

# The New ERA Plan



## The Evaluation Report for Assessment and Accountability

How do we measure success? Since 1995, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has relied exclusively on standardized tests, particularly the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. Test scores determine who passes, who is retained, who moves forward, who gets left behind. This is not an effective, fair, or educationally-sound way to evaluate educational progress.

*It's time for a change - it's time for a new ERA!*

Parents and educators agree that to see how well schools and students are doing, we must look at actual student work, not just test scores. The new ERA Plan provides for a comprehensive analysis of student and school progress toward clear academic standards established for schools and students across the state. Evaluation of schools and students will be based on multiple measures of progress toward those **Illinois Learning Standards**. Results of the evaluation will be included in each school's annual report and verified by rigorous local, CPS, and state reviews. Schools will use this high-quality information to improve student learning.

*For student achievement to improve, schools must improve!*

*With the new ERA Plan, students are evaluated by the adults who know them.  
Multiple measures are used to measure student and school progress.  
The entire school community commits itself to educational excellence for every child.*

## **What is the new ERA Plan?**

The ERA Plan is a new way for school communities to measure student and school progress toward the Illinois Learning Standards. The Evaluation Report for Assessment and Accountability (ERA) will be built into the local School Improvement Plan and the annual Internal Review process. The new ERA Plan will be developed by the school community, approved and monitored by each Local School Council, and used in the periodic state External Review and the annual local Internal Review. Unlike the current standardized test-driven system, the new ERA Plan supports and encourages high-quality curriculum, instruction, and assessment based on state standards.

---

**Under the new ERA Plan, everyone has responsibilities....**

**with progress measured by...**

### ***Students and families will partner with the school***

⇒ ***For students to succeed, families must be active and informed.***

The ERA Plan will increase the involvement of families in whole-school planning and in the evaluation of student achievement. The Illinois Learning Standards will provide a common language for communicating about school and student progress. Close and frequent home-school communication and cooperation will support higher-level student work.

Students will be expected to complete daily class work and homework. They will also do projects, long-term assignments, and presentations. Students will take the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), but they will be evaluated on **all** of their work during the year and through multiple measures. Most students who do not make adequate progress toward state standards will be promoted and given intensive educational support. Student retention will be rare and used only when both the school and family decide that it is the best way to help the individual child.

- ✓ Classroom grades/report cards
- ✓ Student portfolios, performances, and exhibitions
- ✓ Scores on ISAT tests
- ✓ Scores on other tests based on state standards
- ✓ Promotion and graduation

### ***Local schools will evaluate student & school progress***

⇒ ***For student achievement to improve, schools must improve.***

The School Improvement Plan (SIP) is the school's plan for improving student success in meeting state standards and any other key goals of the local school. The ERA Plan will become a part of the SIP which is approved by the Local School Council (LSC). It will spell out each school's expectations and strategies for students and for the school as a whole. The ERA Plan will also show how the school's curriculum, instruction, and assessments are focused on meeting state standards.

Each local school will identify students who are not making adequate progress toward state standards and provide them with intensive educational support.

Schools will be evaluated by periodic state External Reviews and annual local Internal Reviews. The school annual report will document student and school improvement including evaluations of student work, test scores, progress toward SIP goals and the results of External and Internal Reviews.

- ✓ Student portfolios, performances, and exhibitions
- ✓ Scores on ISAT tests
- ✓ Annual report to school community on SIP progress
- ✓ Student promotion and graduation rates
- ✓ Report of annual local Internal Review
- ✓ Report of periodic state External Review
- ✓ State school report card

*System wide excellence is achieved through high-quality teaching.  
Teaching excellence is achieved through an intensive, high-profile,  
best practice program of ongoing professional development.*

---

### **Chicago Public Schools will evaluate schools**

⇒ *For schools to improve, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) must improve its assessment and accountability policies and practices.*

CPS will evaluate individual schools using multiple measures of progress toward state standards and other goals of the local SIP. CPS will review local school annual reports and reports of annual local Internal Reviews and periodic state External Reviews as part of its school evaluation. CPS will stop using the Iowa tests for judging school and student progress, since these tests are not based on state standards. CPS may use additional tests, if necessary, which do focus on state standards.

