



INSIDE: 2005 SCHOOL REPORT CARD

The School Report Card is prepared by the State of Illinois. It provides information about your school compared to the district and state. School Report Cards are posted on www.d41.org.



FOCUS on LEARNING

Exceptional learning in a Respectful and Supportive Environment

Continuous improvement in learning and teaching

District 41 has made a long-term commitment to continuous improvement of student learning so that we can get better and know that we have. This cyclical approach involves: analyzing data such as test scores and student feedback to set specific and measurable goals; testing improvement plans (pilot programs are one way to do this); implementing successful plans throughout the district; and continuing the data-driven cycle as we raise expectations. The continuous improvement cycle will help us to:

- ▶ Align the curriculum to what is vital for kids to know and be able to do.
- ▶ Use data to make decisions about student learning.
- ▶ Meet the needs of all learners so they can maximize their potential.
- ▶ Address the whole child—academic, social and emotional development.

Remember, you are always welcome in our buildings to see continuous improvement in learning in action!

—Dr. Jack Barshinger, Superintendent

Aligning three ways for success



What is alignment and why is it important? Teachers and students have a lot to accomplish during their 174 days in the classroom, especially as state and federal student learning requirements continue to increase. Strong alignment makes sure everything is working together toward common goals, helps us do the best for our students with limited resources and creates a system-wide framework for success that helps ensure consistently exceptional learning for our children over the years. Our

current state of alignment is imperfect, but improving, as we work together to make appropriate decisions about student learning.

When we talk about alignment in District 41, here's what we mean:

1. Align **curriculum** (what we teach) to rigorous state and national academic standards for what kids should know and be able to do. These standards can be found at www.isbe.net.
2. Align **instructional and assessment** practices (how we teach) at the grade levels across buildings.
3. Align **related activities** with the curriculum where possible. With

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From top, as part of the science curriculum, fifth graders throughout the district study ecosystems at the Morton Arboretum; a Literacy Specialist and a student work on fluency using "leveled books" that are developmentally appropriate and written according to standardized criteria for each level.

Aligning three ways

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planning, field trips, cultural events and celebrations can reinforce vital learning goals. Here are some examples of our progress toward stronger alignment:



Science: The new inquiry-based science curriculum provides hands-on learning and develops strong thinking skills that will enhance achievement in multiple disciplines. Students across the district study the same units by grade, using the same materials at the same time.

Literacy: In writing, teachers use “Six Traits” to teach students to use ideas, word choice, voice, organization, conventions and fluency. Six Traits provides a common language for discussing and assessing writing so that goals and expectations are aligned district-wide. In reading, we are introducing leveled books (written specifically for readers in a range of skills) to help students improve fluency and comprehension and to augment our existing program.

Math: A restructured K-8 curriculum will provide better alignment with the state math standards and strengthen vertical alignment of units and learning objectives among grades. At Hadley, work is underway to provide more assistance for students working below grade level, and create a stronger curriculum for students working above grade level.

From top, calculators are introduced in grade 4 in alignment with state math standards; the Physical Education curriculum stresses lifelong fitness through active habits and health awareness.

Using data to make decisions about student learning

The Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) is an assessment of student learning against standards, and is one piece of data about student learning. In 2005, 87.0% of our students meet or exceed state standards. The chart below gives an overview of state and district results, the details of which are in the enclosed School Report Card. Here are some things to remember about ISAT test score interpretation:

- ▶ Long-term learning trends provide the most meaningful information about district performance. Our results over the last several years are generally high and stable but we have room for improvement.
- ▶ Individual results help teachers understand each student’s learning needs.
- ▶ Every year we test a different group of students with a different test, so year-to-year grade-level comparisons must be made with caution.

ISAT Subject	Illinois		District 41		Illinois Acad. Warning	District 41 Acad. Warning
	Meets	Exceeds	Meets	Exceeds		
3rd Reading	45.1%	21.5%	41.9%	43.8%	6.6%	3.0%
3rd Math	45.2%	34.1%	29.4%	60.4%	5.3%	3.6%
5th Reading	40.4%	19.4%	43.0%	38.5%	1.8%	0.5%
5th Math	60.8%	12.4%	64.0%	29.6%	3.2%	0.5%
4th Science	55.1%	16.3%	53.1%	35.5%	5.0%	0.5%
7th Science	54.3%	20.3%	54.3%	37.5%	10.4%	2.7%
8th Reading	61.3%	11.5%	62.2%	24.5%	0.7%	0.8%
8th Math	37.4%	16.9%	44.6%	33.7%	5.9%	1.6%

Note: the state did not test Writing or Social Science in 2005. A Writing component will be back in 2007. Starting in 2006, Reading and Math will be tested annually in grades 3-8.

