



From: Adam Larsen, Assistant Superintendent

To: Board of Education

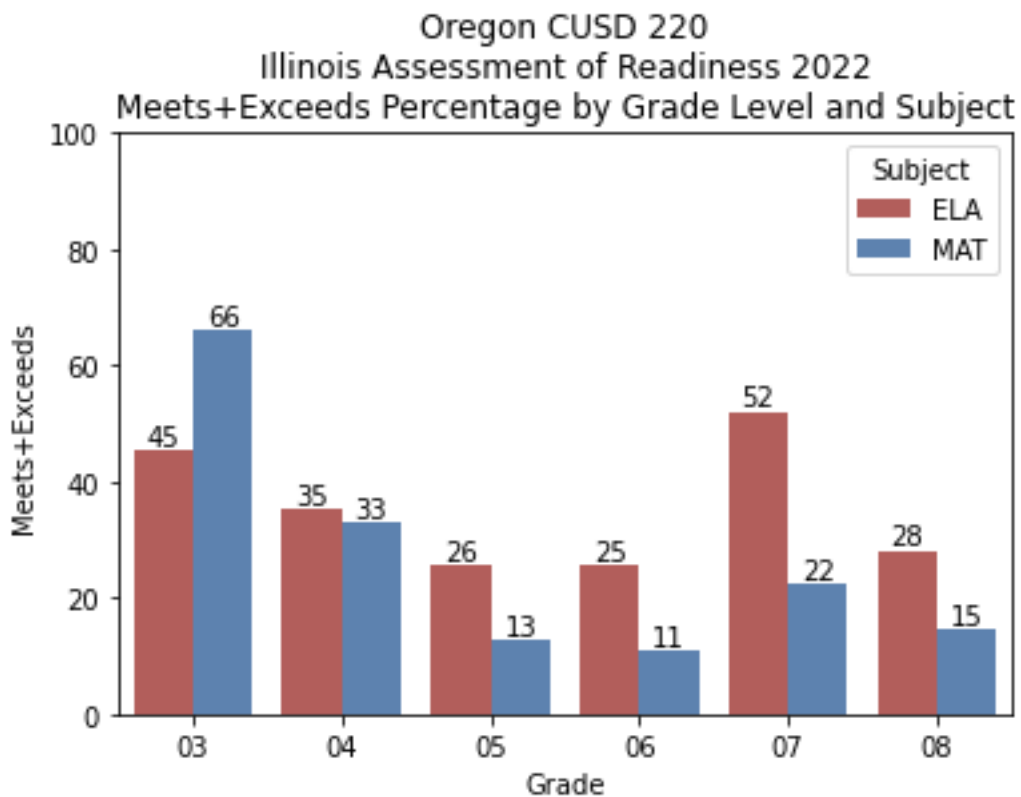
Cc: Thomas Mahoney, Superintendent

Re: June 2022 Board Report

## Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR)

### 2022 Preliminary Scores

The preliminary 2022 IAR scores were released at the end of May. The student rosters must go through a verification process before the final scores are released to the public, but we can begin our analysis of strengths and weaknesses before that occurs.





A couple of highlights:

- Consistent with previous years, our grade 3 students continue to perform at a level that is higher relative to other grades.
- Our English-Language Arts (ELA) scores are higher than Mathematics (MAT) at almost every grade level
- Grade 07 ELA is an unexpected high point. We have not previously seen performance this high for this cohort of students or at this grade level. Additionally, these students outperformed the predictions we had made based on NWEA MAP scores.

Once the student rosters have gone through the verification process and the final Meets+Exceeds numbers have been posted publicly, a more detailed analysis will be conducted and shared. These figures are typically available by August or September.

## Updates to the IAR

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is continuing to discuss what the new version of the IAR will look like. ISBE contracted with the Center for Assessment to conduct a series of surveys and focus groups in the 2021-2022 school year. The findings from this effort were summarized in a report and presented at the April ISBE board meeting.

