



## **General Information About the Illinois Certification Testing System**

### **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

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Testing has been required of candidates seeking Illinois teaching, school service personnel, and administrative certificates since 1988. Legislation enacted at that time, Section 21-1a of the School Code of Illinois, established a testing program as part of the state's certification requirements. Subsequent legislation and the adoption of administrative rules by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) provided additional requirements and information regarding the specific tests required of certification candidates, as well as when the tests must be taken and who must take the tests.

Under the direction of ISBE, the Illinois Certification Testing System (ICTS) was custom designed and developed by the Evaluation Systems group of Pearson to meet Illinois needs and requirements relating to the preparation and certification of educators.

The ICTS tests are criterion referenced and objective based. A criterion-referenced test is designed to measure a candidate's knowledge and skills in relation to an established standard rather than in relation to the performance of other candidates. The explicit purpose of these tests is to help identify, for certification purposes, candidates who have demonstrated the level of knowledge required to perform satisfactorily in their fields of specialization.

All the test standards and objectives developed for the ICTS were reviewed by committees of Illinois educators for relevance to the field of teaching and alignment with state and national standards. A content validation survey was then conducted in each field using practicing Illinois public school educators and educator preparation faculty. Each survey participant reviewed the standards/objectives in his or her field to ensure that only standards/objectives that are important to the job and that are used in Illinois classrooms were selected for testing. Test questions matched to each standard/objective were developed on the basis of textbooks, Illinois curriculum guides, and teacher education and certification standards. These questions were developed in consultation with committees of Illinois public school educators, educator preparation faculty, and other content specialists. Test questions are field-tested and then continually reviewed to ensure content is current and accurate. All tests within the ICTS periodically undergo a comprehensive review to ensure that the tests accurately reflect the knowledge and skills required of the Illinois public school educator.

## **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

If you have questions about tests in the ICTS program after reading this study guide, you may wish to consult the current version of the ICTS Registration Bulletin on the ICTS Web site.

**If you have questions about program policies or about which test(s) to take or at what point in your preparation program you should take the test(s), contact:**

- your college advisor;
- your certification officer;
- a regional office of education; or
- the Illinois State Board of Education Web site: **[www.isbe.net/certification](http://www.isbe.net/certification)**

**If you have questions regarding test registration, administration procedures, admission tickets, or score reports, contact:**

ICTS  
Evaluation Systems  
Pearson  
P.O. Box 660  
Amherst, MA 01004-9000

Telephone: (800) 239-8107 or (413) 256-2870, 8:00 A.M.–5:00 P.M. central time, Monday-Friday, excluding holidays. (Automated Information System available 24 hours daily.)

Fax: (413) 256-8221

Teletypewriter (TTY): (413) 256-8032

Web site: **[www.icts.nesinc.com](http://www.icts.nesinc.com)**

## DESCRIPTION OF THE TESTS

The ICTS includes the following categories of tests.

Test Type	Test Description
Basic Skills test	<p>The Basic Skills test consists of four independently scored and passed subtests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Comprehension: 48 multiple-choice questions</li> <li>• Language Arts (grammar and writing): 42 multiple-choice questions</li> <li>• Mathematics: 35 multiple-choice questions</li> <li>• Writing: 1 constructed-response assignment</li> </ul> <p>A passing score on each subtest is required to pass the Basic Skills test. Passing subtest scores will be banked, such that candidates will only need to complete subtests they have not yet passed.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> In 2012 the Basic Skills test is being replaced with the Test of Academic Proficiency.</p>
Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP)	<p>The TAP consists of four independently scored and passed subtests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Comprehension: 60 multiple-choice questions</li> <li>• Language Arts (grammar and writing): 60 multiple-choice questions</li> <li>• Mathematics: 50 multiple-choice questions</li> <li>• Writing: 1 constructed-response assignment</li> </ul> <p>A passing score on each subtest is required to pass the TAP. Passing subtest scores will be banked, such that candidates will only need to complete subtests they have not yet passed. If an examinee has previously passed one or more Basic Skills subtests after September 11, 2010, the passing score(s) will count toward the passing of the TAP.</p>
Assessment of Professional Teaching (APT) tests	<p>The APT tests assess candidates on professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills. Each APT test consists of 120 multiple-choice questions and 2 constructed-response assignments. There are four levels of the APT: Birth to Grade 3, Grades K–9, Grades 6–12, and Grades K–12.</p>
Content-area tests	<p>Each content-area test (except foreign language content-area tests) consists of 125 multiple-choice questions.</p> <p>The Special Education General Curriculum Test consists of 65 multiple-choice questions.</p>
Foreign language content-area tests	<p>The Foreign Language: French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Russian, and Spanish tests each consist of 100 multiple-choice questions and 2 constructed-response assignments.</p> <p>The Foreign Language: Arabic, Chinese (Cantonese), Chinese (Mandarin), Japanese, and Korean tests each consist of 7 constructed-response assignments and do not include multiple-choice questions.</p>
Learning Behavior Specialist II (LBS II) tests	<p>Each LBS II test consists of 6 constructed-response assignments, including 3 stand-alone constructed-response assignments and 3 constructed-response assignments associated with a single case study.</p>
Language proficiency tests for the Transitional Bilingual Certificate	<p>The English Language Proficiency test and the Target Language Proficiency (TLP)—Spanish test each consist of 55 multiple-choice questions and 2 constructed-response assignments.</p> <p>The TLP tests for languages other than Spanish each consist of 4 constructed-response assignments.</p>

