

Professional Testing Practices for Educators

Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT)

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Illinois State Board of Education

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Introduction

This document provides guidance for educators who administer the Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISATs). In addition, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) hopes that this document is helpful for districts administering all other standardized tests, whether these tests are purchased from a test publisher or are developed locally. State tests are an important and required tool used to monitor state, district, school, and student achievement. For tests to yield fair and equitable results, they must be given under standardized conditions. Only then will the results for students, schools, and districts be comparable across the state and from year to year.

Standardization requires that tests be administered without testing irregularities. The primary sanction for cheating or other testing irregularities is suppression of a student's results. The suppression of a student's results means two things: 1) the student does not receive results in the subject(s) affected on the various reports where the results would be included, and 2) suppressed results are not included in any aggregation of results for the school, district, or state and the scores are not included in any calculation of AYP performance results. Thus, the suppression of a student's scores has repercussions at the school and district levels as well. Sanctions are described further in Section 5 of this document.

To ensure that students take the state tests under fair and equitable conditions, ISBE expects Illinois public school educators to read this document carefully and adhere strictly to the principles and procedures it describes. ISBE also expects that Illinois public schools will use this document, along with the *District and School Coordination Manual* and test administration manuals to provide training for staff in correct and appropriate test preparation, test administration, and test security procedures.

The practices described in Sections 1 through 4 are classified into three groups:

- **Required** procedures and activities
- **Prohibited** procedures and activities
- **Best Practices**, which are procedures and activities that are highly recommended but are not required (Not included in Section 4.)

NOTES:

- **In this document, reference is made to accommodations for students with IEPs or Section 504 Plans. When accommodations for these students are referenced, it is always understood that any such accommodations are written into their IEPs or Section 504 Plans.**
- **Accommodations on the ISAT are not allowed for students with only Response to Intervention (RtI) plans.**

Section 1. Test Security

The primary goal of test security is to protect the integrity of the state tests. To ensure that trends in achievement results can be calculated across years, a certain number of questions must be repeated from year to year. If these questions are made public, the validity of the test may be compromised. The best way to ensure test security is to limit access to tests **only** to those who must have access and to ensure that all who have access understand the crucial need for security.

Requirements: Procedures essential for test security

For Chicago District 299 only: There is no District Coordinator for Chicago District 299 schools. The School Coordinator is responsible for overseeing state testing and for handling test materials in each Chicago public school.

- Districts and schools should formalize the distribution procedure to make the requirement for test security clear to each person who has access to the tests and to ensure correct distribution of test materials. This procedure should define a “*chain of custody*” such that all secure materials are accounted for at all times.
- The **District Coordinator** receives all test materials from the state’s testing contractor, maintains the security of the materials, and distributes the materials to the School Coordinator. The District Coordinator keeps a record of exactly how many test booklets are received from the state’s testing contractor and how many are distributed to each school. The District Coordinator is responsible for returning state test materials to the appropriate testing contractor.
- The **School Coordinator** is responsible for maintaining test security in a building. The School Coordinator distributes test materials to the **Test Administrators**, who will administer the tests. The distribution procedure includes the following actions:
 1. Distribute copies of the appropriate test administration manual to test administrators prior to the two-week window designated for state testing so that they can become familiar with testing procedures.
 2. Keep a record of exactly how many test booklets are distributed to each test administrator.
 3. Distribute the test booklets to the test administrators immediately before the tests are administered.
 4. Count the test booklets returned by test administrators, and verify that all test booklets – including special format tests and unused booklets – have been turned in. The School Coordinator returns all test booklets, answer documents, and other test materials to the District Coordinator.
- The **Test Administrators** should keep a record of how many test booklets are distributed to them and keep the test booklets secure until returning them all to the School Coordinator.
- The **District Coordinator** (or any other appropriate district or school staff member) is responsible for immediately reporting any breach of security, including a loss of test materials or a failure to account for test materials, to ISBE Student Assessment staff (217-782-4823).

