

ACT FAQ

The procurement process for the high school accountability assessment has concluded. As the result, Illinois will transition to the ACT as the state's federally required high school accountability assessment for English language arts, math, and science, beginning with the 2024-25 school year. Please see below for answers to anticipated questions from parents, families, and school communities. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) will follow up with additional information and resources once it has executed the contract with ACT.

1. Why did Illinois switch to the ACT?

ISBE's current contract with the College Board for the high school accountability assessment ends June 30, 2024. As required by state procurement law, ISBE issued a competitive procurement for the future administration of a high school accountability assessment beginning in the 2024-25 school year. The procurement resulted in an award to the highest-scoring offeror.

Procurements are evaluated on three elements: technical specifications, commitment to diversity, and price. The ratings between the two bids (from ACT and from the College Board, the administrator of the SAT) for the technical elements and commitment to diversity, which comprised 75% of the points, were very close. Price made up the other 25% of the points and was not reviewed by the evaluation team but independently by the State Procurement Office. Ultimately, the awarded vendor, ACT, received the most points overall.

2. When will students start taking the ACT?

Students in Grade 11 will start taking the ACT in spring 2025. Students in Grade 10 will take the preACT Secure, and students in Grade 9 will take the preACT 9 Secure.

3. How long will students take the ACT before ISBE has to go through the procurement process again?

The contract with the ACT will last six years, beginning with the 2024-25 school year and concluding after the 2029-30 school year.

4. Will ACT offer free test prep?

Yes, ACT will offer free full-length practice tests, as well as free student and teacher resources. ISBE will finalize the details of what ACT will offer during the process of formalizing the contract. Families should not feel pressured to utilize paid test prep materials offered by any vendor.

The ACT aligns to the Illinois Learning Standards. As always, the best test prep is high-quality, standards-aligned instruction delivered by your student's teacher.

5. My student already took the ACT. Do they have to take it again?

Yes, all Grade 11 students (with the exception of the less than 1% of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternative Assessment) must take the ACT during the statewide school day administration in spring 2025 in order to fulfill federal accountability requirements. Students may still choose which score to include in college and scholarship applications.

6. Will students with disabilities have access to accommodations for the ACT, including taking a paper test?

Yes, the same types of accommodations that were available for students taking the SAT will be available for students taking the ACT. Districts will continue to handle the process of requesting necessary accommodations for students with approved Individualized Education Programs and 504 Plans.

7. What components will the state administration of the ACT include?

The state administration of the ACT will include **English language arts, mathematics, reading, science, and writing**. Students will no longer take a separate Illinois Science Assessment in Grade 11, thereby reducing overall testing time.

**8. Can my student still take the SAT or PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT)?
Can my school or district still administer the SAT and PSAT/NMSQT during the school day?**

The state's transition to the ACT only affects the federally required statewide administration of the high school accountability assessment during the school day, funded by the state. Each high school must administer the state's accountability assessment annually.

Students can still elect to take the SAT and PSAT/NMSQT on their own outside of school, ***in addition to taking the ACT during the statewide school day administration***. Local school districts and schools also can still choose to administer the SAT and PSAT/NMSQT during the school day, either for all students or for those students who choose to, ***in addition to the statewide accountability ACT administration***.

9. Will the state administration of the ACT give my student a college reportable score and free score sends?

Yes, students who test (including those with approved accommodations) will receive a college reportable score and four free score sends, which they can direct to postsecondary institutions or scholarship programs of their choice.

10. Will the test be online? Will students be familiar with the online platform ACT uses?

Yes, all students will test online, unless they have a specific disability that requires paper. Many Illinois students will already be familiar with the ACT's online testing platform, TestNav, as it is the same system used for the online administration of the Illinois Assessment of Readiness, Illinois' accountability assessment for Grades 3–8.

11. How will ACT protect student data privacy?

ACT has experience working with states like Illinois that require parental consent for the sharing of student data for college admissions or scholarship opportunities, as well as ACT's Educational Opportunity Service. MyACT registration will not be necessary for a student to register for or take the state's administration of the test, report scores from the state administration to colleges and scholarship opportunities, or access practice tests. ACT will work with ISBE to determine the best solution for seeking parental consent in Illinois and will comply with ISBE's mandate to require parental consent prior to an unemancipated minor sharing data with third parties through ACT's MyACT online platform, as well as through the alternative route that doesn't require MyACT registration for the reporting of scores to colleges and scholarship opportunities.

12. If my student has already taken the SAT or SAT practice tests, how can they know what they might score on the ACT?

ISBE and ACT will provide a resource to help students, educators, and families understand how SAT scores may compare to ACT scores as soon as possible after the new contract is in effect.

13. Will the cut scores for the state be adjusted to be more appropriate than what they were set at for SAT?

Yes, unrelated to the transition to the ACT, ISBE has embarked on an initiative to develop a more accurate definition of “proficiency” in Illinois.

Illinois currently has the fourth most restrictive definition for proficiency in the nation. It’s harder for a student to be considered proficient in Illinois than practically anywhere else. We are asking Illinois students to jump over hurdles much higher than those in other states. It’s an uneven playing field. The result is that our current cut scores mislabel many students who actually are on track for college and career as “not proficient,” sending the wrong message to students and families.

To change this, we need to redefine proficiency to align with objective measures of postsecondary success and ensure coherence across our entire assessment system. ISBE has begun assembling experts and stakeholders to start the work, which will culminate in a standard-setting process in summer 2025. ISBE will publish spring 2025 assessment data using the new proficiency benchmarks on the October 2025 Illinois Report Card. You can follow along with the process and participate in public comment opportunities on the [ISBE Every Student Succeeds Act webpage](#).

14. When is the assessment window?

ISBE’s Assessment Department will reach out to school districts in the next few weeks to solicit feedback on several important topics, including preferred testing windows, but there will be testing opportunities in both March and April to accommodate a wide range of scheduled spring breaks and religious observations.