



December, 2009

Dear Parents,

We are going to distribute and explain the IOWA Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), which was administered to students in grades kinder through eight during October. **On December 16th, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. in the school Gym, we invite you to be a part of the explanation of your student's results.** The test provides a nationally norm-referenced measure of a student's basic skills. The tests are used by the administration and faculty to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and the learning styles of individual students. The administration also uses these results to gauge the overall achievement of our students in relation to those across the country. However, one test alone cannot indicate a student's overall strengths or weaknesses. A more complete picture is gained by observing trends over several years and other assessments that bench mark the progress of your student. The highest score a student can have on these tests is 99, and the lowest score is 1. A student's scores appear as National Percentile Ranks (NPR). This number indicates how the student scored against others of the same age and grade level across the nation. As an example, a score of 75 on any test indicates that 25% of the students throughout the nation had higher scores, and that the tested student did better than 75% of all students who took that test nation-wide. Scores between 25 (low average) and 75 (high average) indicate performance in the average range. This year the IOWA was scored under a new norming system. This means we will begin a new data set to track year to year how our students are doing. Listed on the back is some important data regarding how our school did as a whole this year. If you would like to read more about how the ITBS is used, please go to this link - <http://www.riverpub.com/products/itbs/details.html>. If you have any questions regarding the results, please feel free to contact us.

We are very thankful for your commitment to Catholic education and for your continued support of St. Anne Catholic School.

Sincerely,

How the Test is Used Tests

Vocabulary

The Vocabulary test assesses students' breadth of vocabulary and is a useful indicator of overall verbal ability. At Levels 5 and 6, the focus is on listening vocabulary. Students hear a word, sometimes used in a sentence, and they choose one of three pictures. Levels 7 and 8 measure reading vocabulary. A picture or written word is followed by a set of written responses. At Levels 9 through 14, each question presents a word in the context of a short phrase or sentence. Students select the answer that has the same meaning as the target word. At all levels, words tested represent general vocabulary rather than the specialized vocabulary used in subject matter areas.

Word Analysis

Available at Levels 5 through 9, the Word Analysis test assesses students' phonological awareness and understanding of word parts. At Levels 5 and 6, the focus is on letter identification and letter-sound relationships. All responses are letters or pictures at Level 5, while Level 6 introduces some word responses. Levels 7 through 9 also include basic letter-sound questions, but more complex word-building tasks involving affixes and compound words are introduced at these levels as well.

Listening

Available at Levels 5 through 9, the Listening test contains short scenarios followed by comprehension questions, all presented orally. The test not only measures literal understanding, such as how well students follow directions or visualize objects, but also the ability to make inferences, understand concepts and sequences, and predict outcomes.

Reading Comprehension

The *ITBS* assesses students' capabilities at all stages of their development as readers. At Level 6 the Reading test measures students' ability to read words in isolation and to use context and picture cues for word identification. There are also sentence and story comprehension questions.

The tests at Levels 7 and 8 include a variety of reading tasks. Students answer questions about a picture that tells a story. They also demonstrate their comprehension of sentences and stories.

At Levels 9 through 14, each test consists of reading passages of varying length and difficulty. At each test level, there is at least one narrative, a poem, and one passage about a science and social studies topic.

Fiction, folk tales, an essay, biographical sketches, a "how-to" piece, an editorial, and expository nonfiction round out the selections. Some passages are excerpts from previously published works, while others have been commissioned for The Iowa Tests™.

Variety in the test materials makes it possible for students' scores to be generalized over a broad range of reading purposes and content.

Test items assess three types of understanding. Factual questions tap students' literal understanding of what is stated in the text. Inferential/interpretive questions require students to read between the lines to demonstrate their understanding of what is implied. Analysis and generalization questions require students to "step back from" the text to generalize about a passage's main points or ideas or to analyze aspects of the author's viewpoint or use of language.

The Reading Comprehension test at Levels 9 through 14 is administered in two separate testing periods of 25 and 30 minutes. By reducing fatigue, this two-session format increases motivation, helps maintain test takers' focus, and results in dependable scores.

