

## ISTEP changes may have students stressed in Southern Indiana

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— Though ISTEP testing just ended, it's not time to rest just yet.

Students throughout the state will start again in April on part two of the test, which accounts for 75 percent of the ISTEP, according to Cam Savage, communications director with the Indiana Department of Education.

Giving the test in two sections is part of the changes started by the department, once the decision was made to move the test to the spring semester this year.

With change comes something else — pilot questions. Those are questions that are used to see what children really know to help develop future tests, but getting those wrong will not count against a student's score, according to Savage. Karen Spencer, supervisor of assessment at Greater Clark County Schools, said pilot questions are nothing new. Spencer said those show up every time the test is moved from spring to fall and vice versa.

Though what was different was not knowing which are pilot questions and which aren't, said Sally Jensen, coordinator of student data services for New Albany-Floyd County Consolidated School Corp. She said that before this test, pilot items were given out as a separate booklet. Those were only given out at schools selected by the state, she added.

"With the spring test, there is no separate pilot-item book," Jensen said. "The pilot items are embedded in each student's test book. The student does not know which items are pilot and which are not."

Jensen said those pilot questions were not harder than any other given question. Spencer agreed, saying the pilot questions seemed in line with the learning standards.

Spencer said she feels that it wasn't the pilot questions that may have been hard on kids, rather the multi-step questions, which required students to show their work in various stages before reaching an answer.

"I think what hurt the kids are the multi-step questions," she said. "It took a higher level of thinking and application of the skill which probably ... stressed the kids out. I think a lot of them ran out of time."

Savage said there were fewer questions on part one of the test, which caused there to be fewer easy questions. He said he won't know if that caused the test to be harder until he sees how the students scored.

Savage, so far, has only heard feedback about the math and open-ended portions on the test.

"It appears students are not having trouble with the other portions of the test, and we do not anticipate them having trouble with the multiple-choice portion — which is about 75 percent of the test — which will be taken in April/May," Savage said.

Spencer said taking the ISTEP test in the fall and now two sessions in the spring because of the exam being moved from the beginning of the year to the end is causing stress on everyone involved.

"It has been a hard year for not only the students, but also the teachers," she said. "Next year, they'll just have the one spring test ... it'll be better."

### What if students don't pass?

- Students who do not pass ISTEP are entitled to extra help and instructional time to address any areas of need.
- Ask your teacher and guidance counselors about extra help in areas that students didn't pass.

### What if I have more questions?

- Talk to teachers and counselors at your school.
- Visit [www.doe.in.gov/istep](http://www.doe.in.gov/istep) or call 1-888-54-ISTEP.
- Visit [www.learnmoreindiana.org](http://www.learnmoreindiana.org) or call 1-800-992-2076.

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