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Parents' Guide to New Assessment in Illinois

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In 2010, Illinois began implementing the new Illinois Learning Standards, based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The CCSS provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn in English language arts and mathematics as they progress through grades K–12.

In school year 2014–15, Illinois will be rolling out new assessments aligned to the CCSS. The new assessments will be used to gauge how well students are mastering the CCSS—and, ultimately, how ready they are for college and further career education.

What are the new Illinois Learning Standards based on the Common Core?

The new Illinois Learning Standards based on CCSS are designed to enhance and improve student learning by embracing higher expectations and a clearer focus than the previous Illinois Learning standards. They are more relevant to the real world, giving young people the knowledge and skills they need for college and career success. They are also robust, ensuring a future U.S. workforce that can compete in the global economy.

The new standards emphasize fewer topics and stress not only procedural skills, but also problem solving and critical thinking. The CCCS build knowledge from grade to grade, enabling students to master important concepts before moving on to others.

The standards are not a curriculum. Decisions about curriculum, tools, materials, and textbooks are best left to local educators and community members who know their students best.

The CCSS were developed through a state-led initiative, spearheaded by governors and school superintendents, in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, college faculty, parents, and education experts. They build on the excellent foundation laid across all states, and have been internationally benchmarked to ensure rigor on par with top-performing nations.

To date, more than 45 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the CCSS.

In 2010, Illinois began implementing the new Illinois Learning Standards, incorporating CCSS changes in each district, school, and classroom. To support professional development and collaboration, Illinois educators have created many free resources for teachers and schools.

CCSS-Aligned Assessments

WHY NEW ASSESSMENTS?

Teachers and principals talk a lot about assessments, which are used to measure students' academic achievement. This document highlights the end-of-year summative assessments, which judge student progress toward mastering state standards and program and school effectiveness. For other assessments used, see box at right.

New summative assessments will address longstanding concerns that parents, educators, and employers have had about current state assessments—namely that they measure students' ability to memorize facts, rather than their critical thinking and knowledge application skills.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THE NEW ASSESSMENT?

The new assessments will enable educators to deepen their understanding of student progress from grade to grade—and just as importantly, identify any gaps in progress so they can address them **well before students enter college or the workforce.**

Types of assessments

Formative: Individual tests given in the classroom by teachers as needed throughout the year to assess knowledge and skills in specific areas in specific areas

Interim: The same test repeated at set intervals to measure student growth over time

Summative: End-of-year assessments administered by the state to measure student performance against a common set of standards
This document addresses summative assessments.

English language arts assessments will demonstrate:

- Whether students can read and comprehend texts of varying complexities.
- How well students can integrate information across sources to make a persuasive argument.
- The degree to which students can use context to determine the meaning of academic vocabulary.

Math assessments will demonstrate:

- Whether students understand and can use important math ideas, including number sense, algebraic thinking, geometry, and data analysis.
- The extent to which students can use math facts and reasoning skills to solve real-world problems.
- How well students can make math arguments.