

February 28, 2013

REGARDING: ISAT AND DROP IN TEST SCORES

Dear 3rd through 8th Grade Parents,

Next week, our 3rd through 8th grade students will take the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). This is a very important assessment for your child and we would like to ask for **your assistance ensuring your child is able to do their very best on ISAT**. There are also some very important changes to how the 2013 ISAT will be scored by the Illinois State Board of Education. These changes will result in a statewide drop in student scores.

Teachers have worked diligently over the course of this school year helping students achieve state standards. They have also spent the past several weeks preparing your child for the ISAT exams with test taking strategies, bolstering skills and teaching vocabulary that will be used in test questions so that students have a complete understanding of what they are being asked.

We would like to request your help in making sure your child has outstanding performance on the ISAT. Each day next week, please make sure your child attends/arrives to school on time, gets plenty of rest and eats a nutritious breakfast (at home or school). You can also help our school teams by sharing the importance of the ISAT with your child and that it is important to do their very best on the assessment. It is critical for students to know that, even though they do not receive a grade on ISAT, it still counts in many other ways. We use their performance on this test to make many other academic decisions (along with other assessment data and teacher input). You are our greatest partner in conveying this message to your child.

Finally, states across the U.S. are beginning the **transition to the new Common Core Standards** (see www.altonschools.org under the parent link for more information on the new standards). The new standards are targeted to better prepare students for college and careers. We are already working diligently at the elementary, middle and high school levels to prepare students and teachers for this transition. Because of this change though, the **Illinois State Board of Education has raised the performance expectations for ISAT including the cut scores** which determines if a student meets/exceeds expectations on ISAT test performance.

What does this mean for your student and all others across Illinois? Simply put, the 2013 ISAT scores are going to drop both for individual students and schools. The higher expectations do not mean that our students know less than they did before or are less capable than they were in previous years. Instead, the State Board is raising the bar on how well students are prepared to meet college and career readiness benchmarks.

As always, I want to thank you for your time and continued support of our students and schools. While change is never easy, it is very important to keep parents informed. Thank you again for helping your child perform their very best on this year's ISAT assessment.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kenneth Spells
Superintendent of Schools