



VISION 20/20

Fulfilling the Promise of Public Education

Updated 6.20.2016

VISION 20/20

LETTER FROM THE VISION 20/20 PARTNERS

Education is an investment in our children's future, our state's future, and our nation's future. It is our responsibility as educators to reflect upon the current state of education in Illinois and take action to create an education system that meets the needs of all students.

Many times statewide organizations are better known for what they oppose rather than those things for which they stand. In November 2012, the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) initiated a visioning process in partnership with the Illinois Principals Association (IPA), the Illinois Association of School Business Officials (IASBO), the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB), the Superintendents' Commission for the Study of Demographics and Diversity (SCSDD), and the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS) to unite the education community and to develop a long-range blueprint for improving public education in Illinois. Currently, over 500 school districts, representing over 800,000 students, as well as 25 education associations and organizations have signed on in support of Vision 20/20. Together we stand for excellence in education for all Illinois children.

Education reform policies have created a divisive relationship between educators and policymakers. Blaming teachers and education leaders is not a solution to the challenges that education faces in our state. We are all part of the system and need to work in partnership to conquer these challenges to create meaningful and lasting change.

Vision 20/20's policy platform reflects educators from across the state and is representative of opinions from the southern tip of Illinois through the northern Chicago suburbs. Although the City of Chicago operates under a separate school code, they face many similar challenges. This vision is the result of input from over 3,000 key stakeholders, discussions with field experts, and a review of current literature on best practices.

Conscious that no single legislative attempt at school improvement can be developed, implemented, or find success without the support, devotion, and hard work of all stakeholders, Vision 20/20 asks not just for state action, but also for local action and the support of educators across the state to **fulfill the promise of public education**. On behalf of the over two million schoolchildren in Illinois, we challenge the State Legislature, the Governor, and all stakeholders to take action.

Our organizations contributed their time, insight, and advocacy to the Vision 20/20 process. Together, we are committed to supporting and promoting the priorities of this vision.



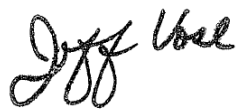
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OUR VISION

The uniting purpose shared across zip codes and political party lines in Illinois is the overwhelming belief that public education plays a defining role in ensuring equal opportunity. It is our collective duty to do all we can to guarantee every student, no matter his or her demographic or geographic identity, has equal access to a quality education.

***“We believe public education works.”
(Vision 20/20)***

As public educators, we believe public education works. We reject the premise that education in Illinois has failed but recognize its impact has not been equitably delivered to all student populations and that there are opportunities for continuous improvement. Now is the time to act. Our vision forward is clear.

We believe the key to continuous improvement in public education relies on the wisdom and innovation of public educators who work with students every day and that innovation emerges through collaboration, not competition. This is a continuous process. We are educators because we care about the future of each and every student and for the opportunity to teach and shape the next generation.

Through the Vision 20/20 process, four areas for prioritization emerged: highly effective educators, 21st century learning, shared accountability, and equitable & adequate funding.



Highly Effective Educators

The quality of teachers and school leaders is the greatest predictor of student achievement schools can influence. By attracting, developing, and retaining our state’s best educators, we can have a profound impact on student learning.



21st Century Learning

For success in life, students need more than knowledge of math and reading. It is time to expand the definition of student learning, commit to the development of the “whole child,” and invest in policies proven to link all schools to 21st century learning tools.



Shared Accountability

A quality education for all Illinois students cannot be ensured without the collaboration, compromise, and hard work of both educators and legislators. With that in mind, it is necessary to expand educator responsibility in the legislative process, create a shared accountability model, and restructure mandates to allow more local district flexibility.



Equitable & Adequate Funding

All students in Illinois are entitled to a quality education. It is our duty to ensure our students have access to all necessary resources by appropriating adequate dollars for education and allowing local school districts the autonomy needed to increase efficiency.

Educators understand the importance of statewide education policy. However, that policy should be crafted to provide districts the flexibility and autonomy to best meet the needs of the students they serve. Statewide, process-specific mandates in education, similar to over-regulation in the business world, do not result in the innovation needed to improve education and do not recognize the state’s diversity. We believe educators should be held to the highest standards and be given the flexibility to apply their experience and knowledge to match local needs in order to best support each individual student.

