

Illinois State Board of Education

Statewide SAT Performance Levels FAQ for Families

Illinois students took the ISBE-sponsored SAT exam for the first time in spring 2017. This assessment serves as a valuable resource for students as it provides a free college entrance exam to every grade 11 student in the state. Providing this resource statewide increases equity of access for students. Illinois is also using this exam for state and federal accountability for both schools and districts in 2017. Because this exam served multiple purposes, student scores have different meanings. ISBE is providing the following FAQ to help you understand what student SAT scores mean as a college entrance exam, and what they mean to ISBE, for school and district accountability.

1. What are the Illinois SAT performance levels?

A set of four performance levels with associated cut scores that Illinois educators have determined represent mastery of the Illinois Learning Standards.

Performance Levels	ELA Score Ranges*	Math Score Ranges*
Level 4 – Exceeds Standards	640-800	670-800
Level 3 – Meets Standards	540-630	540-660
Level 2 – Approaching Standards	430-530	450-530
Level 1 – Partially Meets Standards	200-420	200-440

*Note: Achievable scores increase in increments of 10 (e.g., 450, 460, 470...).

2. My student took the SAT in April of 2017 and has received her scores. How are the IL state performance level different from what my student received from College Board?

The IL SAT performance levels do not change your student’s score in any way.

The IL SAT performance levels are ranges of scores on the math and evidence-based reading and writing portions of the exam that Illinois teachers have determined represent levels of mastery of the Illinois Learning Standards.

3. There are SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks on my student’s score report. Are they the same as the IL SAT Performance Levels?

No. The College Board’s SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks have a different meaning than the IL SAT performance levels. Illinois has four performance levels for the SAT: Exceeds Standards, Meets Standards, Approaching Standards, and Partially Meets Standards. These performance levels represent degrees of mastery of the [Illinois Learning Standards](#). College Board has three performance levels, Green, Yellow, and Red.

Essay Scores

4 | 2-8
Reading

4 | 2-8
Analysis

4 | 2-8
Writing

representative percentile

representative percentile

You've met the benchmark!

You've scored below the benchmark.

Benchmark scores:
Evidence-Based Reading and Writing: 470
Math: 530

How Do My Scores Compare?
A percentile shows how you scored, compared to other students. It's a number between 1 and 99 and represents the percentage of students whose scores are equal to or below yours.
For example, if your Math percentile is 57, that means 57% of test takers have Math scores equal to or below yours.
The Nationally Representative Sample Percentile compares your score to the scores of typical U.S. students.
SAT® User Percentile compares your score to the scores of students who typically take the test.

How Can I Improve?
To see which skills are your strongest and what you can do to boost your college readiness, go to your full report online and look for Skills Insight™.

What Are Score Ranges?
Test scores are single snapshots in time—if you took the SAT once a week for a month, your scores would vary. That's why score ranges are better representations of your true ability. They show how much your score can change with repeated testing, even if your skill level remains the same.

4. Why does my student need a higher score to meet or exceed IL SAT performance levels?

The IL SAT performance levels align to the Illinois Learning Standards, which set rigorous standards for college and career readiness. They were designed to reduce the likelihood that students would need remedial coursework upon entering college. The SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks for the current SAT predict a [75% likelihood of achieving a C or higher](#) in related, first-semester, credit-bearing college courses. They have different meanings.

The IL SAT performance levels are intended to tell schools and districts about the student’s mastery of the standards. College Board’s benchmarks are meant to tell college admissions offices how likely a student is to do in the first semester of college if admitted. They are comparing different populations of students for different purposes.

5. Why didn’t IL just use the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks?

Illinois is required by federal law to establish performance levels aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards.

6. How will the IL SAT performance levels impact my student when she is applying for college?

Colleges will not receive your student’s IL SAT performance levels. Illinois uses these performance levels on the [Illinois Report Card in aggregate only](#) to help educators and communities understand how well a school or district is serving its students. The percentage of students in the Meets Standards or Exceeds Standards categories comprises one part of Illinois’ multi-measure, balanced accountability system for high school, as proposed in our [state ESSA plan](#). ISBE uses the IL SAT performance levels and other indicators of school and district performance to inform decisions, direct resources and support, and identify areas of need statewide.

7. Will my student get an IL SAT performance level report?

Your student received a College Board score report. Information on your student's IL SAT performance level will be included in ISBE's statewide Student Information System. The ISBE-sponsored SAT provides the exam for all 11th grade students at no cost during the school day, while also serving as the state's assessment of the Illinois Learning Standards. Students also received four free score sends to colleges, universities, or other programs of their choice.

8. My student canceled their score shortly after taking the ISBE-sponsored SAT School Day exam. Does that affect my student in any way?

No. ISBE received your student's data for our use only. We factored your student's scores into her school's and district's Report Card information. However, College Board does not report a record of your student's cancelled score.

9. Are my student's scores or her performance level going to appear on her transcript?

No. A student or parent can request to have their ISBE-sponsored SAT School Day scores included on their transcript, but school and districts are no longer required to add it automatically. Many colleges and universities accept a score on a transcript as an officially reported score.

10. My student received a state-approved accommodation on the ISBE-sponsored SAT School Day exam, rather than a College Board-approved accommodation. How did this affect my student?

Your student received a state-approved accommodation on the ISBE-sponsored SAT School Day exam because the teachers and staff at her school believed that she needed those accommodations in order to demonstrate her mastery of the standards.

State-allowed accommodations are ones that the state views as valid when using the score for school accountability, but the College Board does not have the research to support using the score for college admissions. The most common state-approved accommodations were extended time for English learners.

Although your student received a score from College Board, it is not considered a "reportable" score for college admissions. Students who took the ISBE-sponsored SAT School Day exam in spring nonetheless received a valuable experience taking the exam that will help them feel more confident and prepared if they opt to take the exam on a national administration day. These students' IL SAT performance level results are included in the aggregate in the Illinois Report Card.