School Schedule and Site Options for Administration of the 2012 Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE)

September 2011

This document suggests ways schools might be able to adjust their schedules to meet PSAE Standard Testing Requirements. Options 1 – 5 may be used to address challenges that arise because a school typically conducts mixed-grade classes. Option 6 allows school districts and other eligible applicants to modify the required five clock-hours of instruction or study halls for all grade levels in a school, provided that they have banked sufficient time in advance of the PSAE testing days. Option 7 allows the PSAE to be administered at an authorized off-site location, and Option 8 addresses how PSAE testing can be accomplished if a school’s spring break dates conflict with the April test dates. Option 9 addresses procedures for schools that have students who attend physical locations other than the established PSAE test site (e.g., charter school campuses).

Options 1 – 5 (Schedule Adjustments)

1. Conduct PSAE testing in a large, isolated area of the school building and maintain classes for non-testing students in other areas of the building.

2. Conduct PSAE testing at the school and either study halls at school or activities off site (e.g., a work-study experience or field trip) for non-testing students.

3. For districts with multiple high schools, conduct PSAE testing in one building and a full schedule for non-testing students in another building. (A school planning to test at another school’s building would need to submit a proposal for off-site testing, as described in Option 7 below.)

4. Hold a teachers’ institute on PSAE testing days, with teachers who are involved with the testing joining institute activities after completing their PSAE duties.

5. Change (or rearrange the schedule of) local assessments conducted by the school or district so all students are being tested in the school on PSAE testing days.

Option 6 (Modification of the Five-Clock-Hour Requirement)

Eligible applicants previously had to submit a request under the “waiver law” (Section 2-3.25g of the School Code) asking for a modification of the five-clock-hour requirement on PSAE testing days. (Eligible applicants are: school districts; independent authorities established under Section 2-3.25f of the School Code; joint agreements made up of school districts (i.e., special or vocational education cooperatives); Regional Superintendents of Schools applying on behalf of schools and programs operated by them; and Intermediate Service Centers (ISCs) applying on behalf of alternative schools established pursuant to Article 13A of the School Code.) However, Public Act 94-438, effective August 4, 2005, makes the following change to Section 18-8.05 of the School Code:

“(i) On the days when the Prairie State Achievement Examination is administered under subsection (c) of Section 2-3.64 of this Code, the day of attendance for a pupil whose school day must be shortened to accommodate required testing procedures may be less than 5 clock hours and shall be counted towards the 176 days of actual pupil attendance required under Section 10-19 of this Code, provided that a sufficient number of minutes of school work in excess of 5 clock hours are first completed on other school days to compensate for the loss of school work on the examination days.”

Therefore, districts and other applicants who need to modify the five-clock-hour requirement on PSAE testing days to accommodate required testing procedures may now do so without going through the waiver process, provided that they have banked sufficient time in advance of the PSAE testing days.
Option 7 (Off-Site Testing)

The State Board expects that nearly all high schools will be able to make arrangements to administer the PSAE in their buildings. However, a school with exceptional circumstances that cannot meet all PSAE Standard Testing Requirements may submit a proposal for off-site testing to ACT State Testing by December 14, 2011. Principals must receive written authorization from ACT before off-site locations may be used.

The “Proposal for Off-Site Administration of the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE)” form is available online at www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/2011/psae/PSAEoffsite.pdf or by contacting the Student Assessment Division at 217/782-4823 or by e-mail at psae@isbe.net.

After testing is completed, a school will need to either return students to their school building for the afternoon session or provide an appropriate activity at the approved off-site location that allows the five-clock-hour requirement for students to be met. (This would not be necessary if the five-clock-hour requirement is modified under Option 6 above.)

Option 8 (Testing All Students on the May Makeup Test Dates)

If a school's spring break dates that are specified in a teachers’ contract conflict with the initial PSAE test dates in April—and changing those spring break dates would violate a teachers’ contract or deny a community tradition—a school will be allowed to test all students on the makeup test dates. The school will not have an opportunity to conduct additional makeup testing in the spring.

Schools scheduled to be closed for spring break during the initial PSAE test dates (April 24 and 25, 2012) will be allowed to test all students on the makeup test dates (May 8 and 9, 2012). Principals will be asked by PSAE contractors to indicate whether their spring break dates conflict with the initial test dates and confirm that they need standard time testing materials for the makeup test dates only.

Option 9 (Testing Students Who Do Not Regularly Physically Attend the Established PSAE Test Site)

If an established PSAE test site is not the same physical location where students receive educational services on a regular basis (e.g., students attending a separate campus of a charter school that is an established PSAE test site), the school principal of the established PSAE test site must complete a questionnaire for ACT approval. To use Option 9, the principal must contact ACT directly at psae@act.org. Note: Option 9 differs from Option 7 (Off-Site Testing) in that students do not regularly attend an off-site location for educational services.