This document shapes a vision for public education in Illinois to guide educators, legislators, labor, businesses, parents, and community members as we work together toward the common goal of fulfilling the promise of public education in Illinois.

VISION 20/20 PROCESS

Vision 20/20 engaged representatives from IASA regions to unite the Illinois education community. Representatives from each of IASA's 21 regions were active participants in the initiative, as were representatives from the Illinois Principals Association (IPA), the Illinois Association of School Business Officials (IASBO), the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB), the Superintendents' Commission for the Study of Demographics and Diversity (SCSDD), and the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS). Representatives from each IASA region and from each partnering organization were distributed equally across policy areas to ensure equal representation.

The Vision 20/20 process was facilitated and managed by ECRA Group, Inc., a third party educational consulting firm. On behalf of the Vision 20/20 initiative, ECRA administered a survey to key stakeholder populations regarding the current state and desired future direction of education across Illinois. Approximately 3,400 individuals participated, including 661 current and former Illinois superintendents.¹

Vision 20/20 Committee Members

Dr. Dan Bertrand, Marengo Comm. HS #154
Dr. Kathryn Birkett, Indian Prairie #204
Carolyn Brooks, Illinois Association of School Boards
Matt Brue, Porta Comm Unit #202
Dr. Louis Cavallo, Jr., Forest Park #91
Dr. Brent Clark, Illinois Association of School
Administrators
Dr. Constance Collins, Round Lake Area #116
Dr. Nettie Collins-Hart, Proviso Twp #209
Dr. Michael Connolly, Keeneyville #20
Paula Crane, Prairie Central School District #8
Mark Cross, Peru #124
Dr. Ellen Cwick, Comm. HSD #128
Patricia Dal Santo, Kane County ROE/ISC
Dr. Richard Decman, Herscher Comm. #2
Mark Doan, Effingham CU #40
Matt Donkin, Franklin-Williamson ROE/ISC
Roger Eddy, Illinois Association of School Boards
Tad Everett, Sterling #5
Karen Fisher, Illinois Association of School Boards
Jeff Fritchtnitch, Altamont Comm. #10
Hector Garcia, Plano Comm #88
Dr. Jennifer Garrison, Sandoval #501
Nelson Gray, Des Plaines CCSD #62
Ralph Grimm, West Central CU #235
Dr. Judith Hackett, NW Suburban Special Ed. Org.
Dr. Lindsey Hall, Morton CUSD #709
Dale Hansen, Illinois Association of School Boards
Susan Harkin, Carpentersville CUSD #300
Dr. Sheila Harrison-Williams, Hazel Crest #152-5
Aaron Hill, DuQuoin #300
Dr. Jeff Hill, ISU Laboratory Schools
Dr. Michael A. Jacoby, Illinois ASBO
Dr. Lori James-Gross, Unity Point #140
Dr. Gary Kelly, DuQuoin #300
Michael Kelly, Carlinville #1

Dr. Mark Klaisner, Intermediate Service Center #02
Jerry Klooster, Stark County #100
Dr. Todd Koehl, Troy Comm #30C
Jason Leahy, Illinois Principals Association
Dr. Thomas Leonard, Barrington #220
Dr. Elizabeth Lewin, Southern Illinois University
Carbondale
Kimberly Lisanby-Barber, Spring Valley CCSD #99
Thomas Mahoney, Oregon #220
Dr. Jay Marino, Antioch #34
Dr. Jay Morrow, United Twp HS #30
Stephen Murphy, Carbondale Comm. #165
Karen Perry, Morrisonville Unit #1
Matt Plater, Havana Unit #126
James Prather, Rhodes #84-5
Phil Pritzker, Illinois Association of School Boards
Julie Schmidt, Kildeer Countryside CC #96
Rick Schmitt, Sandwich #430
Dr. Gina Segobiano, Columbia Comm. #4
Kevin Shelton, Johnsburg #12
Hillarie J. Siena, Glenbrook HSD #225
Dr. Quintin Shepherd, Skokie #69
Dr. Jeannie Stachowiak, North Palos #117
Mark E. Staehlin, Comm. HSD #99
Dr. Jeff Stawick, Tinley Park CCSD #146
Les Stevens, North Greene #3
Dr. Kelly Stewart, Benton #103
Gary R. Tipsord, LeRoy Comm. #2
Dr. Jose Torres, IL Mathematics & Science Academy
Karen M. Triezenberg, Willow Springs #108
Roy Webb, Canton Union #66
Dr. Jane L. Westerhold, Des Plaines CCSD #62
Judy Wiegand, Champaign Comm. #4
Dr. Don White, Community Consolidated #181
Steve Wroblewski, LaSalle-Peru Twp #120
Dr. Victor Zimmerman, Monticello Unit #25