CPS will set fair, appropriate, and educationally-sound criteria for student promotion and for school remediation or probation status.

CPS will make reports of student, school, and system wide data easily accessible to the public.

- ✓ Local SIPs
- ✓ Data reflecting student progress: attendance, mobility/stability, grade promotion, graduation, college attendance, employment
- ✓ School annual reports
- ✓ Reports of annual local Internal Reviews and periodic state External Reviews
- ✓ Remediation & probation lists
- ✓ State warning lists

### **Illinois State Board of Education will evaluate CPS**

⇒ *For CPS schools and student achievement to improve, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) must have high-quality state learning standards and assessments.*

The Illinois Learning Standards and the ISAT tests will be reviewed and revised regularly and in collaboration with parents, students, teachers, and others.

ISBE will continue to conduct periodic, intensive school quality External Reviews by qualified, independent review teams. These teams evaluate school improvement using multiple measures including student work samples, ISAT results, and the school's overall educational progress. The teams also consider each school's curriculum, instruction, student support, and other factors which affect achievement.

ISBE will include information from local school annual reports in its school and district evaluations.

- ✓ State student assessment data
- ✓ Reports of school quality External and Internal Reviews
- ✓ State and federal warning lists
- ✓ Reports to federal government

# Frequently Asked Questions about the new ERA Plan

**Q:** *Will standardized tests still be used?*

**A:** Yes. In the new **ERA** Plan, however, the Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) will replace the Iowa test, but will be only one of the multiple measures of student and school progress toward state standards.

**Q:** *What do you mean by multiple measures?*

**A:** A variety of information will be used to assess student progress toward state standards. This could include classroom reports/grades, **student portfolios** (collections of students' classroom work, reports, creative writing), **performances** (plays, concerts, debates), **exhibitions** (science, history, and art projects and fairs), and ISAT results. These measures will be used together to determine students' overall progress toward state standards.

**Q:** *Is this a return to social promotion?*

**A:** No. Social promotion is simply passing low-achieving students into the next grade without identifying their problems and helping them. In the new **ERA** Plan, most students who do not make adequate progress toward state standards will be promoted and given intensive educational support.

Retention is not the only alternative to social promotion, and research shows that retention can be very harmful to children. In the new **ERA** Plan, a student may be retained only with the agreement of their parents.

**Q:** *How will students be motivated to do their best?*

**A:** Research shows that students are most effectively **motivated and educated** by work that interests them, that is active in nature, and that relates to their real lives. The high expectations for student work detailed in the Illinois Learning Standards will provide the challenge. Multiple measures will allow students a variety of ways to show that they are learning.

**Q:** *How will parents and the community know if a school is successfully educating students?*

**A:** The new **ERA** Plan will require local school councils to include in their annual report detailed information about their schools' and students' progress toward state standards. It will also require schools to share reports of annual local Internal Reviews and periodic state External Reviews along with their school's ISAT results.

**Q:** *Will this system cost more money?*

**A:** No. While high-quality accountability is not inexpensive, Chicago currently spends an estimated \$86 million per year on Iowa test preparation programs. In addition, retention costs about \$7,000 per year per student. The new **ERA** Plan allows schools to redirect this money toward additional staff, staff development, and other resources needed to carry out intensive educational support plans. Funds may also be used for research-based strategies to prevent low achievement.

---

The new ERA Plan was developed by the LSC ▲ Summit which includes  
▲ Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform ▲ Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
▲ Designs for Change ▲ Parents United for Responsible Education ▲ Participation Associates  
▲ Schools First ▲ Teachers' Task Force  
with the assistance of FairTest, the Center for Law and Education, and Elaine Siegel, Hager & Siegel

*More questions? Call PURE at 312/491-9101*

**August 2000**

---