The Center for Assessment's presentation slide deck is attached for your review. There were 6 themes in the focus group feedback:

1. There is minimal support for a through course model in which state-selected or state-designed interim assessments are used for purposes of accountability.
2. Provide support for the selection and use of local assessment products and professional development to help implement more balanced assessment systems
3. Reduce the footprint of the state summative assessment while improving the procedures and structures in place to support effective use of summative data
4. There is moderate support for the development of voluntary interim assessments that can be used to inform instruction for districts that do not currently have tools available.
5. Clarify the purpose and use of existing or newly proposed assessment options.
6. Don't rush into any new solution that affects all schools.

These 6 themes were used to generate 8 recommendations:

1. Develop state interim assessment supports and/or resources that are decoupled from summative uses
2. Interim assessments
  - a. Develop criteria for "high quality" interim assessments
  - b. Create model resources and/or a "vetted list" of interim assessments
3. Provide professional training to support more effective assessment practices
4. Accelerate and improve assessment reporting
5. Develop a theory of action for state assessments
6. Explore strategies to shorten the end-of-year test
7. Consider transitioning from fixed form to an adaptive design
8. Proceed deliberately and responsively



Taken broadly, this suggests that schools are not interested in any *more* testing but would welcome shorter, more frequent testing if the rationale were clear and the results were available immediately. Schools are more interested in the ability to select measures which serve their local purposes first, state mandates second.

There does not yet appear to be any clarity in where ISBE is headed in a proposed new assessment, but they have asked for and summarized feedback from the field. If most or all of the recommendations listed in the report are followed or implemented, it would be a huge improvement to the current testing regime and would represent a fairly large departure from what we currently do. In particular, shorter assessments with immediate feedback, adaptive design, and a focus on instructional improvement rather than summative accountability would be welcome changes.

We will continue to monitor ISBE's communications for further developments and updates.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Adam P. Larsen'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Adam P. Larsen  
Assistant Superintendent  
Oregon CUSD #220



# Improving the Illinois State Assessment: Feedback and Recommendations

Presentation to the Illinois State Board of Education

April 20, 2022



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# Presentation

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- Goals and Purposes
- Feedback Process
- Focus Group Results
- Recommendations
- Discussion

# Goals and Purposes

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# The Goal

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- The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is committed to having the highest quality, most useful state assessment program possible, within practical constraints
- ISBE staff have repeatedly heard calls to improve the state assessment program by:
  - Providing more timely and instructionally useful information
  - Reducing the accountability assessment footprint, especially the amount of time required for the end-of-year state assessment
  - Supporting more equitable access to quality assessments for all districts

## The Charge: Collect feedback

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- In considering how the state assessment might be improved in relation to the three key priorities, ISBE **gathered feedback from stakeholders to inform** *what* improvements should be prioritized and *how* ISBE might support these improvements
- ISBE contracted with the Center for Assessment to partner in gathering and analyzing feedback regarding the state assessment program and possible future directions



# National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment (Center for Assessment)

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- The Center for Assessment is a Dover, NH-based not-for-profit (501(c)(3)) organization that seeks to improve the educational achievement of students by promoting enhanced practices in educational assessment and accountability
- 14 professional associates; 35 current state engagements; 80+ projects
- Primary focus is to provide support for design, implementation, and validation of assessment and accountability systems
- The Center currently provides technical support services to ISBE, including coordinating the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

# Feedback Process

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# Feedback Activities

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- Met with groups (e.g., SARC, TAC, Board)
- Feedback Survey
  - Constructed by Center for Assessment with input by ISBE
  - ISBE met with many educational and other organizations to let them know about the survey – widely publicized
  - Survey available to anyone in the state through December 2021 and January 2022
  - Analyzed by Center for Assessment
- Focus Groups
  - Widely recruited by ISBE
  - Facilitated by Center for Assessment
  - Eight groups (9-13 persons each) met end of February-beginning of March 2022
  - Over 90 participants nominated by more than 30 organizations
  - Results were analyzed by Center for Assessment

