



Illinois State Board of Education

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Jesse H. Ruiz
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Rod Blagojevich
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Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

July 23, 2008

Dear Parent:

As State Superintendent of Education, I felt it was important to make you aware of a change that occurred this past school year with respect to the annual state assessments for English Language Learning (ELL) students.

Rather than taking the Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English (IMAGE) state assessment, ELL students this year took one of Illinois' general state annual assessments with accommodations. ELL students in grades 3-8 took the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and ELL students in grade 11 took the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE). Illinois was required to make this change rather late in the school year in order to comply with the federal government's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

As a result, school districts and their teachers did not have as much time to prepare ELL students for this spring's assessment. When you look at your school's and your district's 2008 school report card, you will see a difference in the performance of ELL students on this year's annual assessment performance results when compared with that of previous years. Any such drop in the performance of ELL students should not be viewed as a reflection on these students or their teachers.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has been a national leader in bilingual education for more than 30 years and our commitment to Bilingual Education and our ELL students remains as strong today as ever. ISBE is committed to ensuring that ALL students have the appropriate assessments to demonstrate what they have learned. ISBE will continue working with organizations and programs across Illinois and the nation to develop and implement appropriate state assessments for ALL students.

We surveyed teachers across the state to identify which accommodations worked best for our ELL students and to determine what adjustments should be implemented for the 2009 testing period. In consultation with national experts, ISBE is developing a Five-Year Assessment Plan for ELL students, which will include translations and modifications to eliminate unnecessary complex language, as well as additional visual and graphic support.

Again, thank you for your patience as we go through this time of transition and for your commitment to your child's education.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher Koch".

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education