



East St. Louis Teacher Issues Comments: Illinois Federation of Teachers and Education Organizations Asks State Board to Stop Testing Vote

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The Board is planning to vote on June 16.

ILLINOIS – Members and leaders of the Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT) along with Chicago Teachers Union, Illinois Families for Public Schools, the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, Journey for Justice, the Learning Disabilities Association of Illinois, and Raise Your Hand Illinois call on the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to stop their June 16 vote to seek new testing proposals for Illinois students in grades 3-8. These new proposals are for an assessment program that increases state mandated, high-stakes standardized testing for students and will cost over \$200 million. The IFT advocates that ISBE should engage the public, including students, parents, educators, and assessment experts, before seeking a new testing approach.

“Each test administration disrupts instruction for two to three weeks,” said East St. Louis elementary teacher Edwina Holton. “We need to find better ways to assess than state testing, and we must generate more meaningful information for the students themselves. When do we close the gaps on concepts that aren't understood? When would remediation happen if testing is cutting out teaching time?”

“ISBE’s current plan to issue a request for proposals on new, interim testing for Illinois schoolchildren puts the cart before the horse,” said IFT President Dan Montgomery. “This new program, which stands to cost more than \$227 million over the next 10 years in additional funding towards standardized tests, desperately needs more thought and

input from the education community, including parents, students, teachers, and assessment experts, all of whom should be part of deciding how to measure student growth."

Our concerns include the amount of testing and test preparation that students will have to endure, especially as they recover from a traumatic and stressful year. Instead, we call on ISBE to work together with stakeholders to develop an assessment approach that reduces reliance on standardized testing.

"We have too many high-stakes assessments already. I'm a parent and a teacher, so I see what's happening in my classroom and at home. Comparing kids one to another is problematic, and we're losing instruction time to testing," said Lori Torres, Chicago Public Schools parent and teacher. "If we are concerned about 'learning loss,' then we should be concerned about time lost to standardized testing."

In addition to increasing stressful testing for students, it is unclear how student growth will be measured. The proposed RFSP also raises significant equity concerns given the proven negative impacts of standardized testing on Black and Brown students. The proposed \$227 million price tag would divert critical funding from proven resources that help kids most, like smaller class sizes and more clinicians.

IFT's Director of Union Professional Issues Dr. Monique Redeaux-Smith said, "We have been wrapped up in high-stakes testing culture for 20 years. We need a balanced assessment system. We need young people able to tackle real world problems. Assessment needs to be embedded within a culturally relevant curriculum and paired with quality, sustained professional development for teachers. Young people should be asking their own questions, not just answering multiple choice questions."

IFT's President Dan Montgomery added, "As a parent and teacher, I can tell you that rushing to enable a set of high-stakes standardized tests that will embed testing further throughout the school year, as ISBE's current plan suggests, is not the way to best serve our students. While we understand the federal requirements for standardized tests, we continue to call for reducing the testing burden on our students to the greatest degree possible. After a horrible year and a half of COVID-interrupted learning, we must take more care than ever with testing issues; kids need more time with caring adults, more play, more emotional support and more uninterrupted instruction than ever. Illinois has nothing to gain and much to lose by proceeding with this RFSP at this time."