Prohibitions: Actions that violate test security

- Do not read, review, analyze, or copy in any way secure test materials (including pilot or field test materials) at any time *before, during, or after* test administration.

There are three exceptions.

1. *Reader Scripts* – Test administrators using a reader script as an accommodation should take some time to familiarize themselves with the format of the reader script immediately prior to the **first** test session.
2. *Printing Errors* – During test administration if a student has a concern about an item (for example, believes there is no correct answer, believes there is a typographical error, etc.), the test administrator should make note of the grade level, test form number, subject, item number, and student's concern and call the Student Assessment Division at 217-782-4823 to report the concerns about the item. The test administrator should **NOT** make any type of copy of the item for any reason.
3. *Copying/reproducing (for an accommodation)* – School staff members may reproduce secure test materials, in whole or in part, if this is necessary to provide a particular test accommodation for a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan. All such copies are themselves secure and must be returned with the original test materials.

Note: No copies of tests, including special format tests such as reader scripts, may be made to make up for test booklet shortages. All test materials should be ordered in advance of testing.

- School personnel, both at the district and building level, should not distribute secure test materials before the normal distribution for test administration unless it is necessary to provide a test accommodation for a student with an IEP or Section 504 Plan or for a student who is LEP.
- **Never** leave test materials unattended unless they are placed in a secure, locked area.
- Student answers to extended-response questions in reading and extended-response and short-response questions in mathematics may not be copied or edited by school personnel in any way.
- Do **not** score or grade answers to multiple-choice questions, extended-response questions, or short-response questions prior to being returned to the testing contractor for processing.

Best Practices: Procedures that are highly recommended to increase test security

- Schools throughout the *district* administer the same tests on the same days during the two-week test window.
- For a given grade, classrooms throughout the *school* administer the same test sessions not only on the same days (required), but also at the same time of day (e.g., second period, third period, etc.).
- Each district and school establishes a security plan for ISAT, including, for example, who is responsible for various testing activities; how test materials will be transferred within the district; when ISAT materials will be distributed to School Coordinators or test administrators; how secure materials will be stored at the district and the school(s), and in classroom/test settings; and how and when test materials will be collected back from test administrators and School Coordinators.
- School Coordinators collect test materials from test administrators at the end of each day. The test materials are redistributed the following morning or following test day until all tests at a grade have been administered.

Section 2. Test Preparation for Students

Test preparation activities for students must have two goals:

1. to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn in accordance an appropriate curriculum and to become knowledgeable about the content covered by the tests, and
2. to give all students occasion to become familiar with the types of questions used on the test (multiple-choice, extended-response, and short-response questions) so that students are tested for their knowledge and ability, not their test-taking skills.

Requirements: Practices essential for proper test preparation

- Administrators, curriculum directors, and teachers should rely on the Illinois Learning Standards as a primary resource for curriculum development and instruction, thus providing students the opportunity to learn the content covered by the tests. The Illinois Assessment Frameworks outline what may be tested at each grade (available at www.isbe.net/assessment/IAFindex.htm).
- Ensure that students are familiar with the test and answer formats. Teach relevant test-taking skills, especially at lower grades, including how to approach multiple-choice questions and answer extended-response, and short-response questions. ISBE provides sample materials (available online at www.isbe.net/assessment/isat.htm).

Prohibitions: Actions that must not be part of test preparation

- Do **not** use secure test questions or questions that are similar or altered versions of secure test questions/prompts for practice or instruction.
- Do **not** reveal, copy, or reproduce tests, test questions, or reading passages. The only exceptions are noted in Section 1 of this document for students with IEPs or Section 504 Plans, or for students who are LEP.
- Do **not** post, display, or distribute immediately before testing any classroom posters or other materials not provided by the state specifically for testing if those posters or materials would assist students taking the tests. Likewise, do not point out or otherwise draw attention to posters or classroom displays immediately before or during testing, indicating that the posters or classroom displays may be helpful on the state tests.