Pillar Committees

When introduced in November of 2014, Vision 20/20 established four areas of prioritization, or pillars. To fully realize the goal of Vision 20/20, Pillar Committees were created in the 2015-2016 school year to generate recommendations for changes and improvements of the existing policy platform and upcoming legislative agenda. The advisory committee represents partner organizations and guides the direction of the Vision 20/20 initiative.

Advisory Committee

Dr. Sheila Harrison-Williams (SCSDD);
Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro (Latino Policy Forum);
Dr. Jose Torres (IMSA); Jeff Vose (ROE 51); Ralph Martire (CTBA);
Dr. Kevin O'Mara (HSDO); Matthew John Rodriguez (PTA); Stephanie Bernoteit (IBHE);
Tom Hochstein (Horace Mann); Amber Heffner (ICE); Linda Lucke (DKG); Phil Morris (Technology Leader Group); Dr. Geneva Walters (SCSDD); John Murphy (Horace Mann); Elliot Regenstein (Ounce of Prevention);
Kevin Rubenstein (IAASE); Dr. Diane Rutledge (LUDA); Cindy Stover (IACTE); Peg Agnos (LEND/SCOPE);
Caryn Valadez (ED-RED); and Rob Werden (ICTA)



Highly Effective Educators

Executive Committee Liaison:
Roger Eddy

Chair: Dr. Lindsey Hall
(Morton – IASA)

Dr. Carol Ayanlaja (SCSDD)
Jon Bernardy (Horace Mann)
Stephanie Bernoteit (IBHE)
Carolyn Brooks (IASB)
Cathy Carruthers (IACTE)
Dr. Lou Cavallo (Forest Park – IASA)
Jennifer Edmonds (Retired Curriculum Director – IPA)
Dr. Tina Halliman (SCSDD)
Jennifer Hermes (Lake Forest Schools – IASBO)
Dr. Jeff Hill (ISU)
Jami Hodge (IAASE)
Karen Janettas (IAASE)
Kimberly Lisanby-Barber (Spring Valley Elem., IPA)
Kathy Marshall (ROE #28)
David Messersmith (ICTA)
Tammy Muerhoff (ROE 49)
John Murphy (Horace Mann)
Dr. Don Owen (Urbana - LUDA)
Katrina Plese (IACTE)
Peg Staehlin (IL PTA)
Paul Starck-King (Antioch School District - IASBO)
Dr. Sandra Thomas (SCSDD)
Dr. Mary Ticknor (Lemont High SD 210)
Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro (Latino Policy Forum)
Angie Zarvell (ROE 28)



21st Century Learning

Executive Committee Liaison:
Jason Leahy, Dr. Greg Williams, and Pat Dal Santo

Chair: Dr. Julie Schmidt
(Kildeer Countryside – IASA)

Mark Altmayer (Huntley School Dist. – IASBO)
Jonathan Doster (Ounce of Prevention)
Dr. James Dunlap (Evergreen Park HSD 231)
Nick Elder (IACTE)
Karen Fisher (IASB)
Dr. Hector Garcia (Plano – IASA)
Brian Gordon (IACTE)
Amber Heffner (ICE)
Dr. David Hill (Comm. Cons. District 93)
Scott Hogan (IAASE)
Steve Lee (MacArthur Middle School – IPA)
Aaron Mercier (ROE 8)
Eric Miller (Glenview 34 – IASBO)
Dr. Michelle Morris (SCSDD)
Phil Morris (Technology Leader Group)
Candace Mueller (IBHE)
Cristina Pacione-Zayas (Latino Policy Forum)
Dr. Kimako Patterson (SCSDD)
Jim Peterson (Bloomington – LUDA)
Dr. Barry Reilly (Bloomington – LUDA)
Timothy Shimp (Yorkville CUSD 115)



