms and Synonyms
- ♣ Identifying order of events
- ♣ Items dealing with cause and effect
- ♣ Identifying literary devices & figurative language
- ♣ Distinguishing between main idea and minor detail
- ♣ Identifying point of view – perspective from which the passage is told
- ♣ Identifying genre of a passage – especially between narrative and expository when the expository text contains some dialogue and events occur in time order