DO NOT ACCEPT SAMPLE OR PRACTICE ISAT MATERIALS FROM SOMEONE UNLESS YOU ARE SURE OF ITS SOURCE. The format of ISAT sample items and items appearing on the actual test are identical to facilitate student's familiarity with test materials. Before you use any sample materials verify that the materials are indeed **sample** test materials and **not** copies of previous ISAT tests or ISAT pilot tests. If you are uncertain of the origin of sample materials you were given by a colleague, consult with your School or District Coordinator. The sample items from the 2012 Sample Test Books are clearly marked at the top of each page as sample materials.

Best Practices: Activities that are highly recommended for test preparation

- Integrate the teaching of test-taking skills into regular classroom instruction and assessment. Answering extended-response or short-response questions under timed conditions is a skill that requires practice for mastery.
- Do not sacrifice large amounts of instructional time to commercial test-preparation programs or drill-type test preparation.
- Encourage a positive atmosphere for testing. In many cases students are likely to adopt the attitude toward the state tests that they see displayed by their teachers. Encourage students to do their best in ways that do not provoke anxiety beyond that expected for a normal testing situation.
- Keep copies of materials used for practice at the district or school level on file for two years.

Section 3. Standardized Test Administration

For the state tests to be comparable among schools and to monitor school progress fairly, the tests must be administered uniformly. It is important that all eligible students take the tests and that no student be given an unfair advantage or disadvantage.

Requirements: Mandatory test administration procedures

- To implement standardized test administration procedures, District and School Coordinators are responsible for adhering to directions in the *District and School Coordination Manual* and test administrators are responsible for adhering to the directions in the appropriate test administration manual. If questions arise, the District Coordinator or School Coordinator should consult with an ISBE Student Assessment staff member (217-782-4823).
- Teacher aides may administer ISAT tests if they are appropriately trained in administration of a standardized achievement test **and** if they are under the *direct* and *constant* line-of-sight supervision of a certificated teacher. A list of who may (on their own) administer ISAT tests is given in the *ISAT Test Administration Manuals* and the *District and School Coordination Manual*.
- Any accommodation provided to a student with an IEP or Section 504 Plan must be written in the IEP or Section 504 Plan. Students are **not** allowed test accommodations under RtI plans alone. If a student does not have an IEP, Section 504 Plan, or is not LEP, no test accommodations may be given.
- Those administering tests to students who will receive test accommodations should be trained in correct use of test accommodations and special format tests such as reader scripts, as described in the *Test Administration Manual*.
- At any given grade all students in a school must complete the same regularly-scheduled test session(s) by the end of a given school day. This requirement does not apply to students who receive accommodations that require additional time (e.g., reader scripts or Braille formats) or who simply receive extended time as a test accommodation. In addition, accommodations for eligible ELL students may allow a different test schedule (see http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/ell_guidance.pdf).
- Test sessions for a given subject (for example, reading: sessions 1, 2, and 3) must be given in sequence. However, this does not mean that all sessions of reading must be administered before any sessions of mathematics or science are administered.

Exception for make-up situations: *Students who have missed test sessions should resume testing with their class on the regular school test schedule when they return. This may mean that a student could take session 2 of mathematics, for example, before he or she took session 1. In this example, use a make-up schedule to administer session 1 of mathematics so as to get the student “caught up” with the school’s regular test schedule as soon as feasible.*

- Test administrators must strictly observe time limits on test sessions.
 - If one or more students are still actively engaged and working on a test session when the regular time is up, the student(s) may receive up to 10 additional minutes to complete the session. See the appropriate ISAT test administration manual for instructions as to how the additional 10 minutes are provided for each test session.
 - LEP students may receive extended time on each test session. This extended time is over and above the additional 10 minutes that all students who are actively engaged in testing may have. The amount of additional time beyond the regular time for each test session is not specified but should take into account the student’s needs as well as general considerations of what is reasonable.
 - In no case may a test session for a student be split across days. Any test session started on a given school day must be finished by the end of that school day.
 - Any extended-time sessions (i.e., beyond the extra 10 minutes) should be planned in advance and administered separately from the standard-time sessions.

