

2021 State Testing Update: What you need to Know



IL State Board of Education (ISBE) is considering a proposal to replace the annual math and reading tests for 3-8th grade (IAR) with interim tests given **three times a year** and made available for **K-2nd grade** as well.

To meet federal requirements IL will need to pilot this new test until 2024 or 2025. So 20% of IL students would take *both* the IAR *and* these new tests until then. The expected cost of the new test is **\$228M** over the next ten years on top of the cost for the remaining four years of IAR testing.

Why is this a problem?

- * This proposal would require high-stakes state tests *three times* each year—adding even more time for high-stakes testing and test prep to the school year.
- * Students in grades K-2 do not need the pressure of high-stakes state tests and standardized tests have little reliability or validity in early childhood. The federal government does not require K-2 testing, why should Illinois?
- * Commercial interim assessments are not designed to be used for high-stakes accountability and do not provide valid diagnostic information for day-to-day instruction. But many schools continue to use them for that purpose.

Using large-scale interim assessments as part of state testing puts the State Board's seal of approval on a practice that assessment experts do not endorse.

- * Recent research on growth and achievement in Illinois districts (Chicago, Elgin, Rockford) use of commercial interim tests coincided with declines in academic growth in grades 4 through 8. Chicago has now dropped the NWEA MAP test altogether.
- * Federal law requires states to use test results to rate schools. We know that when high-stakes ratings are attached to standardized tests the result is often "teaching to the test," i.e. a narrowed curriculum that overemphasizes discrete skills. Increasing high-stakes tests from one to three times each year will exacerbate this problem.

Timeline: The State Superintendent initially asked the State Board to approve this proposal in May 2021. But intense pushback from educators, parents and assessment experts has put a pause on the vote. Stakeholder feedback sessions are now being scheduled for October and November, and the Board is scheduled to consider the findings from those sessions in December.

What can you do? You can help by calling your state legislators to tell them you oppose the proposal to increase state testing to three times a year and any expansion of state testing to K-2. Urge them to ask ISBE to kill this proposal and work with assessment experts and all stakeholders in our public school system to build a more balanced system of state and local assessments from the ground up.

Find your legislators' contact info: bit.ly/ilgallookup

Stay in the loop on future developments and actions: info@ilfps.org