# Feedback Survey

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- Over 5200 people responded
- A summary of results was presented at the March Board Meeting
- More details are also available in the Center's report
- For the sake of time, today we will emphasize the Focus Group findings

# Focus Group Results

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## Focus Group composition

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- The Center for Assessment decided to keep each Focus Group small (under 12 persons) to allow time for each person to give meaningful feedback
- ISBE invited many organizations to nominate persons to participate in Focus Groups.
- ISBE extended invitations to specific individuals and used acceptances to create broadly representative and balanced Focus Groups
- There were 97 participants nominated by more than 30 groups. A complete list of participants is included in the Center's report.

# Results Summary (1)

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Results are presented with respect to six themes:

1. There is minimal support for a through course model in which state-selected or state-designed interim assessments are used for purposes of accountability.
2. Provide support for the selection and use of local assessment products and professional development to help implement more balanced assessment systems
3. Reduce the footprint of the state summative assessment while improving the procedures and structures in place to support effective use of summative data

## Results Summary (2)

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4. There is moderate support for the development of voluntary interim assessments that can be used to inform instruction for districts that do not currently have tools available.
5. Clarify the purpose and use of existing or newly proposed assessment options.
6. Don't rush into any new solution that affects all schools.



# Theme 1

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- Minimal Support for State Through Course Model used for Accountability
- Concerns expressed included:
  - Limited instructional utility if used for accountability
  - Will impede local control
  - Burdensome to implement
- For example, one participant pointed out that “*A generalized or standardized solution for all schools will not really be useful or instructionally relevant because it is not aligned to what is going on in your curriculum.*”

## Theme 2

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- Provide support for local assessment practices.
- While participants stressed the value of local control related to assessment choice, there was a strong desire for the state to take an active role assisting local efforts to develop balanced assessment systems.
- Many commented on the need for tools and resources that would serve to inform the selection and use of local assessment options
- For example, the state could help evaluate the quality of local assessments so that districts know they are using products that provide for “*credible and reliable information.*”
- There was also a call for state-provided professional development focused on improving assessment literacy and building local capacity.

## Theme 3

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- Reduce the footprint of the state summative assessment and support effective use of data
- A common suggestion across the eight groups was that the time and emphasis placed on the summative assessment should be minimized.
  - For example, “*decrease the time spent meeting federal testing requirements*” so that educators could focus on activities better suited to supporting student’s needs.
- Changes were recommended with respect to the timing, content, and structure of IAR results.
  - For many, summative assessment results are provided too late to support district-or school level programmatic decisions and reports are not sufficiently useful to educators.

## Theme 4

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- **Moderate support for the development of voluntary interim assessments**
- Except for assessments in early grades (K-2), participants were generally agreeable to the state providing districts with a *voluntary* interim assessment option.
- Concerns voiced related to the utility of a common interim assessment solution across districts and schools with different curriculum, priorities and initiatives were acknowledged.
- Example comments:
  - *I think interims are appropriate and can be used effectively, potentially if not defined at a state level and used at the summative determination level.*
  - *If the state can help out there is an equity opportunity there, but that (the solution) would need to be aligned to local assessment system and be optional.*

## Theme 5

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- Clarify the purpose and use of existing or newly proposed assessment options
- Stakeholders are often confused about the purpose of the state summative assessment and the role it should/should not play in supporting the needs of schools and teachers.
- A common sentiment was that the state should not try to do too much through the design of the state assessment system.
  - Sample comment: the state should make sure that the “purposes of different types of assessments really clear and note that there are specific roles for specific assessments.”