- Oral instructions to the students in the *Test Administration Manuals* shall be read verbatim. However, if students do not understand the test instructions that are read to them, the instructions may be paraphrased or the test administrator may provide further explanation.
- Schedule rest breaks of at least ten minutes between test sessions. Keep in mind that young children (especially) require a rest period. Students with IEPs, Section 504 Plans, or who are LEP may require longer breaks or breaks during test sessions.
- Test accommodations should not negate or undermine the purpose of a test or jeopardize test security. If there are any questions about the appropriateness of an accommodation for a student with an IEP or a Section 504 Plan or for a student who is LEP that cannot be answered locally, contact a Student Assessment Division staff member at 217-782-4823.
- If necessary, the school administrator must alter the school's schedule to accommodate the required times for test sessions.
- Encourage student attendance on days when tests are administered.
- Arrange seating so that there are adequate spaces between seats during testing. For example, if two students are seated at small tables, they should be seated opposite each other.
- Make every reasonable attempt to give makeup tests to students who were absent on a testing day or days and develop a plan for makeup sessions.
- Secure test materials must be closely supervised or locked in a secure area at all times.

The following guidelines must be observed regarding posters, classroom displays, and what may be on the student's desk during testing.

POSTERS

- There are only two types of posters that **may not** be displayed on classroom walls during ISAT testing. Use your best professional judgment regarding other posters and classroom displays.
 1. Any poster that has step-by-step instructions for answering a reading extended-response question – for example, the Reading Student-Friendly Rubrics.
 2. Any poster that provides definitions for those root words and affixes listed in the Illinois Assessment Framework for Reading.
- Students may not get out of their seats to refer to a poster or classroom display during testing, nor may they ask about a poster or classroom display during testing.
- Test Administrators should not make reference to posters or classroom displays immediately prior to or during testing. Likewise, posters or classroom displays should not be added to the classroom immediately prior to or during the two-week test window. Posters and displays should simply be part of the background classroom environment.
- Unless it is used to provide an accommodation for a student with an IEP or Section 504 Plan, posters or classroom displays may not be moved to an alternative testing location. This may create an artificial environment and may lead students to believe that they should use these during testing.

DESKTOPS

Students must have only their test booklet, answer document, and writing utensil(s) [No. 2 pencils, and highlighter if desired], on their desks during testing. Anything attached to or part of the desk such as multiplication tables, number lines, word lists, etc., must be removed or covered up during the test. However, a simple name tag displaying **ONLY** the student's name may be on the desk.

There are five exceptions:

1. *Students may use calculators during all three sessions of the ISAT mathematics tests at grades 4 through 8. (See the current test administration manuals for a list of what is considered to be an acceptable calculator).*
2. *Students in grades 7 and 8 must have the Mathematics Reference Sheet provided by ISBE on their desks during all three sessions of the ISAT mathematics test.*
3. *Students in grades 3 through 8 must have paper rulers provided by ISBE on their desks during all three sessions of the ISAT mathematics test.*
4. *SCRATCH PAPER (Mathematics, session 1 only)*

*Mathematics test – Students at all grades must be given a supply of blank, unlined scratch paper for **session 1** of the mathematics test. For sessions 2 and 3 of mathematics students will do all scratch work in their test booklets in the space provided.*

NOTE: The test administrator must collect and destroy (e.g., shred) all separate, used scratch paper immediately after mathematics, session 1 is completed.

5. *As a test accommodation for students with an IEP or Section 504 Plan, students **may** use graphic organizers, word processors, calculators at grade 3, additional paper for notes or calculations for any test, or other aids such as multiplication tables, number lines, or word lists.*

Note: Dictionaries or thesauruses are **not** allowed at any grade or for any subject, even as an accommodation.