Shared Accountability

Executive Committee Liaison:
Dr. Brent Clark

Chair: Ralph Grimm
(Galesburg - IASA)

Stephanie Bernoteit (IBHE)
Barry Bolek (THSD 113 – IASBO)
Sara Boucek (IASA)
Nick Chatterton (ICTA)
Dr. Shelly Davis-Jones (SCSDD)
Matt Donkin (ROE 21)
Dr. Judy Hackett (IAASE)
Dr. Nakia Hall (University of St. Francis)
Cathy Johnson (District 214 - IASBO)
Elizabeth Kaufman (IACTE)
Dr. Gary Kelly (Supt. of DuQuoin - IASA)
Dr. Jennifer Kelsall (Ridgewood HSD 234)
Dr. Mark Klaisner (ROE West 40)
Dan Krause (Willowbrook High School - IPA)
Jamie Lodge (ROE 30)
Ralph Martire (CTBA)
Brian Minsker (IL PTA)
Bobby Otter (CTBA)
Phil Pritzker (IASB)
Dean Romano (Yorkville CUSD 115 - IASBO)
Dr. Jeff Schuler (Wheaton/Warrenville SD - LUDA)
Dr. Sonya Whitaker (SCSDD)



Equitable & Adequate Funding

Executive Committee Liaison:
Dr. Michael Jacoby

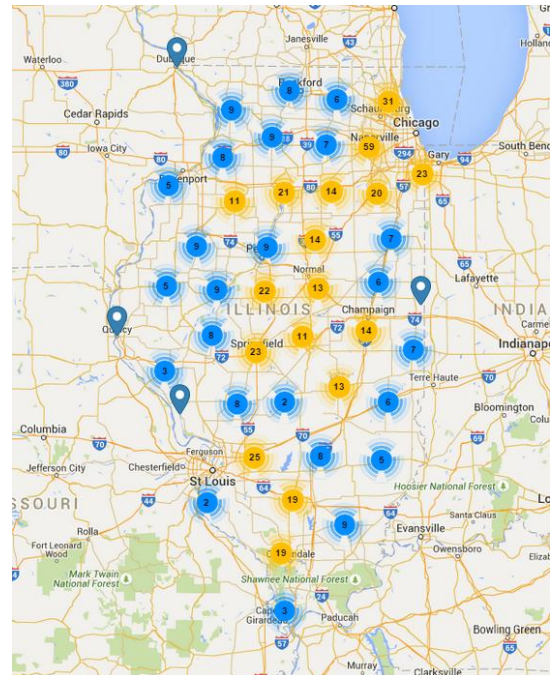
Chair: Gary Tipsord
(Leroy - IASA)

Tad Everett (Sterling - IASA)
Julie-Ann Fuchs (Kaneland - IASBO)
Dr. Jennifer Garrison (Sandoval 501)
Jim Gay (CHSD 230 – HSDO - Scope)
Sean German (Argenta-Oreana HS - IPA)
Dale Hansen (IASB)
Susan Harkin (Comm Unit 300 - IASBO)
Chad Hoesman (ROE 40)
Mark Jonty (ROE 17)
Chris Kendall (ICTA)
Tarin Kendrick (IAASE)
Dr. Donna Leak (SCSDD)
Ralph Martire (CTBA)
Dr. Doug Moeller (DeKalb - LUDA)
Candace Mueller (IBHE)
Thomas Neeley (IASB)
Dr. Mike Oberhaus (Rock Island – LUDA)
Bobby Otter (CTBA))
Brenda Patrick (IAASE)
Barb Quinn (IL PTA)
Paula Rademacher (IACTE)
Tony Sanders (Elgin U-46)
Lyndl Schuster (River Trails - IASBO)
Brad Skertich (Southwestern 9)
Dr. Darryl Taylor (SCSDD)
Martin Torres (Latino Policy Forum)
Ryan Wamser (ROE #50)
Cheryl Witham (ED-RED)

Vision 20/20 Supporters

Since the official November 2014 launch of the Vision 20/20 initiative, 522 districts from across the state, representing over 800,000 students, have signed on in support of our common vision. In addition, the following 25 education associations and organizations have joined in partnership with the founding associations to help Vision 20/20 fulfill the promise of public education in Illinois.