## Theme 6

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- **Don't rush into a new solution that affects all schools**
- Many participants applauded efforts taken by the state to collect feedback from stakeholders but suggested that additional work was needed.
- Some participants indicated that the state should identify and consider a broader range of models.
- Others pointed out that parent participation in the survey was limited and that additional effort should be taken to obtain feedback from stakeholders in historically underserved communities.
  - Illustrative comment, *“Engage more stakeholders in decision making. Collect more information and invite more engagement before moving forward with a focus on improving teaching and learning, advancing equity, and thinking through possible unintended consequence.”*

# Recommendations

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# Overview

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- The Center's report details 8 recommendations, addressing the rationale and considerations for each.
- The first 4 recommendations address strategies to help the state provide more instructionally useful information
- The next 3 recommendations suggest ideas to improve state assessments.
- The last recommendation applies to all the work.
- Recommendations regarding the third interest, "How could more equitable access be provided for districts to procure effective interim assessments?" is subsumed within the two listed areas.



# Summary of Recommendations

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1. Develop state interim assessment supports and/or resources that are decoupled from summative uses
- 2A. Develop criteria for “high quality” interim assessments
- 2B. Create model resources and/or a “vetted list” of interim assessments
3. Provide professional training to support more effective assessment practices
4. Accelerate and improve assessment reporting
5. Develop a theory of action for state assessments
6. Explore strategies to shorten the end-of-year test
7. Consider transitioning from fixed form to an adaptive design
8. Proceed deliberately and responsively

# Recommendation 1

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- *Develop state interim assessment supports and/or resources that are decoupled from summative uses*
  - In order to provide more instructionally useful information during the year ISBE may consider providing statewide interim assessment supports or resources to districts and schools.
  - The feedback from the survey and focus groups suggests that there is not sufficient support to make such assessments compulsory statewide or use these assessments for summative purposes.

## Recommendations 2A and 2B

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- *Develop criteria for “high quality” interim assessments*
- *Create model resources and/or a “vetted list” of interim assessments*
- Develop criteria for “high quality” interim assessments and provide professional training to districts so districts could be more certain the interim assessments the districts procure are technically sound and appropriate for their intended purposes.
- Apply the criteria to create model resources available as options to districts, such as a bank of items, performance tasks, or tests.
- Consider creating a vetted list of interim assessments that would help guide districts in procuring an interim assessment.

## Recommendation 3

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- *Provide professional training to support more effective assessment practices*
- ISBE may consider providing professional training, directly or through regional or other appropriate groups, to support educators using assessment information more effectively. This assessment literacy could focus on use of summative, interim, and/or formative assessment information to support better teaching and school programmatic decisions.

## Recommendation 4

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- *Accelerate and improve assessment reporting*
- ISBE may consider working with its current or future state assessment contractors to accelerate the response time for summative assessment results.
- Explore strategies to expand and/or improve assessment reports so they are more useful to educators, parents, and others.

## Recommendation 5

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- *Develop a theory of action for state assessments*
- Consider developing a clear, detailed theory of action of what purpose(s) the state assessment should serve and what actions will lead to those purpose(s) being accomplished.
- The role of assessments should be clearly articulated in terms of what assessment information is needed to support the actions leading to the goals.

## Recommendation 6

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- *Explore strategies to shorten the end-of-year test*
- Explore options to shorten the end-of-year state assessment, and make sure that any reduction in length of testing time minimizes unintended negative consequences.
- Work with technical advisors and contractors to determine technically defensible and feasible strategies.

## Recommendation 7

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- *Consider transitioning from fixed form to an adaptive design*
- Consider an adaptive design for the state assessment, where the difficulty of questions would be adjusted to the student's ability level.
- There are several possible adaptive designs each with advantages and drawbacks. ISBE may wish to work with contractors and advisors to explore the technical and practical implications.



## Recommendation 8

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- *Proceed deliberatively and responsively*
- Do not rush, but plan thoroughly and proceed with deliberate speed. Understand thoroughly the different viewpoints and values which have made consensus and adoption challenging. Exercise leadership to move forward with improvements while maintaining the required high quality required for high-impact state assessments.

# Discussion

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# Discussion

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We welcome feedback or questions





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