Note: If students use highlighters as a reading or test tool, students may highlight parts of reading passages, graphics attached to test questions, multiple-choice test questions, and extended-response or short-response test questions. Highlighting must **not** be part of any answer, either multiple-choice or written responses. **All responses must be marked or written in the scannable answer document or grade 3 test booklet ONLY with a No. 2 pencil.**

Prohibitions: Actions that must not occur during test administration

- No off-grade testing is permitted, even as an accommodation for a student with an IEP or Section 504 Plan or for a student who is LEP. A state test should be given only to students enrolled at the grade level for which the test is labeled.
- Students must not participate in more than one battery of state tests or in portions of more than one battery of state tests. They participate in ISAT tests or the Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA).
- Neither tests nor the test sessions may be divided for administration in any way that is not described in the *Test Administration Manual*, except to provide a test accommodation for a student with an IEP or a Section 504 Plan or for a student who is LEP. However, a test session **may not** be split across days, even as an accommodation. Any test session begun on a given school day must be completed by the end of that same school day.
- Students are to take no more than two test sessions on any one day of regularly-scheduled state tests. Within reason, more than two sessions may be given in one day during the makeup period, but no more than two sessions may be administered in any one morning or afternoon.

- Test administrators or proctors must not coach students, edit their work, respond to their questions, or give them cues in any way during testing that would guide them to a correct answer or aid them in responding to any question. Coaching and cues include gestures, pointing out correct or incorrect answers, facial expressions, and encouragement to edit or change a response. Simply encourage students to do their best.
- **No part of the reading test (passages, multiple-choice questions or alternatives, or extended-response questions) may be read to a student, even as an accommodation for a student with an IEP or Section 504 Plan or for a student who is LEP.**
- For students using the regular-English test forms (those forms not marked as LM) all or part of mathematics or science questions may be read in English to a student who has an IEP, a Section 504 Plan, or who is LEP. However, under no circumstances may words be defined or explained for any student. If a student does not have an IEP or Section 504 Plan, you ***may not*** read any part of any test to the student. This includes pronouncing individual or isolated words or phrases.
- School personnel may not make changes to answers students have recorded on their answer documents. Only the examinees during the actual test session may make changes to answers on their answer documents. However, when students dictate responses to be transcribed onto a scannable answer document, such transcribed responses may be changed by the scribe on the answer document to accurately and faithfully capture the student's response.
- Do **not** examine completed answer documents or grade 3 test booklets to erase stray marks or generally "clean up" the answer document. High speed scanners are extremely accurate in detecting students' intended multiple-choice responses, and those scoring written responses are very experienced in determining students' intended written responses. Teachers or administrators observed making erasures on student answer documents may create the appearance of impropriety.
- During a test session test administrators must not leave a test room unattended at any time.
- Test administrators must not allow test materials to be taken out of the testing area or off school or district grounds by students or unauthorized personnel. Students may ***not*** transport test materials from one location to another.
- Student teachers may ***not*** serve as test administrators in charge of administering ISAT test sessions. However, they may serve as proctors. (See Best Practices below.)

Best Practices: Activities that are highly recommended during test administration

- At the test administrators discretion, if students complete a test session early they may indicate that they are finished so that the test administrator can collect the test booklet and answer document from them at that time. However, before test materials are collected, students should be encouraged to check their work for that test session. After test materials are collected students may engage in a quiet, non-disruptive activity at their desks, such as reading a book. Once students turn in their test materials, they are considered to be finished with that test session, and they are **not** allowed to have the test materials back to change any test responses. In all cases the test administrator **must** allow full time for the test session to expire, even if all students are finished.
- If possible, schools should arrange to have one adult proctor (who is **not** related to any student in the test setting), in addition to the test administrator giving the test, present in each room during testing. Student teachers may serve only in the role of proctor, assisting test administrators.
- The teacher or proctor should periodically walk around the classroom to monitor the testing, checking to see if students are responding in the right section, showing confusion, making a large number of erasures, etc.
- The principal should be present in the school during test days.
- Schools should provide at least two opportunities for students to make up tests as soon as students are able.

