

What is the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (ACT NCRC)?

Eligible ACT WorkKeys scores combined from three ACT WorkKeys tests—*Reading for Information*, *Applied Mathematics*, and *Locating Information*—allow a student to qualify for the ACT NCRC. PSAE already includes two of these ACT WorkKeys tests: *Reading for Information* and *Applied Mathematics*. For the first time in spring 2013, and again in spring 2014, ISBE has arranged for schools to automatically receive materials to administer the ACT WorkKeys *Locating Information* test to enable students to qualify for the ACT NCRC. For more information about the ACT NCRC, visit www.act.org/certificate/about.html or contact ACT at 800.967.5539.

Because the ACT WorkKeys *Locating Information* test is not a component of the PSAE, its scores will not be used in any PSAE score calculations, and its administration is not required. Score reports for students who take this test will be mailed to the principal of the school where they test. For more information about the *Locating Information* test, visit www.act.org/workkeys/assess/locate/index.html.

Must PSAE scores appear on transcripts as part of the student permanent record?

Yes. Student transcripts must include scores for each of the PSAE subjects and indicate the subject(s) in which a student earned a Prairie State Achievement Award. Scores for the individual tests that constitute the PSAE, including the ACT WorkKeys scores, may be included on the student temporary record but not the permanent record.

Must ACT scores be placed on student transcripts?

No. Schools should not **automatically** place ACT scores generated by taking the PSAE on transcripts. These scores should be included on transcripts only with a student's written permission (or a parent's or guardian's written permission if the student is younger than 18 years old).

What is a Prairie State Achievement Award?

A Prairie State Achievement Award is recognition of excellent performance on the PSAE. A student can earn an award in each of the subjects that are tested. (There is no composite score or overall award for the PSAE.) Students receive a certificate in the fall that indicates each subject in which they earned an award.

Do colleges and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) accept ACT scores from the PSAE?

Yes. Colleges and universities throughout the United States and ISAC have indicated their willingness to use college-reportable ACT scores from state testing.

Does the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) accept ACT scores from the PSAE?

In 2006, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) implemented rules changes that allow the use of state college-reportable ACT scores in determining initial eligibility for participation in Division I and Division II sports. As a result, students entering college on or after August 1, 2006, can use state college-reportable ACT scores for both Division I and Division II initial eligibility. Questions may be directed to the NCAA Eligibility Center at 877.262.1492.

Where can I find more information about the PSAE?

Contact the Illinois State Board of Education or visit the PSAE website for more information, using the information provided below.

Student Assessment Division Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street, E-216
Springfield, IL 62777-0001
Phone: 866.317.6034 Fax: 217.782.6097
Email: psae@isbe.net
www.isbe.net/assessment/psae.htm

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Prairie State Achievement Examination

2013–2014



Questions & Answers for Parents of Illinois Students

Illinois State Board of Education



What is the Prairie State Achievement Examination, or PSAE?

The PSAE is the state achievement test for grade 11 public high school students. Current state legislation requires that students take the PSAE to receive a regular high school diploma, unless they are exempt. Please visit www.isbe.net/assessment/psae.htm for more information concerning the PSAE diploma requirement. In spring 2014, the PSAE will test four academic subjects: reading, mathematics, science, and writing.

What is the purpose of the PSAE?

The PSAE assesses the progress of both high schools and individual students in meeting the Illinois Learning Standards.

What are the Illinois Learning Standards?

The Illinois Learning Standards are descriptions of the specific knowledge and skills that students should learn in Illinois public schools.

To develop the Illinois Learning Standards, thousands of Illinois citizens—teachers, parents, school administrators, employers, community leaders, and representatives of higher education—contributed ideas about what students need to know and be able to do at five benchmark levels from the early elementary years through late high school.

Thus, the Illinois Learning Standards have a real connection to entry-level jobs and post-high school education.

Where can I find more information about the Illinois Learning Standards?

Contact your local high school or visit your local library to review a copy of the *Illinois Learning Standards*. Copies of the *Illinois Learning Standards* are also available for download and printing at www.isbe.net/ils.

When do students take the PSAE?

Students take the PSAE on a Wednesday and Thursday in April. The test dates this spring are April 23–24, 2014. Makeup tests for students who are not in school on one or both April test dates are two weeks later on May 7–8, 2014.

How is the PSAE administered?

Students are tested over two days. On Day 1 they take the ACT® Plus Writing, which includes multiple-choice English, mathematics, reading, and science tests and an essay writing test.

On Day 2, they take a science test developed by the State Board of Education with assistance from Illinois educators and two ACT-developed ACT WorkKeys® tests: *Reading for Information* and *Applied Mathematics*.

Should students with disabilities take the PSAE?

Students with disabilities must take the PSAE unless they have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that identifies regular state testing as being inappropriate for them, even with accommodations.

Decisions about participation and any need for accommodations that students with disabilities may have are made on an individual basis by each student's IEP team.

Testing for students with accommodations may occur between April 23 and May 7, 2014, for Day 1, and April 24 and May 8, 2014, for Day 2.

Should students with limited English proficiency take the PSAE?

Students with limited English proficiency must take the PSAE. As necessary, they may receive accommodations during testing to assist them in understanding the tests. However, ACT scores from these accommodated administrations cannot be reported to colleges or universities.

Why does the PSAE include different kinds of tests?

The State Board of Education wants the PSAE to have value for individual students, so tests that

will be useful to them are included.

The ACT WorkKeys tests measure skills in mathematics and reading that employers believe are critical to job success. The college-reportable ACT college readiness assessment scores may be used for college admissions.

Why include tests that measure workplace skills on the PSAE?

Many employers use ACT WorkKeys test scores to determine whether an applicant is suited for a particular job. High school students may use their ACT WorkKeys scores to identify the reading and mathematics skills they have and those they need to acquire to qualify for different jobs.

Why should students who are not planning to go to college take the ACT?

The Illinois Learning Standards are for all Illinois students, not just those who plan to go to college. Taking the ACT, which is aligned with the Illinois Learning Standards, gives students a measure of their academic strengths and weaknesses.

Furthermore, students who do not want to attend college immediately after high school graduation may decide to go back to school after they have worked for a time. The need for learning in the workplace is continuing; most high school graduates will eventually have to continue their education to achieve career or life goals.

What scores do students get from the PSAE?

Students receive PSAE scores for each of the tested subjects: reading, mathematics, science, and writing. In addition, if they test under standard conditions or with ACT-Approved accommodations, they receive the bonus of ACT scores that they can report to colleges or universities.

Eligible ACT WorkKeys scores combined from three of the ACT WorkKeys tests, two of which are part of PSAE Day 2, allow a student to qualify for the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate™ (ACT NCRC™).