

IAA FAQs

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Student Assessment Division relies upon the professional judgment of teachers who administer the Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA). ISBE is confident that teachers will make appropriate adaptations and provide access to the IAA through the students' modes of communication in presentation of the tasks and accurate recording of the responses. In order to assist teachers, ISBE has provided the following list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) that were recorded during the 2009 IAA Teacher Training sessions.

IAA FAQ's

1. Last year, the IAA test allowed the teacher to choose familiar stories for the reading test portion. Why can't we continue to do that? Why must the teacher "follow the script" in the tasks presented to the student?

The 2009 IAA provides the scripted primary task, general prompt, and the three answer choices. The 2008 IAA Teacher Surveys indicated that many teachers preferred fewer options and choices be placed on them. Scripted tasks also allow for a more reliable assessment because they provide for evaluations of specific abilities and knowledge.

2. If a teaching/testing adaptation I use with a student everyday (hand-over-hand, signing end punctuation, highlighting the student's work) is used on the IAA, I believe it will give a strong clue to the correct answers. What do I do now? May I use hand-over-hand to guide a student during task presentation or response?

Focusing the attention of a student is essential for access to the test.

Directed movements such as hand-over-hand may be used in presenting the primary tasks, general prompts, and answer choices. Hand-over-hand MAY NOT be used to guide students during the responses. Responses must be indicated by the student independently (eye gaze, buttons, mechanical or manual indicator).

Sign Language must not be used to cue the students during administration or recording of responses. If a student is accustomed to having text signed to them, please avoid signing the portions of the text or answers that could otherwise be determined by the student through the use of sight (for example, signing the ending punctuation when the purpose of the task is that the child accurately indicates the correct ending punctuation).

Student pages should not be highlighted. The teacher is encouraged to assist the student to focus on the task in other ways.

3. The number of tasks increased this year? Why?

Federal Peer Review personnel have indicated that the number of tasks on past IAA tests did not adequately address the same number of state standards as the regular state assessments (ISAT/PSAE). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires that all students be assessed with instruments that cover the same standards regardless of the test.

4. Do I send all the adapted materials I used back to Pearson with the test booklets?

Return only the student test booklets (used and unused) to Pearson. Adapted materials, answer sheets, etc. should not be returned. While the adaptations you make will not be used again on the IAA in future years, please use them in your classrooms if they are pertinent and helpful to your students. Please shred any leftover adapted materials or answer sheets that you cannot use.

5. What if I think the student is guessing? What if the student has the habit of always pointing to the item on the right? Should I change the position of the answer choices?

Guessing is a test taking skill that all students use on the IAA, ISAT, or PSAE. ISBE does not discourage student guessing on the standard assessments.

If your student habitually points to a certain response, DO NOT CHANGE THE ORDER OF THE ANSWER CHOICES. The IAA accounts for such behavior by randomly reordering the position of the correct answers on the tasks. There will be times when the student points to a correct answer and thereby, scores well. The opposite outcome will be true on other tasks.

6. What if the student answers before I have completed reading the task and the answer choices?

All students should be given the advantage of hearing all the information before the teacher records the response. If you know your student is one who tends to “jump in” early or before you have finished reading the scripted task, please use the methods you employ in everyday instruction to prevent this behavior (for example, hold the student’s hands away from materials until you have finished giving the information).

7. What should the teacher do on Feb. 17th?

IAA testing materials will be arriving in the districts on Feb. 17th. Look for your coordinator to be distributing these to you this week.

The teacher will not receive a user name and password to access the online scoring system until the coordinator has set up that teacher’s account and classroom. The coordinators received access to the system on Feb. 9th. If you have not received your user name and password during the week of Feb. 17th please contact your coordinator.

As soon as you have access to the online system, please check that your teacher account and classroom is accurate and complete. If children are placed in your classroom who are not yours or if a child is missing, contact your coordinator. Only coordinators may add new students to the online scoring system this year.

8. Why is the Teachers Resource Guide no longer available?

All texts, symbols, and artwork that would have been found in the Teachers Resource Guide are now imbedded in the test itself.

9. Who can administer the test? Who can score the test?

As you will note in the 2009 Implementation Manual, certified personnel may administer and score the IAA (administrators, social workers, psychologists, counselors, speech pathologists, teachers). A paraprofessional, one-on-one aide, or teacher's aide may administer the IAA as long as one of the above certified persons observes and scores the test.

10. Why should I enter scores as I complete them? Why can't I wait until April 3rd to enter my scores?

In 2008, over 12,000 students were assessed with the IAA. Nearly half of those students' scores were entered in the online scoring system during the last two days of the window. This caused many teachers the unnecessary stress of a slower system impeding the input of the scores. It is recommended that scores be entered as the tasks are given to the student. The scoring system allows the teacher to keep track of what is completed and what still needs to be done. The online scoring system closes at 11:59 p.m. on April 3, 2009. If scores are not entered by that date, the opportunity to enter the scores is lost.

11. What if the IEP team changes a student to the IAA now (before my district's testing window)? What do I do if that happens and I have no materials for the student?

The IEP team may make decisions on the type of state assessment during the IEP team meeting or by utilizing the IEP amendment form for changes between annual IEP meetings. If you are not able to share test booklets you already have for that new student's grade level, you should notify your coordinator to order a grade level test booklet for that student. If you already have booklets for the same grade level, ask the coordinator to order the same form that you already have. This will allow you to use the same adaptations you've already prepared (if necessary for that student).

12. Can I highlight information in the test booklets? If so, which areas?

You may highlight the scripted text, general prompt, and answer choices on the teacher instruction pages. You may NOT highlight any information on the pages the student uses.

13. When may I use manipulatives during the test? When must I use manipulatives during the test?

In Math and Science, many students are accustomed to using manipulatives to solve problems. If that is the student's accustomed accommodation, use the accommodation as needed.

ISBE requires that concrete objects be used on certain tasks in Math and Science. These are the only tasks that require manipulatives.

14. I have a student with multiple handicaps that interfere with the student's ability to communicate with others. I have no way to gauge if the student is understanding communication and presently we have yet to determine a way to gauge responses, if any. How do I test that student?

Each teacher knows their students best. Whatever methods you have been accustomed to implementing should be continued. Just as some students taking the ISAT or the PSAE will not always be successful, the same is true of some students taking the IAA. In spite of the small number of students who are assessed with the IAA, ISBE is aware that each communicates in their own individual fashion. Teachers are complimented on their unceasing efforts to expand their students' interaction with the world.

15. May I change the text of the task to words I believe my student will more readily understand? Can I offer different answer choices than those provided in the test booklet?

No. All scripted text must be repeated as written in the teachers' instructions. Answer choices must be kept the same and in the same order.

Adaptations of the scripted text and answers may include enhancements. A few examples might include text/artwork combinations, color pictures or photographs, use of BoardMaker, PECS, and copying of the student pages for enlargement or separating the choices.

16. Is it OK to point to the task information the student needs to focus on if that is what I usually do?

There is a fine line between cuing and focusing. If the student is accustomed to having information pointed out during questioning, that accommodation should be continued. If this is not customary, the accommodation may actually be a distraction if it is new to the student.

17. Can I write in the student test booklets? **Yes.**
18. Can I highlight my "script" on the teacher instruction pages? **Yes**
19. Can I highlight information on the student pages? **No**

20. I made adaptations to the student pages in the test booklets. Do I send these adaptations to Pearson along with the test books? **No. Only test booklets are returned.**