Section 4. Reporting Test Results

Test results are important to educators, parents, students, and the community. School administrators or others who are responsible for reporting test results must make an effort to communicate the strengths and limitations of testing to put the results into proper perspective.

Requirements: Essential guidelines for reporting test results

- Any administrator, counselor, or teacher who reports results must do the following:
 1. Take into account the audience to whom the results are being presented.
 2. Caution audiences about unwarranted inferences based on test results.
 3. Explain both the purpose of the tests and what the tests are *not* designed to do.
 4. Provide a greater understanding of student performance for the audience by using appropriate data analyses, such as disaggregation of results based on student demographics, comparison of course preparation in relation to test scores, and review of performance trends.
- School administrators should report aggregate/summary results to all teachers – not just to those at the grades that are tested – and remind all teachers that student achievement is the responsibility of all educators. Test results are an indicator of what is happening in the school (as well as the community), not just of what is happening in the grades and subjects tested.
- Schools should share test results with students (as appropriate) and their parents or guardians. Schools receive at least two copies of students' Individual Student Reports. One copy should go to parents or guardians within a reasonable time after the receipt of the reports from the test contractor.
- School administrators should provide appropriate staff development so that staff can competently respond to questions related to testing, scores, and interpretation of results.
- School administrators, counselors, and teachers should use test results to identify general areas of strength and areas where improvement is needed.

Prohibitions: Actions that must be avoided when reporting test results

- No person or organization should make a decision about a student or educator on the basis of a single test.
- School administrators and staff must not knowingly make false, misleading, inappropriate, or unsubstantiated statements that lead to false or misleading conclusions about test results.
- Students' demographic characteristics should not be altered to misrepresent demographic characteristics of students, the school or the district.
- School administrators and staff must not violate student confidentiality or provide information that publicly identifies an individual student's results. FERPA guidelines must be followed.
- School administrators must not allow unqualified staff members to interpret publicly the results of a test or tests.

Section 5. Sanctions for Testing Irregularities

School or district staff members ***must immediately*** report all incidents of cheating or other testing irregularities by students or staff to a Student Assessment Division staff member (217-782-4823). The district superintendent and principal have the primary responsibility for ensuring that irregularities are reported, but all staff involved in testing have a corresponding responsibility. ***Unless otherwise directed by ISBE, answer documents of students involved in test irregularities should be returned to the test contractor for normal processing. These answer documents should not be identified or separated in any special way.***

When a testing irregularity is alleged to have occurred, ISBE will require the school or district to conduct a thorough fact-finding investigation of the alleged irregularity and send a report of the investigation to ISBE as expeditiously as possible (within 2 weeks of reporting the test irregularity to ISBE unless other arrangements have been made). A copy of the investigation procedure is available upon request.

Upon receiving the fact-finding report, ISBE staff will determine whether the alleged testing irregularity occurred and, if so, whether it was severe enough to preclude reporting test results for the students affected. There will be no opportunity for students to retest. Students who cheated or students who were affected by a test irregularity on an ISAT test will receive no results for the affected test. Aggregate results reported on ISAT reports and the School Report Card at the school, district, and state levels will be based on remaining ISAT scores. AYP calculations will be based on the remaining state test scores for the school and district.

Disciplinary measures for students are handled at the school or district level. ISBE's usual policy is to leave sanctions for school or district staff involved in testing irregularities to the local district. Districts must therefore have in place a local testing policy that includes sanctions and disciplinary measures that will be used if testing irregularities occur. However, in extreme cases, ISBE reserves the right to pursue its own sanctions for school or district testing irregularities.

Note to users of this document: The State Board appreciates receiving any suggestions for revisions to this document that will make it clearer and more useful. Please make your suggestions to a Student Assessment staff member at 217-782-4823, or fax your comments to 217-782-6097.