To diagnose individual and class needs, the new Primary Reading Profile, available at Levels 5 through 9, combines information from all the literacy-related tests into a single report. Overall test scores as well as skill scores in Vocabulary, Word Analysis, and Listening are presented on the Levels 5 through 9 profiles. At Levels 6 through 9, Reading test scores are included, and Spelling scores are included at Levels 7 through 9.

Language

The Language tests at Levels 5 and 6 measure students' understanding of how language is used to express ideas. Skills assessed include the use of prepositions, comparatives and superlatives, and singular-plural distinctions. Questions are presented orally as scenarios; students choose one of three picture responses.

At Levels 7 and 8, the teacher reads one or more sentences aloud while the students look for a mistake in either spelling, capitalization, punctuation, or usage. The items at these levels represent a bridge between the emphasis on oral language in Levels 5 and 6 and an emphasis on written language in Levels 9 through 14.

The Language tests at Levels 9 through 14 measure students' skill in using the conventions of standard written English. The tests constitute a thorough sampling of skills in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, usage, and written expression.

Separate scores are reported in each area, and detailed diagnostic reports of strengths and needs are possible because of the content coverage afforded by separate tests.

At Levels 9 through 14, the Spelling questions offer four words, one of which may be misspelled, and a fifth "*No Mistakes*" option. The Capitalization, Punctuation, and Usage and Expression tests present brief written contexts, asking students to identify which line, if any, contains an error. In the Usage and Expression test, students also read stories and are asked to choose the most effective way to express ideas, organize paragraphs, or write an opening, transitional, or concluding sentence or paragraph.

Math

In accordance with the *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics* of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), the Math tests at all levels do much more than assess skill in solving numerical problems. The tests emphasize the ability to do quantitative reasoning and to think mathematically in a wide variety of contexts.

The tests at Levels 5 and 6 assess students' knowledge of beginning math concepts, focusing on numeration, geometry, measurement, and problem solving using addition and subtraction. All questions are presented orally; responses are pictures or numerals.

At Levels 7 through 14, there are three separate tests. The first is called Math Concepts at Levels 7 and 8 and Math Concepts and Estimation at Levels 9 through 14. This test requires students to demonstrate their understanding of fundamental ideas in the areas of number properties and operations, geometry, measurement, algebra, probability and statistics, and estimation. At Levels 9 through 14, the separately timed Estimation section tests mental arithmetic, number sense, and various estimation skills such as rounding.

The second test, called Math Problems at Levels 7 and 8 and Problem Solving and Data Interpretation at Levels 9 through 14, includes word problems that require one or more steps to solve. In many cases, students select an appropriate method or approach, rather than compute an answer. At Levels 9 through 14, several real-world "stories" form the basis for sets of three to four problems, each requiring somewhat different skills to solve. Levels 7 through 14 also include data displays such as tables and graphs. Students use them to obtain information, compare quantities, and determine trends or relationships.

Each problem in the third test, Math Computation, requires one arithmetic operation — addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division. The problems require operations with

whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and various combinations of these, depending on the test level.

Students must work a problem and compare their answer with the choices given. The last answer option is "N," meaning the correct answer is "*Not given*."

At levels 7 and 8, all Math tests, except for the last portion of the Computation test, are presented orally.

At Levels 9 through 14, calculators may be used on the Concepts portion of the Concepts and Estimation test and on the Problem Solving and Data Interpretation test.

Social Studies

The Social Studies tests at Levels 7 through 14 measure objectives of the social studies curriculum not measured elsewhere in the *ITBS* battery. At Levels 7 and 8, all questions are presented orally, and students select a picture response. At Levels 9 through 14, a number of questions ask students to respond to materials such as political cartoons, graphs or charts on social data, timelines, or excerpts from historical texts. The content of the questions is drawn from the ten thematic strands identified by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and covers four broad areas:

- History — Culture, time, continuity, and change
- Geography — People, places, and environments; global connections
- Economics — Production, distribution, and consumption; science, technology, and society; global connections
- Government and society — Power, authority, and governance; civic ideals and practices; individual development and identity; individuals, groups, and institutions

Science

The Science tests at all levels assess not only students' knowledge of scientific principles and information but also the methods and processes of scientific inquiry, in accordance with the recommendations of The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA). At Levels 7 and 8, all questions are presented orally and response choices are pictures. Included in Levels 9 through 14 are scenarios presenting real-life science investigations with questions emphasizing the thought processes used in designing and conducting research and in analyzing data.