- Illinois Parent Teacher Association
- Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools
- Education for Employment System #330
- High School District Organization of Illinois
- Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education
- Illinois Association for Career and Technical Education
- Illinois Association of School Personnel Administrators
- Illinois Computing Educators
- Illinois Council of Professors of Educational Administration
- Illinois Career and Technical Administrators
- Illinois Educational Technology Leaders
- Indian Valley Vocational Center
- Illinois Women for Education Leadership
- Livingston County Special Service Cooperative
- LaSalle-Putnam Educational Alliance for Special Education
- System Directors' Leadership Council Illinois
- Special Education Association of Peoria County
- Special Education District of Lake County
- Woodford County Special Education Association
- Western Area Career System, Education for Employment #265
- Bureau County Board
- Center for Tax & Budget Accountability
- Charlie Rose (Former General Council for the US Department of Education)
- Horace Mann
- The Ounce of Prevention Fund



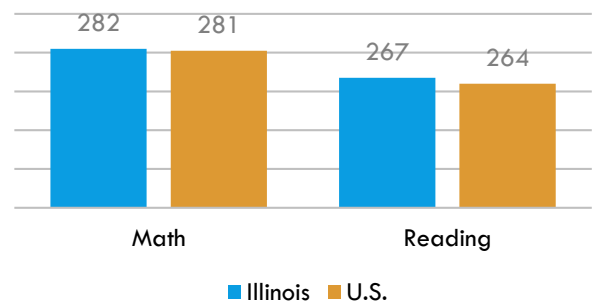
THE STATE OF ILLINOIS EDUCATION

Despite being ranked nearly last nationally in state education funding and over half of all students identified as low income, Illinois students continue to perform well.

Illinois Public Education Comparable to National Averages

Every two years the federal government administers a national standardized assessment, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), for the purpose of comparing state performance. Illinois students have comparable achievement to national averages in both reading and mathematics according to the most recent NAEP results.

Average Eighth Grade NAEP Scale Score, 2015 ²



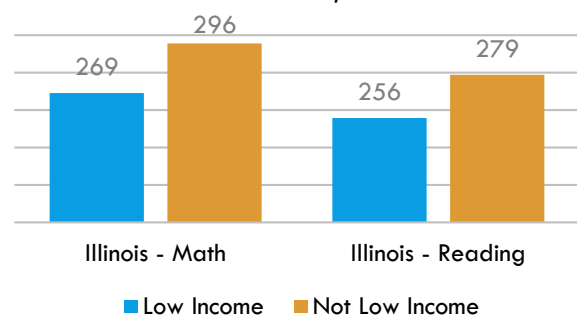
Large Inequities in Education Exist

An achievement gap remains at both the state and federal level.

Both the United States and Illinois face the challenge of closing achievement gaps among students from different backgrounds, including students with disabilities, students from low-income backgrounds, and students identified as English Language Learner (ELL). The achievement of Illinois students in each of these populations on NAEP is comparable to U.S. averages for the same grades and subjects.

Nonetheless, an achievement gap remains at both the state and federal level. It is this achievement gap that should be of primary concern.

Average Eighth Grade NAEP Scale Score by Income Status, 2015 ³



District characteristics are strongly correlated to student achievement. For instance, income status accounts for 54 percent of the variance in the percentage of students meeting Illinois standards in ELA and math at the district-level.⁴ Illinois' inadequate funding structure reinforces the disadvantages already found among children living in communities with low property values. Currently, each Illinois district's resources are closely associated with local wealth. This is different from other states across the nation where greater state funding dilutes discrepancies in funding between high and low property wealth districts.

