



MEASURING STUDENT LEARNING IN 2021: What will be Different in Illinois?

Since COVID-19 first led to sudden school closures in 2020, families have stepped up in unprecedented ways to support learning at home as students began learning remotely. Teachers and leaders have worked hard to put plans in place to ensure students are safe, offering students across Illinois different learning models—remote, hybrid and in-person, with some school districts transitioning between them as circumstances demanded. But the unprecedented changes in learning have impacted students in many ways, from their relationships with peers and social emotional growth to academics.

This year, it is more important than ever to measure student learning to understand the impact that COVID-19 and different learning models have had on students. This is especially important for families, who need objective information about how well their child learned grade-level skills so they can better support learning at home. While state tests are only one of many ways to measure student learning, families, schools and leaders need the objective and actionable information the state test provides to identify any learning gaps to best support students and fully recover from the pandemic. While Illinois students may not take the ISAT this spring, families should talk with teachers before summer to discuss results from other measures that may be available and whether their child met the expectations of the grade level.

How will State Tests be Different in 2021?

Knowing that the pandemic has deeply affected students, teachers and schools, state tests will be different than in the past. Illinois has asked the U.S. Department of Education to cancel the state tests for 2021. If this is not approved, students will be required to take the tests. As of March 2021, the following changes have been made:

- **To reduce stress for teachers and students in an already challenging year, the results from the ISAT will not be used to rate schools or districts as they have in the past.**
- **Districts have a longer window for students to take the test, until mid to late May, depending on the grade and subject. This will allow teachers additional time to cover content and for schools to test students in smaller groups with social distancing.**
- **While students will be required to take the test in-person, most districts will have plans to test students learning remotely separately from classmates learning in person.**