



# Illinois State Board of Education

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State Superintendent of Education

Date: September 30, 2009

## MEMORANDUM

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

FROM: Joyce Zurkowski, Division Administrator,  
Student Assessment Division

SUBJECT: 2009-2010 Guidance – Regular High School Diplomas and the Prairie State Achievement Examination

This memorandum provides guidance for implementing Public Act 93-857 – **Prairie State Achievement Examination as a Condition for Receipt of a Regular High School Diploma** – during the current school year. *Please share this information with building principals and directors of guidance who are responsible for maintaining school student records.* As necessary, the Illinois State Board of Education will issue new guidance for the 2010-2011 school year.

- In August 2004, Senate Bill 2769 (Public Act 93-857) became effective and requires all students to take the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) as a condition of receiving a regular high school diploma, unless a student is exempted. Please reference the following page for a list of exemptions.

A regular high school diploma is a diploma awarded by a local school district. The term does not include

- diplomas awarded through any alternative education program pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/2-3.81 and 23 Illinois Administrative Code Part 215,
- high school equivalency certificates, or
- honorary diplomas or certificates of completion issued by local school districts.

The signing of Senate Bill 2014 (Public Act 96-0430) on August 13, 2009, eliminates the grade 12 fall PSAE retake.

**NEW for Spring 2010:** Students classified as being in grade 12 in the spring who have not yet 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 in Spring 2010 should participate on the make-up date(s) in Spring 2010 for the day or days they missed. By now allowing grade 12 students to satisfy this requirement during the spring administration, students are essentially afforded a total of four opportunities in grade 11 and grade 12 to satisfy the diploma requirement. Scores achieved by grade 12 students will not count towards AYP for the school, district, or state.

**Due to the lateness of this announcement, only 2009-10 grade 12 students who are scheduled to receive a regular high school diploma prior to the Spring 2010 PSAE administration may satisfy the PSAE requirement by participating in a national ACT administration. For these students, ISBE is requiring school districts to complete an [application form](#), which must be submitted to ISBE prior to the awarding of the regular high school diploma. The Illinois State Board of Education is no longer authorized to provide funding for the administration of any national ACT assessment.**

### **PSAE Diploma Requirement: Students Who Are Exempt**

Students who are exempt from taking the PSAE in grade 11 or 12 are exempt from the PSAE diploma requirement. The exemptions to taking the PSAE 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 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 program does not culminate in the issuance of regular high school diplomas (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.30 (a)(4)(A));
- the school district is not required to test the individual student for purposes of accountability under federal No Child Left Behind requirements; or
- the school district is not required to test the individual student because at the time of the administration of the PSAE, the student:
  - (a) is admitted on an emergency basis to a hospital or residential facility (e.g., because of a motor vehicle or other type of accident, emergency surgery, psychiatric emergency) or on an emergency basis to a drug/alcohol/psychological treatment program; and (b) is unable to be schooled during the time of testing. (i.e., medically exempt);
  - is on homebound status during the time of testing and is too ill (based upon a specific written statement from a physician licensed to practice medicine in all its branches) to be tested. (i.e., homebound exempt);
  - is jailed or in a locked-down facility; or
  - is residing in or attending facilities located out of state or out of country (This includes Illinois students who are in foreign exchange programs.).

### **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, unless exempt as noted above. The PSAE scores these students earn are to be reported to and counted for AYP purposes at the home school they attended (or would have attended) had they not been transferred to a safe school program or attending an alternative learning opportunities program.

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. Students who are dually enrolled in a local school district and an alternative school but who will not receive a regular high school diploma must nevertheless still take PSAE for the purpose of school accountability.

**Note: Spring 2010 PSAE testing is for grade 11 students and only grade 12 students who have not yet satisfied the PSAE diploma requirement and are not exempt from taking the PSAE.**

## **Acceptable Proof That a Student Has Taken the PSAE**

### **Grade 11 or Grade 12 Spring PSAE Administration**

For the current school year, a student has taken the PSAE if the student was present for at least one day of spring PSAE testing while in grade 11 or 12. Acceptable proof that a student has taken the PSAE would be—

- 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, or
- The student's name appears on a PSAE Individual Student Report.

**For grade 12 students only:** If none of the above proofs are available due to the timing of the 2010 Spring PSAE reporting and the awarding of a regular high school diploma, acceptable proof a student has taken the PSAE would be—

- The student's name appears on a local PSAE testing roster, on which the student's attendance is marked as present for testing for Day 1 and/or Day 2, or
- **For this year only**, grade 12 students who are scheduled to receive a regular high school diploma prior to the Spring 2010 PSAE administration: The student's name appears on an ACT High School List Report, an ACT High School Report, or on an ACT score label. School districts must complete an [application form](#) for students taking the ACT, which must be submitted to ISBE prior to the awarding of the regular high school diploma.

### **Determination of Participation for Awarding a Regular High School Diploma**

District superintendents are responsible for determining whether students have satisfied the PSAE diploma requirement or whether they are exempt. District superintendents are also responsible for ensuring that grade 12 students who have not yet satisfied the PSAE diploma requirement and are not exempt, have the opportunity to satisfy the PSAE diploma requirement by participating in the Spring 2010 administration.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

- 1) Will taking only a national ACT satisfy the PSAE diploma requirement for 2009-10 graduates?

**Answer:** No, not for Spring/Summer 2010 graduates. However, for this year only, grade 12 students scheduled to receive a regular high school diploma prior to the Spring 2010 PSAE administration may satisfy the PSAE diploma requirement by participating in a national ACT. For these students, ISBE is requiring school districts to complete an [application form](#), which must be submitted to ISBE prior to the awarding of the regular high school diploma. The Illinois State Board of Education is no longer authorized to provide funding for the administration of any national ACT assessment.

- 2) Are all current grade 12 students who were enrolled in an Illinois public high school during the Spring 2009 PSAE administration, regardless of grade classification at the time, subject to this requirement?

**Answer:** Yes, all grade 12 students who were enrolled in an Illinois public high school during the Spring 2009 PSAE administration must test in Spring 2010 if it is determined that they have not yet satisfied the PSAE diploma requirement and are not exempt.

- 3) Are current grade 12 students who were not enrolled in an Illinois public high school during the Spring 2009 PSAE administration subject to this requirement (e.g., students who attended private or parochial schools, students who attended schools located out of the state or country, students who were home schooled by their parents)?

**Answer:** No, all grade 12 students who were not enrolled in an Illinois public high school during the Spring 2009 PSAE administration are exempt.

## **Questions**

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