

## Earlier ISAT testing dates worry area educators

By **Robin J. Youngblood**, Staff writer

Students will take the Illinois Standards Achievement Test earlier next year, and area educators are concerned about the impact of less preparation time.

The state board of education sets specific testing dates each year. The window to take the test in 2005 is March 7-18 -- about a month earlier than this year.

Rock Island students will take this year's **ISAT** between April 5 and 16, after spring break. That is an ideal testing situation, said assistant superintendent of curriculum Jay Marino.

Taking the test before spring break "is not an ideal time to be testing because it's at the end of the quarter," he said. Students "are gearing up for vacation. There are more distractions and people are planning vacations."

School districts can apply for waivers to move the test either before or after their spring breaks. Next year, Rock Island will try to get a waiver allowing students to take the test March 1-11.

Les Huddle, Moline's assistant superintendent of curriculum, said their spring break won't be affected, but students probably won't get the March 7, 2005, Casimir Pulaski holiday.

Mr. Huddle also said he's heard the test may be altered to reflect the one month less of instruction.

There are benefits to testing earlier -- primarily that districts will receive the results earlier.

In past years results arrived in July, making it difficult for schools to make adjustments to curriculum or other changes needed under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

For example, NCLB requires giving parents 30 days notice about their options to send their children from poor-scoring schools to higher-scoring ones.

"It puts us in a bad position to not have the time necessary to react without disrupting the education of kids," Mr. Marino said.

For the past few years, Rock Island -- which uses a year-round school calendar -- started classes in early August, sometimes less than a month after the scores were received.

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