## TEST ADMINISTRATION

The ICTS is administered both on paper and for select tests, on computer. See the current version of the ICTS Registration Bulletin on the ICTS Web Site for information about test dates, sites, and fees and registration policies and procedures.

**Alternative Testing Arrangements.** Alternative testing arrangements that are reasonable in the context of this licensing test, as approved by the Illinois State Board of Education and supported by documentation, will be provided for examinees who are unable to take the tests under standard conditions. Alternative test dates may also be arranged for people whose religious convictions prohibit them from taking tests on Saturday. These alternative test dates may be arranged **only** for religious reasons. Consult the current ICTS Registration Bulletin for information on requesting alternative testing arrangements.

## SCORE REPORTS

Your score report is available to you on the Internet, at 10:00 p.m. central time on the score report date published in "Test Dates" on the ICTS Web Site, as a PDF document, which you may view, print, and save for your records. To access your score report on the Internet, select "Score Reporting" on the ICTS Web site and follow the instructions provided. Your score report will be available for 45 days after the score report date.

For each test you took, your score report provides information about your passing status and other performance information. See "ICTS Passing Requirements" for detailed information on the passing requirements for ICTS tests.

Your score report is accompanied by an explanation of how to read your score report. A score report explanation is also available by selecting "Score Reporting" on the ICTS Web site.

**If you register online**, you may request during the registration process that your score report be sent to you by e-mail. Score report e-mails are sent beginning at 5:00 p.m. central time on the score report date. If you request this service, your score report will be sent to the e-mail address that you provide during the registration process. If you wish to have your score report sent to a different address, you may log in to your account on the ICTS Web site and update your contact information.

**If you register by mail or telephone**, your score report will also be sent to you by U.S. mail on the score report date. Your score report will be sent to the address that you provide during the registration process. If you wish to have your score report sent to a different address, you may log in to your account on the ICTS Web site and update your contact information.

## HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE TEST

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### ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND TEST SKILLS

**Read the test standards/objectives.** The set of test standards/objectives for each test is the only source identifying the information covered by the test(s) you are taking.

1. Read through the entire set of standards/objectives to get a general picture of the material the test covers.
2. The test standards/objectives form the foundation and focus for the test questions. The descriptive statement(s) that follow each standard/objective are included to provide examples of possible content covered by the standard/objective. **Read each standard/objective and its descriptive statement(s) carefully to get a more specific idea of the knowledge and skills you will be required to demonstrate on the test.**

### PRACTICE YOUR TEST-TAKING SKILLS

**Answer the sample test questions.** After you have become familiar with the test standards/objectives, review the sample test directions and try to answer the sample test questions for the test(s) you are taking. Set aside several hours for this exercise. If possible, answer the sample test questions in a quiet room that simulates the testing environment. As you answer the sample test questions, time yourself to get an estimation of how long it may take you to complete the actual test.

## THE DAY OF THE TEST: HELPFUL HINTS

### PREPARATION

**Arrive on time.** Make sure you leave plenty of time to get to the test center. You should arrive at the test center on time, relaxed, and ready to begin the test when instructed to do so.

**Dress comfortably.** Wearing layers of clothing will allow you to adjust for fluctuations in room or body temperature. Wearing soft-soled shoes will permit you to leave your seat without disturbing other examinees.

### TEST-TAKING TIPS

**Follow directions.** At the beginning of the session and throughout the test, follow all directions carefully. This includes the oral directions read by test administrators and written directions in the test booklet or on the computer screen. The test booklet or computer screen presents directions for the test questions. If you do not understand something about the directions, raise your hand and ask a test administrator.