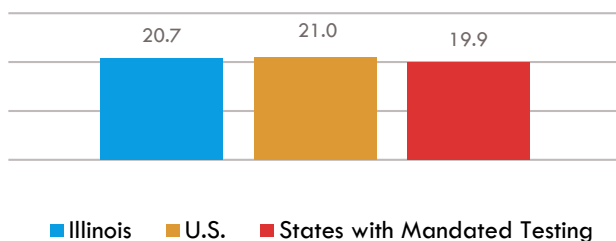
Beyond the moral imperative and responsibility to close the achievement gap in Illinois, achievement gaps systemically impact the broader economy. A 2009 report issued by McKinsey and Company estimated the impact of the achievement gap on U.S. GDP to be 1.3 to 2.3 trillion dollars, similar to the effect of a national recession.⁵

Illinois Performs Well on College and Career Indicators

Students in Illinois receiving at least a core curriculum outperform their counterparts nationwide.

Composite scores for Illinois students on the ACT college admissions test are comparable to national composite scores, as seen below.

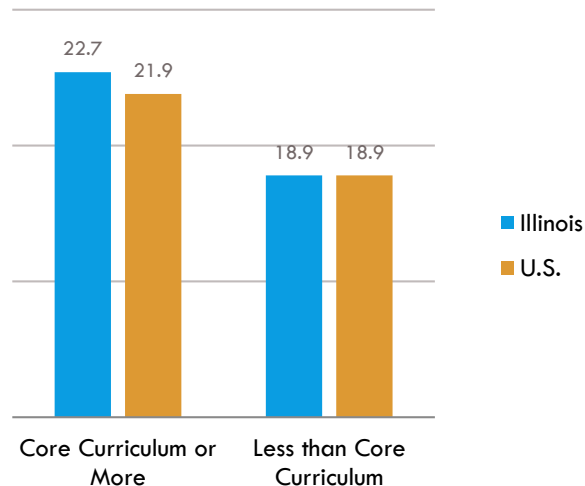
Average ACT Composite Scores by Category, Graduating Class 2015 ⁶



Across the United States, only 59 percent of students in the graduating class of 2015 took the ACT, while in Illinois 100 percent of public school students took the test. Illinois students rank 1st in achievement among the states that tested 100 percent of their public school student population (Alabama, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, and Wyoming).

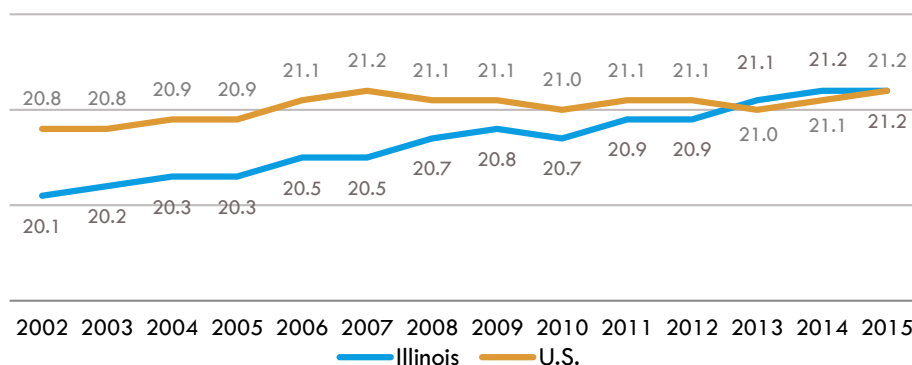
ACT identifies a student as prepared to take the ACT if the student took four years of English and three years each of mathematics, social studies, and natural sciences, which they define as the core curriculum. Students in Illinois receiving at least a core curriculum outperform their counterparts nationwide.