Meeting the needs of all learners

In D41, we meet children where they are and move them forward so that each child can optimize his or her potential. Below is a sampling of practices and programs designed to meet diverse learning needs: **In the classroom:** Teachers adjust lessons to meet the continuum of learning needs of the kids in their class. This might mean several approaches to the same material, for example, taking some students deeper into the subject matter and providing more background or a different pace to others. **Specialists:** Gifted, Literacy and Math Specialists work with teachers on alignment, instructional practices, student assessment and professional development. They may also model best practices, co-teach and work with small groups of students. **Programs:** Pre-Kindergarten At Risk provides early intervention to help children succeed in Kindergarten and beyond. English Language Learner (ELL) programs serve nearly 300 students who speak scores of languages from Spanish to Urdu to Swahili. Some students spend half their day in bilingual classes, while others receive support services in the general education classroom. **Special Education:** About 12% of D41 students receive some type of Special Ed service provided in the least restrictive environment. Services are provided in the student's home school if possible. Student needs span a continuum of academic, emotional and physical needs from mild to profound, needs that may be met in the context of the general education classroom, in a self-contained classroom or in a placement outside the district.

From top, parent volunteers learn how to help students master math facts using games; Pre-Kindergarten at Risk students practice "baking" and language skills at the same time; ELL teachers work with refugee students, some of whom have never attended school before.



The whole child: head and heart

In order to learn well, children need to feel safe and secure in school with proper attention to their developmental, emotional and social needs in addition to academic ones. This year, the state has adopted requirements for a standards-based approach to Social-Emotional Learning and we are studying these requirements to determine what adjustments the district may need to make. Here are a few ways that we work to provide the "Respectful and Supportive Environment" that is so necessary to student success: **Social workers, psychologists, counselors, nurses:** qualified staff members help students and families manage many factors that may affect academic, social or emotional health. **Service Learning:** our Student Councils or Student Leadership Teams are encouraged to focus on helping others and often work with the PTAs on philanthropic projects which spring from the heart as well as support learning goals. The Six Pillars of Character of the **Character Counts!** program are emphasized in our schools in many ways.

From top, students throughout the district raised money for Hurricane Katrina victims; students recite the Pledge of Allegiance in sign language, learning a new skill and becoming aware that others' may have needs different from their own.

How assessment helps learning

Assessment: Two types of assessment are key to improving learning: “formative” assessments, such as pre-tests, help the teacher adjust instruction *for* learning along the way so that by the end of a unit or the year, students have learned better. Formative assessments also help the teacher adjust instruction to varying needs. “Summative” assessments *of* learning (like the ISATs), help determine what the student has learned. Here are some changes underway in assessment:

- ▶ Starting this year, the Cognitive Ability Test (CogAT), a test that measures potential, is given to first graders so that we can begin providing appropriate services earlier. To the same end, nonverbal testing has been incorporated for Kindergartners and English language learners.
- ▶ A new writing assessment program is being developed that aligns with state standards and provides kid-friendly rubrics. Online components will allow teachers to work with the data to find learning trends for individuals and classes.

Five factors of successful schools...

In addition to effective teachers, research points to five school-level factors that lead to improved student learning:

1. Guaranteed and viable curriculum.
2. Challenging goals, effective feedback.
3. Parent, community input.
4. Safe, orderly environment.
5. Collegiality and professionalism among staff.

—Source: “What Works in Schools,” by Robert Marzano

ASSESSMENTS: what we do and why

Assessment	Purpose
Classroom assessment	Teachers assess academic progress, social development, curiosity, love of learning, creativity.
District assessment	Targeted assessments (often conducted by our specialists) help us evaluate individual students to better meet their needs.
CogATs	Cognitive Ability Tests measure innate ability and potential.
Naglieri, PETs	Non-verbal ability tests for Kindergartners and English Language Learners.
Explore	Given in Grade 8 for high school placement.
IMAGE (2005) ACCESS (2006)	The state assessment for English Language proficiency given to ESL and Bilingual students.
IAA	Illinois Alternative Assessment is a portfolio-style state assessment for students with significant disabilities.
ISAT	Illinois Standards Achievement Test measures what students should know and be able to do by a particular grade level in relation to the Illinois Learning Standards. ISATs measure cumulative learning...for example, tests given in grade 3 measure learning from Kindergarten through third.

ACCESS, IMAGE
IAA AND ISAT
measure D41's
compliance to
NCLB



Fine arts is studied in its own right and can align with academic goals to reinforce learning in other subjects. From top, students studied avian habitats, characteristics and literature before drawing bird portraits; serape-clad first graders performed music of Mexico in conjunction with their studies of that country.