

March 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians,

All fifth- and eighth-graders will begin taking the Illinois Science Assessment (ISA) beginning in April, 2017. The ISA aligns with our new [Illinois Learning Standards](#) in science. This assessment helps families understand how well students are performing academically and see whether they are on track to succeed in college. The ISA represents Illinois' commitment to preparing all students for college and careers, including in the high-demand science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. The assessment also satisfies federal accountability requirements.

Many Illinois students took the ISA for the first time in 2016. However, budgetary uncertainty at the state level delayed the start of the scoring process. The Illinois State Board of Education expects schools to have spring 2016 assessment results in summer 2017. **The delayed results will not affect individual students' learning or their prospects for success when they take the ISA this spring.**

The ISA is designed to reflect classroom experiences. Many students who took the assessment last year said the ISA seemed more like instruction than a test. Students do not simply select an answer and fill in the bubble of a multiple-choice test. Rather, the ISA pushes students to apply their knowledge when they give answers, thus better preparing them for higher education and a career. All students deserve the opportunity to demonstrate what they know; they get to see how knowledge is applied to real-life situations.

The ISA is an hour-long summative assessment. The results provide administrators with important data to help them make broad curriculum decisions at the school and district levels. But classroom educators will not use the results to make teaching adjustments year-to-year for individual students.

We encourage you to talk with your children about the importance of doing their best on the ISA, while communicating that the assessment yields only one piece of information about them and their school's progress. Students' attendance, classroom work, homework, projects, performance on local tests, participation in sports and extracurricular activities, and contributions to the school's climate and culture all help them grow and learn.

We all work together to ensure Illinois students build a cohesive understanding of science over time. Thank you for your role in developing lifelong learners and successful citizens.