

ISAT Preparation Sheet—Reading—Week of March 1st, 2010

We have spent several months preparing in different ways for the types of assessments you will see on the ISAT test next week. While there is really no way to study for a test like this, it does help to think about some of the strategies we have discussed in class.

Listed below are some of those strategies, along with some other helpful hints I think may be beneficial as you tackle the ISAT.

Before the Test

- **Get a good night sleep**—I will not be assigning ANY at home work this week, so use that extra time to hit the hay a few minutes early.
- **Eat a good breakfast**—studies show that students that eat breakfast are more focused than those that skip it. Try to eat something so your mind is sharp all day.
- **Pack a healthy snack and a water bottle**—I will allow you to have these during breaks in testing.
- **Come prepared**—bring several number two pencils and some highlighters for the reading portion of the ISAT.

Taking the Test: General Guidelines for Reading (and other tests too)

- **Relax**—while it is OK to be nervous, don't get too worked up. Nobody gets every question right on a standardized test. Be relaxed, but at the same time...
- **Take the test seriously**—this is the only assessment the state of Illinois gives you in 7th grade. You only get one shot to do well. There are no second chances like you may get on some of your assignments for your regular classes. This is the Super Bowl of Tests...there is no tomorrow.
- **Ask questions for clarification**—there are many questions that I cannot answer when you ask them (don't take it personally). However, you do not know if I can help you or not unless you ask in the first place. Don't be afraid to ask me for help. I may not be able to give it to you, but you don't know until you ask.
- **Be aware of the classroom environment**—there are many posters that can be of some assistance when taking the test. Those include the following:

All Over Room: The stoplight symbol for extended response. You have to remember what each color represents in the E.R. answer.

- **Manage your time effectively**—I cannot stress this point enough. You get 45 minutes for each reading test, plus an extra 10 if you are still working, for a total of 55 minutes. **USE THE TIME THEY GIVE YOU.** There is a reason why test makers give you the amount of time that they do. Want to guess why? **BECAUSE THE TEST TAKES BETWEEN 45-55 MINUTES!!!** Be aware of your time and adjust your test taking style accordingly. Go back and reread and then recheck your answers if you finish exceptionally early. Let's say you catch one mistake. **YOU JUST IMPROVED YOUR SCORE.** Isn't that worth the extra effort? You've got nothing else to do on these days. It's sure better than sitting there with nothing to do for 30 minutes while the other students are working on their test. See **SAMPLE A** for a breakdown of the test sessions for reading.

- **Skim the questions and extended response prompt quickly before starting the story**—I’m not saying to spend any more than 2 minutes on this. If you do, you may not have enough time to finish. However, remember the benefits of skimming the questions BEFORE you read a single sentence:
 - 1) You now have a purpose for reading (this is especially true for extended response prompt)
 - 2) You can now highlight text examples for your extended response while reading. This will save you time later...you won’t have to search and search for good text examples once you start writing your E.R. You’ll already have them identified.
 - 3) You can save yourself time. You’re not going to remember every single question obviously, but if you remember a couple, you won’t have to go back and reread as much. This brings us to our next point...
- **LOOK BACK IN THE PASSAGE**—why is this capitalized? Because a lot of students, instead of rereading a section of the story to find an answer they are unsure of, will simply guess. WHY?!?! There is absolutely no rule against looking back at your passage. In fact, that is what the state of Illinois EXPECTS good readers to do, and you are ALL good readers!!! Students love open-book tests right? The ISAT is an open-book test because YOU CAN LOOK BACK AT THE PASSAGE!!!
- **Use any extra information the test gives you**—often, there are questions on the test that will give you extra information, so even if you don’t know the answer right away, the extra info will help you answer the questions. Too many times, students skip over this extra information for some reason. Again, not a good idea. If the test gives you an extra advantage, USE IT TO YOUR ADVANTAGE!!! This information often appears in [BRACKETS] or (PARENTHESIS). SEE SAMPLES B, C, and D for examples of test questions where you are given extra information. Questions like this that you will probably see for sure are the **etymology questions**, which are SAMPLES B AND C.
- **Replace vocabulary words**—when you do the vocabulary type questions, replace the old word with your answer choices (A, B, C, D). Chances are some of the words will just sound plain silly and won’t make too much sense in the sentences from the passage. For these types of questions, you are usually looking for a word that means nearly the same thing, so it must be a SYNONYM. You do know we do analogies and vocabulary exercises every week for a reason, don’t you?!☺
- **If all else fails...--**you may find yourself in a situation where a question has you stumped. It happens to EVERYONE at one time or another on these types of tests. It is acceptable at these times to take an EDUCATED GUESS at the answer. What do I mean by educated guess? Usually, there will be some answers that just obviously are not the right answers. If you can identify the answers that are simply foolish or out of place, you can increase your chances of getting the question right. A 1 out of 4 wild guess is nowhere near as effective as a 1 out of 2 EDUCATED GUESS.

You should not have to do this on every question. If you are, you should probably go back and reread the passage. You may be missing something. Also, by analyzing the question, you may have an “AH-HA” moment, and then the answer comes to you...no guessing required.

Long story short...try to avoid guessing. If you are stumped every now and then and you have reread the passage, then make an educated guess by eliminating obviously wrong answers. NO WILD GUESSING EVER, NO MATTER HOW HARD THE QUESTION IS!!! If it’s that hard, go back and reread to find what you need.

Red, Yellow, Green...Extended Response Items

When it's time to answer your extended response items, remember what each color stands for:

RED: Stop and simply answer the question. What are you being asked to respond to? *Remember to reword the question into your answer.*

YELLOW: Slow down and explain your answer with support from the text. If you read the prompt before the story, you can highlight the text examples that you can use for your extended response answer. This will save you A TON of time.

GREEN: Go further...use your own thoughts, ideas, and experiences to expand (or EXTEND) your response. This is where a lot of you have struggled. Remember, write the answer with the following assumptions:

- 1) The person grading your paper HAS NOT read the story. They need everything explained to them.
- 2) They do not know you (which is obviously true). You have to explain your entire thought process. NO SHORTCUTS...NO EXCUSES. You get one shot to write a great extended response. There are no do-overs. Like I said before...MAKE IT COUNT!!!

Study your Extended Response Basics sheet from your binder for a refresher a night or two before ISATs.

If you explain your ENTIRE ANSWER AND THOUGHT PROCESS, you will do well. If you take shortcuts, you will not do as well. It's that simple. EVERY ONE OF YOU is more than capable of an extended response that would meet the state requirements.

I truly believe that each of you can show improvement over last year.

I want you to believe it too!!!

RELAX...HAVE FUN...GIVE YOUR BEST EFFORT!!!