

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THE PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF JUNIOR STUDENTS

PRAIRIE STATE ACHIEVEMENT EXAM (PSAE) April 23-24, 2008

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE)

What is the purpose of the PSAE?

The PSAE has two purposes: (1) to measure students' progress toward meeting the Illinois Learning Standards for school accountability and (2) to recognize the achievement of individual students who receive a Prairie State Achievement Award for excellent performance.

In August 2004, Governor Blagojevich signed Senate Bill 2769 (Public Act 93-857) to require all students (unless a student is exempted) to take the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) as a condition of receiving a regular high school diploma.

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.

How is the PSAE administered?

Students are tested over two days. On Day 1 they take the ACT Plus Writing Assessment, which includes English, mathematics, reading, science and writing tests.

On Day 2 they take tests developed by the State Board of Education in science and two ACT-developed WorkKeys tests, *Reading for Information* and *Applied Mathematics*

Why are the ACT Assessment and two Work Keys assessments used as components of the PSAE?

ISBE designed the PSAE to contain a set of existing tests that measure the Illinois Learning Standards, including tests used for college admissions and for measuring workplace skills so students could receive the results of these tests as a bonus.

When are the PSAE testing sessions? The two testing sessions are described below.

Day 1 – April 23, 2008:

ACT English (75 questions)
ACT Mathematics (60 questions)
ACT Reading (40 questions)
ACT Science Reasoning (40 questions)
ACT Writing Test

Day 2 – April 24, 2008:

ISBE-Developed Science (40 questions)
Work Keys Applied Mathematics (33 questions)
Work Keys Reading for Information (33 questions)

May students use calculators on any part of the PSAE?

Yes. Students will be allowed to use certain types of calculators on the PSAE mathematics component tests (i.e., the ACT Assessment mathematics test and the Work Keys Applied Mathematics assessment), but not on tests for other subjects. Types of calculators that may be used for the respective component tests are described for students in the pamphlets "Preparing for the ACT Assessment 2007-2008" and "Preparing for the Work Keys Assessments." (Informational packets containing these pamphlets will be distributed to juniors in March.) In addition, details about calculators are available on the ACT Web site at www.act.org.

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Will a formula sheet be provided for students to use during the mathematics portion of the PSAE?

A formula sheet will be provided for the Work Keys Applied Mathematics assessment. However, students will not be allowed to use a formula sheet for the ACT Assessment mathematics test. Students will need to know basic formulas and perform basic computational skills to solve problems on the ACT Assessment mathematics test, but will not need to know complex formulas or perform extensive computation.

Must students with disabilities take the PSAE?

Students with disabilities must take the exam, unless their IEPs under IDEA identify regular state testing as inappropriate for them. However, as stipulated in the PSAE legislation, these students nevertheless have the option of taking the exam, with approved accommodations as documented in their IEP's. PSAE scores that appear on transcripts will not include information about whether they were achieved with accommodations.

Is there an overall composite score for the PSAE?

No.

Will students get a breakdown of their PSAE scores to be able to see how they performed on the ACT Assessment, Work Keys, and ISBE-developed portions?

Yes. On their ACT Assessment reports, students will receive an ACT Assessment composite score, four ACT Assessment test scores, seven subscores, and a writing score. Their Work Keys reports will contain a Reading for Information and an Applied Mathematics score.

If a student takes the ACT Assessment at a national test center, will those scores count for the ACT Assessment component of the PSAE?

No. Only ACT Assessment scores achieved through PSAE state-required testing will be used to compute PSAE scores.

What information about PSAE test results will appear on students' transcripts?

For each academic area, the student's performance level and whether a Prairie State Achievement Award (honors) was earned will be recorded on students' transcripts.

What is a Prairie State Achievement Award?

A Prairie State Achievement Award is the state's recognition of a student's excellent performance on the PSAE. Students can earn an award in each subject assessed by the PSAE. (There is no overall score or award for the PSAE.)

Will colleges accept ACT Assessment scores achieved through PSAE state-required testing?

ACT has communicated with various colleges, universities, and the Illinois State Scholarship Commission (ISSC). The ISSC has confirmed that it will recognize ACT Assessment scores achieved through state-required PSAE testing for use in awarding state scholarships. Colleges and universities have indicated willingness to accept and use ACT assessment scores reported from "state" testing.

Will the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) accept ACT Assessment scores achieved through state-required PSAE testing?

Yes. Effective with 2007 testing, NCAA will accept ACT Assessment scores achieved through state-required PSAE testing.

Further information concerning the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) can be found on the Illinois State Board of Education website www.isbe.state.il.us.

If you have any questions concerning the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), please contact Mrs. Maggie Roland, Assessment Supervisor, at (847) 718-5002.