

IOWA TEST OF BASIC SKILLS FAQ

Who takes the ITBS?

In January, Springmont administers the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) to Lower and Upper Elementary children who are at least age 8 by September 1, 2017. This is the only standardized test administered annually at Springmont and all eligible students are expected to participate. Make up tests are only considered for excused absences as defined by the parent handbook and are not guaranteed. Test dates are rescheduled only in the event of school closures due to inclement weather or other emergencies.

What is the ITBS?

The Iowa Test of Basic Skills is a standardized test. While Springmont has been using the ITBS standardized test for a number of years, this will be the first time we will be administering the newly updated Form E. Form E has been aligned with current curricular expectations and the norms have been updated. Additionally, the test questions have been formulated with increased emphasis on higher level thinking skills. The test now highlights three levels of thinking: “essential competencies” which involve recall of learned information or facts, usually entailing a single step (level 1); “conceptual understanding” requiring students to use learned information to solve a problem that may be more than one step (level 2); and “extended reasoning” to connect or relate ideas to solve a problem requiring multiple steps or drawing upon a variety of skills (level 3). In format, the test will remain the same with students testing for short periods of time over multiple days using a paper answer sheet and pencil.

How do the Lower and Upper Elementary tests differ?

The ITBS, like other achievement tests, are designed to show individual student progress over time. When the child first tests in Lower Elementary, their scores provide a baseline of their learning in the core subjects of language (including reading, written expression, vocabulary, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation), mathematics (including concepts in math and geometry and math computation) as well as word analysis and listening tests. In subsequent years we follow the child through that continuum of learning to track growth over time. Upper Elementary students participate in the complete battery of tests that expand on the language and mathematics subtest to include the addition of science and social studies.

How are scores shared with parents?

Scores are provided to parents at the spring Parent/Teacher conference and are retained in each student’s school file.

How does my child prepare to take the ITBS?

While it is not possible to “study” for an achievement test, we do take care to assist students by providing practice materials to help her understand the application of what she has learned into a test format. These materials support a transference of knowledge so the child can “show what he knows”. In the Lower Elementary these practice experiences occur in class; first with the Teacher’s help and finally as independent classroom work. In Upper Elementary, students receive test practice packets as part of their weekly homework. This practice work provides sample problems similar to the content and format of the ITBS Form E. Upper Elementary Teachers review the practice work and provide students opportunities to correct errors in preparation for the actual test. The practice work helps to prepare students as well as to highlight areas of student strength or difficulty for the student, parent and Teacher.

Our goal is to help students feel confident working through the test and avoid any surprises. All students participate in a brief ITBS Practice Test in January just prior to test administration. This experience emphasizes the logistics of how to take the test: using a bubble answer sheet; following written instruction; working alone; and listening to directions from their Teacher.

How can parents help?

Our goal is to foster lasting progress over time. Parents support these efforts by maintaining the proper school/home balance. A regular bedtime assuring adequate sleep and good nutrition are important as well as being keenly aware of stressors and keeping those to a minimum – especially regarding the test itself. Students should arrive at school on-time on test days. Students arriving late may not be able to make up missed test sessions. We ask parent to honor Springmont’s culture of keeping test scores confidential – this protects students from stressors and prevents inappropriate comparison and ranking by the students themselves, far earlier than is age appropriate.

What if I still have questions?

Your child’s Teacher or Nikki Torres, Associate Head for Elementary & Middle Learning, are happy to answer additional questions.