

A green wavy line representing a hill. On the hill, there are five black silhouettes of people in various walking or standing poses, moving from left to right across the top of the hill.

Indiana Department of Education

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2015 ISTEP+ Frequently Asked Questions by Families

In April of 2014, Indiana's State Board of Education adopted new college and career ready Indiana Academic Standards. The United States Department of Education has mandated that in the 2014-2015 school year each state test must align with more rigorous state college and career ready standards. This means that at each grade level, 3-8 and grade 10, the state will assess whether your child is on track to have the skills and knowledge necessary to graduate and be college and career ready. Our goal is for your child to enter college and career without needing remediation. This spring will be the first year your child will be taking the new college and career ready version of ISTEP+... it will replace the old ISTEP+ test.

Because the new ISTEP+ will be more rigorous than in previous years, the Department of Education has provided professional support to educators to help your child prepare for the test. In addition, the Department has extended the amount of time that your child will have to take this new test. We anticipate a continued period of adjustment over the next few years as we all get used to the new test.

1. Why has there been an increase in the number of sessions as well as an increase in the time required for the 2015 ISTEP+ test?

The 2015 ISTEP+ is longer than the previous ISTEP+ for two main reasons: First, because the test is more rigorous, your child may need additional time to complete each test session. The lengths of various sessions were set to ensure that your child will have the time he/she may need for each session. The testing times are maximum amounts, and teachers may call "time" if all students have completed their work prior to the end of a test session. Second, some sessions have additional questions this year to allow the Department to build questions for 2016 and beyond as required by Indiana law. To access a complete chart of your child's test session work times, please visit the parent portal or the ISTEP+ website at <http://www.doe.in.gov/assessment/istep-grades-3-8>.

2. How is the 2015 ISTEP+ the same and different from previous years' tests?

The 2015 ISTEP+ is the same in that there are still two parts. Part 1 in February/ March and Part 2 in April/May. Part 1 will include writing samples, responses to reading passages, math problem solving and in identified grade levels science and social studies. Most of this test will be in paper form.

In April/May Part 2 will be computer based and cover language arts and mathematics. In addition, science and social studies are tested at selected grade levels. Part 2 will have items types similar to previous ISTEP+ tests, such as multiple choice questions.

The 2015 ISTEP+ is different in that most questions will measure higher levels of critical thinking in which your child will be asked to demonstrate and apply what he/she knows. The format of some items will be technology enhanced so that your child can demonstrate a more thorough understanding of concepts.

3. Why is it better that the practice test is being used for instruction?

Recently the department changed how the ISTEP+ practice test would be used in the classroom. This change is so that your child will be able to have no time restrictions placed on the practice, and so that the teacher can use it as an instructional tool with your child. By using the practice test as an instructional tool, teachers will have a better opportunity to provide examples and guidance to your child as they prepare for the new Spring 2015 ISTEP+ assessment. Using practice tests instructionally also enables teachers to more readily engage with your child on the new rigorous college- and career-ready content standards and ensure students fully understand the new instructions and new test item types.

4. What are changes in the ISTEP+ test for children with special needs?

The U.S. Department of Education has provided regulations to transition away from tests aligned to modified academic achievement standards for some students with special needs. If your child took the IMAST exam in the past, they may be taking the ISTEP+ test this year. Any accommodations provided for your child through their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for testing will still be available. IMAST transition information may be found at <http://www.doe.in.gov/assessment/imast-transition-information>.

Students who previously were given the ISTAR assessment for math and language arts may now be taking a new alternate test called National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC). For more information contact your child's teacher of record. Visit the Alternate Assessment website at <http://www.doe.in.gov/assessment/alternate-assessments>.

5. What type of change (if any) is expected in student performance on the 2015 ISTEP+ test?

Any time tests change, there is generally an initial decrease in scores. Other states have seen significant drops in scores after switching to a new college and career ready test. This does not mean that students or schools are performing worse than in previous years. Instead, it simply means that the test is measuring something different than it had in previous years and a drop in scores is expected.

6. What can I do to prepare my child and where can I find more information about the 2015 ISTEP+ test?

Please visit the IDOE website at <http://www.doe.in.gov/assessment/istep-grades-3-8> to view standards, test question examples and testing times. Your complete understanding of the new test will help you support your child.

In addition, stay in contact with your child's teacher and school regarding his/her academic progress, and continue to instill confidence in your child that the test will measure what he/she is learning in the classroom. Please encourage daily reading in your home, ensure that your child has good attendance at school and oversee the completion of homework.

7. Why should my child take this test?

Regardless of whether your child is in elementary school, middle school or high school, there are educational milestones your child will need to reach at the end of their grade level to be ready for a successful career or

college. The Spring 2015 ISTEP+ test will assess whether your child has the skills and knowledge needed at the end of his/her grade level to be on track to graduate and be college- and career-ready.

8. When will 2015 ISTEP+ results be available?

The anticipated release of 2015 ISTEP+ results will be in the fall of 2015. This later than usual release is due to the Indiana law that provides for an extensive cut score setting process after this new test.

9. How does the federal government impact the tests my child takes?

There is a federal law called No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which requires that all students be college and career ready by graduation. No Child Left Behind also mandates that all states test your child in all grades 3-8 and 10 on mathematics and language arts. Currently the NCLB law is being debated across the country and in Washington, DC. Assessment is one of the major NCLB conversations. If you have a position about the high stakes tests in our schools and the amount of time your child spends on assessments, you should consider writing to your United States Congressman or Senator.