

Illinois State Board of Education

Statewide SAT Performance Levels FAQ for School and District Administrators

Illinois students took the ISBE-sponsored SAT exam for the first time in spring 2017. This assessment serves as a valuable resource for students as it provides a free college entrance exam to every grade 11 student in the state. Providing this resource statewide increases equity of access for students. Illinois is also using this exam for state and federal accountability for both schools and districts in 2017. Because this exam served multiple purposes, student scores have different meanings. ISBE is providing the following FAQ to help explain what student SAT scores mean as a college entrance exam, and what they mean to ISBE, for school and district accountability.

1. What are the Illinois SAT performance levels?

A set of four performance levels with associated cut scores that Illinois educators have determined represent mastery of the Illinois Learning Standards.

Performance Levels	ELA Score Ranges*	Math Score Ranges*
Level 4 – Exceeds Standards	640-800	670-800
Level 3 – Meets Standards	540-630	540-660
Level 2 – Approaching Standards	430-530	450-530
Level 1 – Partially Meets Standards	200-420	200-440

*Note: Achievable scores increase in increments of 10 (e.g., 450, 460, 470...).

2. Our students took the SAT in April of 2017 and have received their scores. How are the IL state performance levels different from what students received from College Board?

The IL SAT performance levels do not change the student scores that have been reported in any way.

The IL SAT performance levels are ranges of scores on the math and evidence-based reading and writing portions of the exam that were recommended by Illinois teachers and adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education to reflect student mastery of the Illinois Learning Standards.

3. Are the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks on student’s score reports the same as the IL SAT Performance Levels?

No. The College Board’s SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks were set by the College Board and have a different meaning than the IL SAT performance levels. College Board has three performance levels, Green, Yellow, and Red. Illinois has established four performance levels for students on the SAT: Exceeds Standards, Meets Standards, Approaching Standards, and Partially Meets Standards. These performance levels represent degrees of mastery of the [Illinois Learning Standards](#).

The image shows a portion of a SAT score report. On the left, under the heading 'Essay Scores', there are three rows: 'Reading' with a score of 4 | 2-8, 'Analysis' with a score of 4 | 2-8, and 'Writing' with a score of 4 | 2-8. Below these scores is a horizontal line. Underneath the line, there are two rows of text, each with a 'representative percentile' label on the left. The first row has a green checkmark icon and the text 'You've met the benchmark!'. The second row has a yellow warning icon and the text 'You've scored below the benchmark.'. A red circle is drawn around the green checkmark and its text. To the right of the score report, there is a section titled 'Benchmark scores:' with sub-sections: 'Evidence-Based Reading and Writing: 470', 'Math: 530', 'How Do My Scores Compare?', 'How Can I Improve?', and 'What Are Score Ranges?'. The 'How Do My Scores Compare?' section explains that a percentile shows how you scored compared to other students. The 'How Can I Improve?' section suggests looking for 'Skills Insight™'. The 'What Are Score Ranges?' section explains that test scores are single snapshots in time.

4. Why are the IL SAT performance levels different from College Board’s Benchmarks?

The IL SAT performance levels align to the Illinois Learning Standards, which set rigorous expectations of mastery of the Illinois standards to demonstrate college and career readiness. They were designed to reduce the likelihood that students would need remedial coursework upon entering college. The SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks for the current SAT predict a [75% likelihood of achieving a C or higher](#) in related, first-semester, credit-bearing college courses. They have different meanings.

The IL SAT performance levels are intended to tell schools and districts about the student’s mastery of the standards. College Board’s benchmarks are meant to tell college admissions offices how likely a student is to perform in the first semester of college if admitted. They are comparing the same data for different purposes.

5. Why didn’t IL just use the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks?

Illinois, like all states, is required by federal law to establish performance levels aligned to its state learning standards.

6. How will the IL SAT performance levels impact students applying for college?

IL SAT performance levels **will not** be reported to colleges or universities. Illinois uses these results on the [Illinois Report Card in aggregate only](#) to help educators and communities understand how well a school or district is serving its students. The percentage of students in the Meets Standards or Exceeds Standards categories comprises one part of Illinois' multi-measure, balanced accountability system for high school, as proposed in our [state ESSA plan](#). ISBE uses the IL SAT performance levels and other indicators of school and district performance to inform decisions, direct resources and support, and identify areas of need statewide. The performance levels will also be applied to student data shown in the Ed360 portal.

7. Will we receive individual student IL SAT performance level reports?

No. Your students receive a College Board score report. All information on students IL SAT performance levels will be included in the Student Information System.

8. What about students who “canceled” their scores shortly after taking the ISBE-sponsored SAT School Day exam. Does IL SAT performance levels affect these students in any way?

No. ISBE received this data for accountability use. We factored these scores into the school and district Report Card information. However, College Board does not report the record of cancelled student scores.

9. Are schools required to record the IL SAT performance levels on student transcripts?

No. [Changes to rules](#) regarding student transcripts were recently approved at the October 2017 State Board meeting. A student or parent can request to have their ISBE-sponsored SAT School Day scores included on their transcript, but schools are no longer required to place them on transcripts automatically. Many colleges and universities accept a score on a transcript as an officially reported score.

10. What about students who received a state-approved accommodation on the ISBE-sponsored SAT School Day exam, rather than a College Board-approved accommodation.

State-allowed accommodations are ones that the state views as valid when using the score for school accountability, but the College Board does not have the research to support using the score for college admissions. The most common state-approved accommodations were extended time for English learners. These students received scores from College Board that are considered not “reportable” for college admissions. These students' IL SAT performance level results are included in the Illinois Report Card.

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