



Illinois State Board of Education

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Gery J. Chico
Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

February 28, 2014

Ms. Barbara Byrd-Bennett
Chief Executive Officer
Chicago District 299
125 South Clark Street, 6th Floor
Chicago, IL 60603-5200

Dear Ms. Byrd-Bennett,

Districts and schools are required to administer the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) under both federal and state law and any district or school that does not comply with those legal requirements faces possible local and state disciplinary action and runs the risk of reduced state and federal funds.

The ISAT measures the achievement of students in reading and mathematics in grades three through eight and science in grades four and seven. It produces data used for local and state analysis and school improvement planning. It is a test that is used statewide for local, state and federal purposes.

At the local level, the ISATs can help parents and educators at districts and schools assess how well their students are meeting benchmarks set under the new Illinois Learning Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics, benchmarks that should be guiding classroom lessons across the state this year. Additionally, the ISAT results will show whether or not students and schools are making progress under new, higher performance levels, or cut scores, that were implemented for the 2013 ISATs. Last year, many schools saw their ISAT scores drop, as expected under the new expectations. The 2014 ISAT results should show parents and local educators how well students fared again, after another year, against these new, higher performance levels.

Finally, the ISATs help parents and educators view how their students are doing compared to other students in the state. In the case of Saucedo Elementary Scholastic Academy, last year's state data shows that 57 percent of students met or exceeded standards in 2013 compared to the state average of 59 percent of students meeting and exceeding standards. Next year, The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) will provide results that can be compared not only across Illinois but across the nation and internationally as this assessment system is better aligned to international benchmarks. As parents, educators and policy makers, this data is invaluable as we all work to ensure that our children are on track to compete and collaborate with their peers in our global economy.

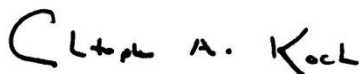
The ISAT data will also contribute to our state's new growth metric, showing how much progress schools made from last year to this year in improving student achievement. In the case of Saucedo Elementary Scholastic Academy, the 2013 ISATs showed that Saucedo had higher than average growth (improvement over 2012 ISATs) in reading and math. The 2014 results will show if that trend continues for Saucedo. To see the school's report card, click here: <http://www.illinoisreportcard.com/School.aspx?schoolId=150162990252829>.

The 2014 ISATs will provide information about how well students are performing at grade level and how well they respond to 100 percent of the questions being connected to the new Illinois Learning Standards. Next year, students will face questions on the PARCC, which have been completely designed and aligned to the new Illinois Learning Standards. Through the ISATs, students get access to the sorts of questions that they will be asked to complete again in 2014-15 although the PARCC will likely be even more rigorous, with more questions that test higher-order thinking. We believe parents would want their children to have access to these sorts of questions this year, before taking the PARCC next school year.

It's important to note that we are talking about 6 hours of testing for grades 3, 5, 6 and 8, and 8 hours of testing for 4th and 7th graders who also take the science portion of the ISAT. This is less than 1 percent of the time that students are in school in a given year. Students with IEPs get additional time to take the tests. We offer a two-week testing window to give schools flexibility in offering the test and allow enough time for make-up days but students, by no means, are testing for a week or two weeks.

Again, it's incumbent on districts to administer the ISATs. Districts face lower public school recognition status, threatening receipt of state funds, if they break the law and don't administer the ISATs and risk receipt of federal funds, such as Title funds to help children from low income families, if they break federal law and don't administer the ISATs. Additionally, teachers and administrators that willingly refuse to comply with federal and state law face local disciplinary action and possible action by the State Licensure Board.

Sincerely,



Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education



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