

Illinois Invest in Kids Act Frequently Asked Questions

From Principals and Test Coordinators

May 2023

Q: What is the Illinois Invest in Kids Act?

A: The Illinois Invest in Kids Act, commonly referred to as IIKA, is a law that allows families to apply for scholarship money from one of eight state-approved scholarship-granting organizations so their child can attend a private school within the state of Illinois. Donors across the state can donate money to one of these scholarship-granting organizations and, in turn, can receive tax credits from their donation. Donors also can dedicate their donations to support a specific private school, should they choose to do so. A brief explanation about the IIKA regarding assessment is on the [IIKA webpage](#).

Q: Are students who receive IIKA scholarship money mandated to take the state assessments?

A: Yes, all students in Grades 3-11 will need to take the appropriate state assessments that their public-school peers take throughout the course of a school year. The assessments required for the 2023-24 school year can be found [here](#).

Q: Can parents opt their students out of taking the required state assessments?

A: No, there isn't an option for students -- or parents on their behalf -- to opt out of the required state assessments. Upon acceptance of their scholarships, families are made aware of this requirement and sign off knowing that their child(ren) will need to take the required assessments for their grade level.

Q: Can our school use other forms of assessment in place of the state-required assessments?

A: No, all IIKA scholarship recipients must take the same required tests and within the same testing window as their grade-level public school peers. IIKA student scores must be measured against their grade-level public school peers.

Q: If we administer the same assessments earlier in the school year, will those scores count?

A: Unfortunately, if assessments of a similar nature, such as the PSAT or SAT, are administered in fall as opposed to the spring (when the public-school students are being assessed), their scores will not count for the state-required testing. All IIKA scholarship recipients must begin and complete their required assessments within the same window as their grade-level public school peers. The public-school assessment window can be found [here](#).

Q: What assessments do I need to administer to my IIKA scholarship recipients?

A: IKA scholarship recipients in Grades 3-8 will need to take the Illinois Assessment for Readiness (IAR). This is an online assessment that is available via the Pearson PAN system. Paper versions of this test are available for schools that do not have the technology to administer it online.

Students in Grades 5, 8, and 11 must take the Illinois Science Assessment (ISA), which is administered via the ISBE Teach/Learn platform. This is also an online test. Paper tests are available for this assessment, but all answers will need to be entered into a computer by hand by school personnel. It is highly encouraged that this assessment be administered online.

New for the 2023-24 school year: All College Board assessments will be administered digitally, and all administrations will be given within six weeks. The SAT w/Essay is required for all IKA scholarship recipients in Grade 11. All scholarship recipients in Grade 9 must take the PSAT 8/9, and all scholarship recipients in Grade 10 must take the PSAT 10. Since these assessments will be digital this school year – which is a major change -- please plan accordingly. Very few exceptions will be made to accommodate paper testing. Please click [here](#) to see the new testing windows for the SAT and PSAT.

Q: Our school would like to test all our students along with our IKA students. Is that allowed?

A: Yes and no. Grade schools can test all their students when administering the IAR. ISBE will need to know which students are IKA scholarship recipients and which are not. Please send a roster of students who are scholarship recipients at the school to the IKA mailbox via the [ISBE Attachment Manager](#). The same can be done for the SAT w/ Essay and the PSAT 8/9 and PSAT 10. Feel free to roster all your students, but please send the IKA scholarship recipients' names to the IKA mailbox using the [ISBE Attachment Manager](#).

The only assessment that does not allow for non-IKA students to be assessed is the Illinois Science Assessment. This assessment is provided to the IKA scholarship recipients at no cost to the school or families. When you are asked to roster students for the ISA, please only roster the IKA scholarship recipients in Grades 5, 8, and 11.

Q: Who pays for all the required assessments for the IKA scholarship recipients?

A: The IKA as written specifies that all schools that have IKA scholarship recipients incur the cost of the assessments. The only assessment that does not have a cost is the Illinois Science Assessment. The SAT w/ Essay cost \$46 per scored test for the 2023-24 school year. The PSAT 10 is \$18 and the PSAT 8/9 is \$14. The Illinois Assessment of Readiness cost is \$12. All billing will be conducted through the respective testing agencies. ISBE does not engage in any monetary transactions between schools and the testing agencies.

Q: How do I know if I have IKA scholarship students at our school?

A: The business manager and/or the person in charge of tuition should know if there are any IKA scholarship recipients at the school. The scholarship-granting organization may reach out

to the principal or the business manager to inform them that the school has scholarship recipients. If you are not sure, please check with your business manager or tuition office to confirm IKA scholarship recipients.

Q: What happens if a student does not complete the required testing for the school year?

A: At the end of the testing cycle -- typically in May/June -- ISBE will conduct an audit of all students who did not make a valid attempt at the required assessment. The reasons for this can vary, but ISBE will send a document to each school that has a student or students who did not complete the required assessments asking why they did not take the test. ISBE then shares the information about which student or schools did not complete the required assessments with the scholarship-granting organization.

Q: What happens if a school fails to administer an assessment? Will the student scholarships be in jeopardy?

A: Decisions to award scholarships to schools rely on the scholarship-granting organizations. Schools that routinely do not assess their students without a valid reason risk the chance that scholarship-granting organizations will no longer award scholarships to students. Repeated occurrences of not testing students can result in schools losing their ISBE state recognition, which jeopardizes the ability of scholarship-granting organizations to grant scholarships to students in those schools.

Q: Our school would like to enroll IKA scholarship students, but our school is not recognized by the state of Illinois. What do we do?

A: A school in Illinois that desires to become an established school to receive IKA scholarship recipients must become a recognized nonpublic school. If your school is interested in becoming a recognized nonpublic school, please visit ISBE's Regional Services webpage regarding [Nonpublic School Recognition](#).

Please contact Robert Potempa at rpotempa@isbse.net for any other questions you may have regarding the Illinois Invest in Kids Act and assessments.