



Board of Education

TO: West Chicago District 33 Board of Education
FROM: Director of Assessment & Accountability, Cathy Park
DATE: March 5, 2026
RE: State Testing Memo

This memo is:

- Information only.
 Information with a recommendation and a request for Board approval by vote.

Date by which a Board decision is needed: _____

Previous memos on this topic can be found:

- in previous Board packet(s) dated. _____
 or attached to this memo

Basic information:

Each year, from January to April, the Illinois State Board of Education requires schools to administer five assessments to various groups of students. Below are descriptors of the state-mandated assessments.

5Essentials

What:

The 5Essentials survey of parents, students, and teachers is designed to support school improvement efforts. It is administered for the state by the University of Chicago. Over twenty years of research conducted by the University of Chicago shows that schools strong in at least three of the five essentials were ten times more likely to show learning gains in reading and math than schools weak in three or more of the essentials.

- For students, the survey takes 20-40 minutes and is computer-based. Parents and staff are provided a link to a survey website.
- The survey includes 80 student questions and 150 teacher questions.
- The 5Essentials domains are: Supportive Environment, Involved Families, Effective Leaders, Ambitious Instruction, and Collaborative Teachers.
- Student completion of the survey is part of each school's annual Summative Designation rating.

Accountability:

- The five domains of the survey are used as key performance indicators for the Achieve 2026 Strategic Plan.
- Student completion of the survey is part of each school's annual Summative Designation rating. The state requires 95% of students in grades 4-8 to take the survey.
- Staff and parents must be provided the opportunity to take the survey but there is not a participation requirement. There are participation recommendations and minimums for the University of Chicago team to create a report of staff or parent responses for a school.
- Results are included on the public Illinois School Report Card website (illinoisreportcard.com) for each school building and district.

Window: February 3 through March 13, 2026

ACCESS

What:

- ACCESS is a test of English language proficiency for kindergarten through grade 12 students identified as English learners (ELs). It is administered through the WIDA Consortium which is a member-based organization of states and includes all of Illinois.
- The test includes four subtests: Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing.
- Testing is computer-based except for writing for Grades K-3.
- Kindergarten testing is completed one one-on-one.
- In grades 1-8, testing is roughly an hour per sub-test.

Accountability:

- All students who are English learners must take the assessment and students scoring less than a 4.8 out of 6 as an overall test score are considered English Learners as a state definition.
- ACCESS results are looked at for two pieces of school accountability.
 - Exit rate: The state looks at the number of students who exit, or score at or above a 4.8 out of 6 on the assessment, as a percentage of all ELs. This exit rate is made public on the Illinois School Report card.
 - Pathway to Proficiency Report: The Pathway to Proficiency report calculates the growth each student needs to make annually to exit EL services within five years.
- Students who meet their annual growth target and exit in five years or less improve the score of a school's Summative Designation.

Window: January 14 to March 3, 2026

Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR)

What:

- The state assessment and accountability measure for each public school in the state.
- It assesses Illinois state learning standards for mathematics and English language arts in grades 3-8.
- Testing is computer-based.
- Math standards are tested in three sessions of 60 minutes in grades 3-8.
- The IAR Math assessment is available in Spanish and with text-to-speech accessibility in that language. D33 provides this assessment for students who are determined to be eligible for it by their teacher and the school's MLL coach.
- ELA standards are tested in two sessions of 60 minutes for 3rd grade and two sessions of 90 minutes for grades 4-8.
- Field testing: In 2025-2026, two schools (Currier and Indian Knoll) in District 33 are required to participate in a field test of an additional ELA session. This session is an additional session of 60-90 minutes depending on grade level.

Accountability:

- 15% of each school's accountability is based on the number of students meeting proficiency on the math and ELA assessments.
- Student groups have different proficiency targets so every group counts in the school Summative Designation.
- 50% of each school's accountability comes from growth and the comparison of the growth of students relative to other students in the state with a similar scale score in the preceding school year(s).
- A minimum of 95% of students are required to complete the IAR in both subject areas.

Window: March 2- April 17, 2026

Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment (DLM-AA)

What:

- Alternative to the IAR and ISA for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

- Only 1% of students with disabilities should qualify.
- Assesses math, ELA, and science.
- Assessments are given in multiple short “testlets” of three to nine items. Each testlet starts with an engagement activity.

Accountability:

- Participation is required as it replaces the IAR.
- The percentage of students scoring at each performance level is reported on the Illinois School Report Card for each school building.
- If there are fewer than 10 students in grades 3-5 or 6-8 then results are not reported.

Window: March 11- May 6, 2026

Illinois Science Assessment (ISA)

What:

- For all students in grades 5 and 8 not taking the DLM-AA
- Testing is computer-based
- Assesses life, physical, and earth space sciences, and engineering technology
- Test questions require students to apply science skills to answer the questions, not just recall facts.
- Three test sections per grade, each test section has 30 multiple-choice and two written response items
- The English version of the ISA has text-to-speech as a universal accessibility feature that students control to listen to the test read for as much of the assessment as they need.
- A Spanish version of the ISA is available and does have text-to-speech as a universal accessibility feature.

Accountability:

- 5% of school accountability is based on the percentage of students proficient on the Illinois science standards
- 95% participation or better is required of students in grades 5 and 8

Window: March 2- April 30, 2026

Background or historical information:

All state-required assessment results are included on the Illinois School Report Card (illinoisreportcard.com) for each school and district. Schools are informed annually of performance through their Summative Designation, released in late October.

Previous decisions, actions, or parameters that relate to this topic or issue:

Recommendations:

Other questions? What else does the Board wish to know?: