

Lower Expectations On State Standards



By Dr. R. Pletsch

Illinois Policy printed an article by Hannah Schmid last month. It helped bring attention to the fact that the State Board of Education approved a plan to lower the score needed to be considered proficient in Reading and Math.

The students in Illinois have not been doing well for years. The latest available data was the 2024 State test. It indicated only 41% of students in grades 3 - 8 could read on level. It was only 31% in 11th grade. In Math, only 28% in grades 3 - 8 met the standards and in the 11th grade, 26% met the standards.

The State appears to be trying to show improvement and they are using the new standards and are including it in last year's test which will be released in October. With the new "cut scores," now 53% will be considered proficient in Reading and 38% in Math on the 2025 scores. The scores and charts are available on the internet.

Test scores can be misleading to those not accustomed to working with them. They are important indicators of growth and often used by parents to choose a school or even a neighborhood to move to.

The State's argument for doing this is, that the "2022 State Standard Mapping Study" conducted by National Center for Educational Statistics noted that Illinois has one of the higher proficiency standards among the states. Therefore, the State Board believes lowering the standards to be more closely compared to other states. A problem is that some parents and students will believe great gains were made because of the old comparing apples and oranges.

Ms. Schmid states that changing the score will help Illinois compare more favorably to other states, but time would be better spent improving the students' abilities. The states of New York and California have also lowered their expectations from their traditional tests. There are articles available on the internet if you are interested in those states.

Parents should understand that the questions are still the same. Their scores will still be the same from 2025, but the interpretation of those scores will be raised. For example, 10 correct may have been not proficient and now will be improving proficiency. So the wording will be more important than the raw score. While this test score may not be accurate compared to your older students who graduated, so don't compare them. But it is appropriate to compare their 2025 score with the 2026 score they will be taking this Spring. Your teachers will explain this if you ask them.