The four major content areas covered in the Science tests are:

- Scientific inquiry — Methods of science; analysis and interpretation of data
- Life science — Structures and life cycles of living things; environmental interactions
- Earth and space science — Earth's composition and structure and its changes; the universe
- Physical science — Forces and motion; energy; properties of and changes in matter

Sources of Information

These tests measure students' abilities to use information resources and to judge their usefulness. At Levels 7 and 8, a single Sources of Information test assesses students' skills in alphabetizing and in using picture dictionaries, tables of contents, and maps. All questions are read aloud by the teacher.

At Levels 9 through 14, there are two separate tests: Maps and Diagrams and Reference Materials. In the Maps and Diagrams test, students demonstrate their ability to use visual materials such as maps, tables, charts, and schematic diagrams. Skills tested include locating information, interpreting it, and analyzing it in order to draw conclusions.

The Reference Materials test focuses on the skills and search strategies needed to obtain information from various sources. At the lower test levels, students are asked to alphabetize and to use a table of contents, while at higher levels not taking and using an index are assessed. At all levels there is an emphasis on strategies for gathering information and on the thoughtful selection of reference sources, including judging the quality of research results. The test has been designed to assess skills, such as the selection of keywords, that are important when using both electronic and traditional reference sources.

Levels

The *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* span ten articulated levels appropriate for use at Kindergarten through Grade 8. The *ITBS* test levels are vertically scaled and co-normed with the *ITED*[®] high school achievement battery, providing schools the opportunity to trace student achievement growth on a continuous scale from Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Levels 5 and 6

Levels 5 and 6 of the *ITBS* include the following tests:

- Vocabulary
- Word Analysis
- Listening
- Mathematics
- Reading
 - Words
 - Comprehension

Levels 5 and 6 of the *ITBS* are designed to be developmentally appropriate for young children. All tests are untimed and, except for the Reading test, are read aloud by the teacher. Appealing, open pages with large picture responses engage students' interest, and simple line drawings of everyday objects at the tops of pages help students keep their places in the test booklets. Students mark their responses under the answer choices in the machine-scorable booklets.

Levels 7 and 8

The Complete Battery at Levels 7 and 8 assesses a broad array of skills in eleven tests:

- Vocabulary
- Word Analysis
- Reading
- Listening
- Language (includes Spelling)
- Word Concepts
- Math Problems
- Math Computation
- Social Studies
- Science
- Sources of Information

The Core Battery contains all tests in the Complete Battery except Social Studies, Science, and Sources of Information. At Levels 7 through 9, the Core Battery includes Listening and Word Analysis. The Survey Battery includes a representative set of items from the Core Battery tests in Vocabulary, Reading, Language, and Mathematics.

All tests at Levels 7 and 8, with the exception of Vocabulary and Reading, are orally administered. Students mark their answers in the machine-scorable booklets.

Levels 9 – 14

The *ITBS* Complete Battery assesses student achievement in Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, Language, Math, Social Studies, Science, and Sources of Information. Language consists of four separately timed tests: Spelling, Capitalization, Punctuation, and Usage and Expression. Similarly, Math has three tests: Concepts and Estimation, Problem Solving and Data Interpretation, and Computation. Students' abilities to effectively use Sources of Information are assessed by two tests: Maps and Diagrams and Reference Materials. Word Analysis and Listening tests are included at Level 9.

The Core Battery contains all tests except Social Studies, Science, and the two Sources of Information tests. The Survey Battery contains 30-minute Reading, Language, and Mathematics tests that are comparable in content to the corresponding tests of the Complete Battery.

Test booklets for all levels are reusable; however, a machine-scorable booklet is available at Level 9.