**Pace yourself.** Each paper-based test session is five hours in length, and you will have the entire session to complete the test. The length of a computer-based test session varies depending on the test(s) and or subtest(s) you are taking. The test schedule is designed to provide sufficient time to complete the test, but be sure to allocate enough time to complete all sections within the test session.

The test is designed to allow you to allocate your time. You determine how much time you need to spend on each section of the test. However, you will be required to turn in all your testing materials at the end of the five-hour test session.

As you begin a test on paper, skim the questions quickly to get an idea of how long you need to devote to each section of the test. At a computer-based test session, the amount of time elapsed during the test session will be shown on the computer screen to aid you in pacing yourself.

**Read carefully.** Read the directions and the test questions carefully. Read all response options. Remember that the test questions call for the "best answer." Do not choose the first response option that seems reasonable; read and evaluate all choices to find the best answer. Read the test questions closely so that you understand what they ask. Do not skim the test questions in an effort to save time; you may misread key words and select the wrong answer or spend more time than needed on a test question. For example, if a test question calls for an approximate answer and you skip over that detail, you could waste time performing a long computation.

**Designate your answers carefully.** Your answers to the multiple-choice questions will be scored electronically; therefore, it is very important for you to designate your answers carefully, whether you are responding on paper or by computer.

For paper-based testing:

- The answer you select must be clearly marked and the only answer marked. If you change your mind about an answer, erase the old answer completely.

Do not make any stray marks on the answer sheet. You may use any available space in the test booklet for notes, but your answers must be clearly marked on your answer sheet.

- **If you skip a multiple-choice question, be sure to skip the corresponding row of answer choices on your answer sheet.**
- If the test you are taking includes a written constructed-response assignment, your answer must be recorded in the appropriate answer document. **If you write your response to a written constructed-response assignment in the test booklet, it will not be scored.**

**Guess wisely.** As you read through the response options, try to find the best answer. If you cannot quickly determine the best answer, try to eliminate as many of the options as possible. Then, guess among the remaining answer choices. There is no penalty for incorrect answers; therefore, it is better to guess than not to respond at all.

**Check accuracy.** Use any remaining time at the end of the session to check the accuracy of your work. Go back to the multiple-choice test questions that gave you difficulty and verify your work on them. If you are testing on paper, check the answer document, too; be sure that you have marked your answers accurately and have completely erased changed answers. Review your responses to the constructed-response assignments and make any revisions as necessary.

**Follow the rules.** Review the Rules of Test Participation contained in the registration bulletin. Be aware that actions such as using a cell phone during the testing session, attempting to remove notes written in your test booklet, removing test materials from the site, or other such violations may result in your score(s) being invalidated.

## TEST DIRECTIONS

Below is a sample directions page for an ICTS paper-based test. These are general directions. If a test uses directions other than these, the directions will be found in the field-specific section of the study guide. The directions provided during a computer-based administration are similar in content.

You should have in front of you:

- (1) a test booklet for the teaching field for which you registered (check the field name on the front cover);
- (2) an answer sheet (be sure you have filled in the required information); and
- (3) a No. 2 pencil.

*IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ALL OF THESE MATERIALS, PLEASE INFORM THE TEST ADMINISTRATOR.*

### DIRECTIONS

Each question in this booklet is a multiple-choice question with four answer choices. Read each question carefully and choose the ONE best answer. Record your answer on the answer sheet in the space that corresponds to the question number. Completely fill in the space having the same letter as the answer you have chosen. *Use only a No. 2 lead pencil.*

Sample Question:

1. What is the capital of Illinois?
  - A. Chicago
  - B. Peoria
  - C. Springfield
  - D. Champaign

The correct answer to this question is C. You would indicate that on the answer sheet as follows:

1. (A) (B) ● (D)

Try to answer all questions. In general, if you have some knowledge about a question, it is better to try to answer it. You will NOT be penalized for guessing.

Once the test has begun, you should continue from page to page, in sequence, throughout the test booklet. You may write in the margins of the test booklet if necessary. The words "End of Test" indicate that you have completed the test. You may go back and review your answers, but be sure you have answered all questions before raising your hand for dismissal. Your test materials must be returned to a test administrator when you finish the test.

**FOR TEST SECURITY REASONS, YOU MAY NOT TAKE NOTES OR REMOVE ANY OF THE TEST MATERIALS FROM THE ROOM.**

This testing session will last five hours. If you have any questions, please ask them now before beginning the test.



**DO NOT GO ON UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO.**