

New ISAT Cut Scores

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has released rescored 2012 ISAT results to align with new performance levels under the more rigorous Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The new performance levels are intended to provide more accurate information about students' progress toward success after high school graduation. The scores were released to school districts today and are expected to be available to the public on Monday. In fact, the new scores will better align with the PSAE (high school) scores. Traditionally, ISAT scores in Illinois have looked better than high school scores because the elementary standards have been lower. The new scoring system will eliminate those differences and align all of the scores from grades 3 to 12. The higher expectations of the new ISAT cut scores will cause a downward shift in the number of students who are meeting or exceeding standards. This drop is a result of raising expectations, not a reflection of student or teacher performance. Overall, this will have an impact of raising student expectations and therefore achievement at the elementary level which will better prepare children for high school and ultimately college and career options.

As an example of how the new ISAT cut scores will impact North Boone, among the North Boone's 3rd Graders who took the ISATs in the spring of 2012:

94% of those children meet or exceeded the math standards under the previous cut scores

62% of those children meet or exceed the math standards under the new cut scores.

This is one of the reasons why North Boone adopted a more rigorous math curriculum last year. Even though the students were doing extremely well on the ISAT, the previous curriculum wasn't rigorous enough to properly prepare them for a truly rigorous high school curriculum.

89% of 8th graders met or exceeded the math standards under the previous cut scores

58% of 8th graders met or exceed the math standards under the new cut scores

Reading shows similar trends:

92% of 8th graders met or exceeded the reading standards under the previous cut scores

68% of 8th graders met or exceeded the reading standards under the new cut scores

Attached are some graphs showing the changes in some math and reading scores. The ISBE is not changing the cut scores on the science exams.

Special Education Options

I have been working with Kim Moore and Michael Houselog to iron out the concerns North Boone has relating to dissolving the BCSEC. District 100 is currently drafting an intergovernmental agreement relating to those issues. The BCSEC is scheduled to vote on the issue at its March 7 meeting.

State Comptroller's Debt Recovery Program

We have learned that debt collection efforts for school districts by the Illinois Office of the Comptroller under the Local Debt Recovery Program (LDRP) have been put on hold indefinitely. In a notice sent to districts seeking to participate in the LDRP, the Comptroller's Office cited the need for more information about the nature of the debts. It appears that the Comptroller doesn't feel some schools have given people the opportunity to appeal their debts properly. They promise to work towards resuming it shortly.

Disabilities Presentation

The NBHS Pit crew sponsored a disabilities awareness presentation at NBHS on February 6. The students handled themselves well. The guest speaker, Noah Currier, a North Boone alum, is the founder of the Oscar Mike Foundation which is a foundation that employs other disabled Vets, aids in rehabilitative programs, and organizes a disabled Veteran based non-profit.

<http://www.oscarmike.org/about-oscar-mike> Noah's presentation will be followed by a presentation created by the NBHS PIT Crew (Peer Intervention Team) and RAMP.

ISBE Climate Survey

The state's new 5 Essentials School Climate Survey is now available online. Parents can access it at <https://survey.5-essentials.org>. There is a notice on the district blog and buildings are putting it out via newsletters. A twitter reminder will go out in mid-March. The survey will be available until March 31.

Bandwidth Issues

iFiber met with me earlier in the month. They are going to bring a proposal back shortly based on using a wireless connection between Stone Creek School in Roscoe and Manchester as a base connection. I will let you know when I see a proposal. I am also working an alternative route with two other vendors.

PARCC Testing Requirements

The PARCC Consortium has continued to modify its technology requirements for the online PARCC exams which will replace the ISAT beginning in 2015. Currently, only 51% of our student computers meet the minimum requirements identified by PARCC. Additionally, the bandwidth requirements are significantly more than our current bandwidth. We are not alone in this situation, but there will need to be a significant investment in technology infrastructure and equipment in order to be prepared for the PARCC testing. Currently, the PARCC organization is planning to set its final requirements by October 2013.

A+ Run for Education

Dr. Belcastro and the Education Foundation are planning a 5K fun run on May 4 at NBHS in order to fundraise for the Foundation and the district. So far, McDonalds of Belvidere, Blackhawk Bank and Poplar Grove State Bank have all agreed to sponsor the run. The Rockford Road Runners will be handling the timing for the event. The t-shirt at the right will be provided to all participants.



New NBMS Girls Basketball Uniforms

Thanks again to the generous donors who provided new uniforms for the 7th and 8th grade girls' basketball teams.