ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
August 23, 2001

**Agenda Topic:** PSAE Cut Scores

**Materials:** PSAE Definitions  
PSAE Panel Members

**Staff Contact(s):** Carmen Chapman Pfeiffer  
Merv Brennan

**Purpose of Agenda Item**

To establish cut scores for the Prairie State Achievement Exam that reflect the performance levels for high school students in meeting the Illinois Learning Standards.

**Expected Outcome(s) of Agenda Item**

Cut scores will be established to designate school and student performance on the Illinois Learning Standards.

**Background Information**

The 2001 Prairie State Achievement Exam was first administered April 25-26, 2001. Make-up testing occurred on May 9-10, 2001 with an approximate total of 116,000 11th grade students taking the exam.

The Illinois State Board of Education contracted with ACT to develop and implement the standard setting procedure. ACT is recognized nationally for its standards-setting procedures on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The panel determined the range of scores for academic warning, below standards, meets standards, and exceeds standards on each of the PSAE tests – writing, math, reading, science, and social science. Over 100 panelists were selected to set the cut points and included representatives from business, higher education, and high school teachers who were specialists in the five subject areas. The process included more than 12 hours of instructional training to prepare the panelists for this task.

The recommended cut score ranges for the PSAE Performance Levels follow:
### TABLE 1

Score Ranges of the PSAE:
Performance Levels by Subject Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Social Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Warning</td>
<td>120 – 132</td>
<td>120 - 135</td>
<td>120 - 134</td>
<td>120 - 135</td>
<td>120 - 136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meets Standards</td>
<td>155 - 178</td>
<td>156 - 178</td>
<td>155 - 177</td>
<td>158 - 177</td>
<td>154 - 173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On July 10, 2001, during a special meeting of the Board, the panel’s recommended cut scores for the PSAE were reviewed. During that discussion, additional information was requested by Board members regarding the correlation of PSAE and ACT scores. ACT and the Illinois Board of Higher Education responded with information indicating that the PSAE “meets” scores appear to be close to an ACT score of 18 or 19 for reading and math, and a score closer to an ACT equivalent of 20 for science.

### Analysis and Implications for Policy, Budget, Legislative Action and Communications

Over the past several weeks, the Communications Unit has met with key partners - ICCB, IBHE, the Governor’s office, and the ISAC - to facilitate the development of a consistent message regarding the PSAE and a comprehensive marketing plan for using PSAE results. The marketing plan is in its final stages of development.

### Pros and Cons of Various Actions

Adopting the cut scores as recommended by the panels will support the goal to establish cut scores that are a reasonable judgment of meeting state standards.

The recommended scores correlate with a reading and math ACT equivalent of 18 to 19 which provides students opportunity for admittance to at least 50% of the colleges and
universities in Illinois. Some of those institutions that list a minimum score higher than 18 will accept students with a score of 18.

The recommended cut scores reflect rigor and also communicate confidence in the integrity and credibility of ACT and the committee process.

**Superintendent’s Recommendation**

To adopt the cut scores as provided in Table 1.

**Next Steps**

1. Disseminate and develop school reports.

2. Develop a strategy to assist schools in interpreting their results.

3. Implement the marketing plan beginning with a public announcement of state PSAE results on September 5, 2001.

4. Continue to work with the JEC and other key partners in using the PSAE.