

NextGen Admission

Equitable Use of ISEE Scores



Objective and Predictive Values

The Independent School Entrance Exam (ISEE) is an admission test that measures the reasoning skills and academic achievements that independent schools value. Its content is grounded in skills identified as important by independent school teachers and aligned with national learning standards.

K-12 schools receive a range of materials from families applying for admission, and ISEE scores are often the one truly objective data point among these materials. Research has demonstrated that ISEE tests predict student success in a wide variety of independent schools.¹

Achievement and Reasoning Scores

The ISEE Lower, Middle, and Upper Levels contain four subtests representing two categories of skills: achievement and reasoning. The achievement subtests (Mathematics Achievement and Reading Comprehension) provide information about what a student knows and can do at the time of testing, while the reasoning subtests (Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning) provide information about a student's ability to learn. The test also includes an essay prompt to allow students to demonstrate their writing skills. The essay section is unscored.

The ISEE Primary tests for Grades 2-4 assess achievement in two sections: Reading Comprehension and Math Achievement.



¹ Educational Records Bureau (2017). The Independent School Entrance Exam (ISEE) Validation Study. New York, NY: ERB.



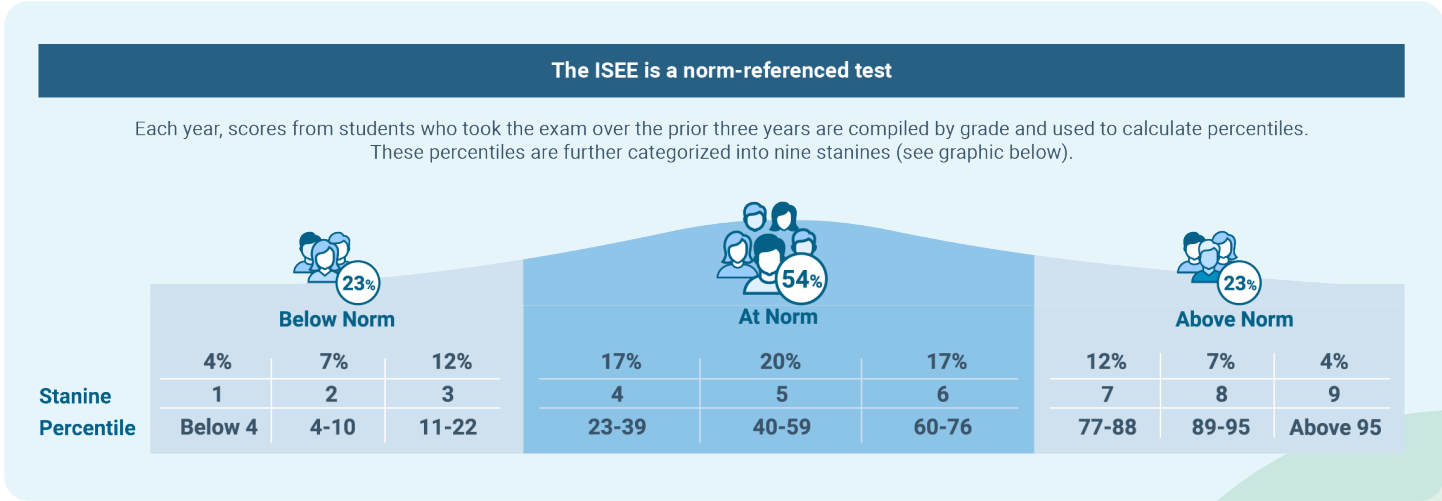
Scoring

ISEE scores are based on the number of correct answers, adjusted to account for minor differences in difficulty across different ISEE test forms. No points are deducted for incorrect answers because a penalty for guessing is stressful for students and can reward “testing strategies” rather than skills.

To provide a comprehensive picture of a student’s performance, ISEE scores are reported with both percentile ranks and as stanines.

The percentile rank shows where a student’s performance falls within the norm group, or the group of students entering the same grade who took the ISEE during the past several years. Typically, students applying to independent schools are academically competitive. A student’s percentile rank score on ISEE tests may be less than what it has been on other tests where the comparison group is less competitive.

Because small differences in percentile ranks may not be meaningful, ISEE scores are also reported as stanines. Stanines are determined by dividing the entire range of the norm group’s scores into nine segments, as shown below.



Graphical representation of the norms that accompany ISEE scores



Using Scores in the Admission Process

- 1** An ISEE test score **should not be used as the sole determinant of an admission decision**. Admission officials should consider ISEE scores along with multiple sources of information, including students' coursework and grades, letters of recommendation from teachers, personal statements, interviews, and observations during school visits. These are important sources of insight into an applicant's fit for a school.
- 2** ISEE scores should be **considered within the overall context of the student's application**. How strong is the student's current school? What opportunities for learning has the student had outside of their school community? Does the student have adults who support them in their educational journey? Questions such as these can bring important information to the forefront of an admission decision.
- 3** Because ISEE norm groups are generally made up of competitive students, it is important that admission teams **understand the overall range of ISEE scores**. In addition, admission professionals and committee members should be familiar with the skills measured by the ISEE test. This allows admission officials to weigh section scores as they consider a student's fit with their school's curriculum.
- 4** The ISEE is designed to showcase student's strengths in different areas; each subscore measures a unique aspect of a student's readiness for an independent school. A composite score consisting of each subscore added together lacks this information. ERB advises that schools **consider each subscore when evaluating a candidate's fit for a school**, rather than creating a less-illuminating composite score. Over time, attention to ISEE subscores allows admission officials to track how well those scores align with academic performance at their own school.
- 5** Students may take the ISEE one time per testing season (Fall, Winter, and Spring). Research on college admission supports the practice of "super scoring," or **using the best score from each section across multiple testing events**. These higher subscores reflect that retaking the test is itself a predictor of successful outcomes. This practice can clearly be applied to ISEE test scores as well.





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An equity-driven approach to
admission for the next generation

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