Average Composite ACT Score by Preparation Level, Graduating Class 2015 ⁷



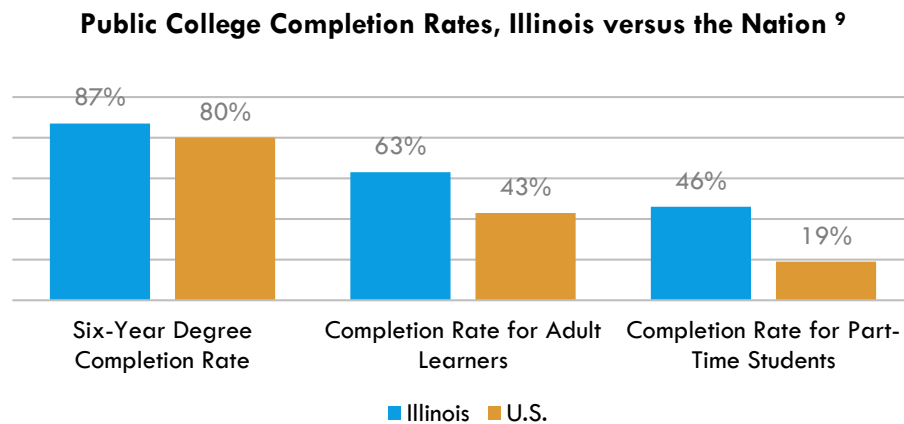
A consistent, positive trend is observed in average Illinois students' ACT scores starting with the graduating class of 2002, the first class to take the ACT universally in Illinois. Students requiring extended time accommodations are excluded from the analysis. At the same time, average national scores remained relatively constant.

**Average ACT Composite Score by Graduating Class, 2002-2015 ⁸
Extended Time Accommodations Excluded**



Illinois students outperform the nation on college completion rates.

Over 87 percent of students who enroll full-time at an Illinois public university complete a degree within six years, compared to 80 percent across the nation. In addition, approximately five percent of students who have not completed a degree in Illinois are currently enrolled and pursuing a degree.

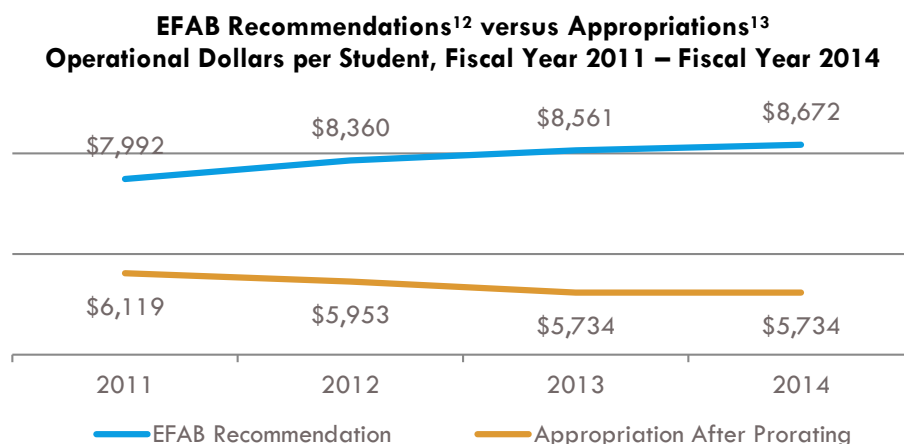


Illinois ranks 1st in the nation for the percentage of adult learners and students who begin college as part-time students that successfully graduate. Illinois is 3rd in the nation for the percentage of full-time community college students who complete their bachelor's degree at a four year college.

Achievement Gap Exacerbated by Illinois Funding System

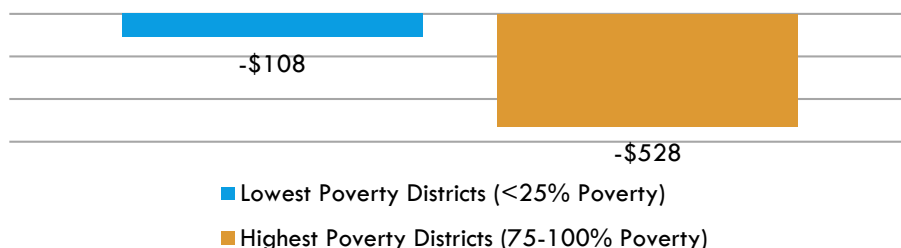
Illinois cannot begin to address its achievement gap without first adequately funding education for all Illinois children.

Current funding in Illinois public schools is inadequate and contributes to inequities in public education. Across the nation, Illinois is ranked 48th in state funding for education, with Illinois funding only 32 percent of public education costs compared to 45 percent across the nation.¹⁰ Every year the Education Funding Advisory Board (EFAB) establishes minimum funding recommendations for the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to “provide the basic costs of educating a child who is not at risk for academic failure.”¹¹ **This minimum recommendation is routinely disregarded when appropriating funds, with the difference between appropriated and recommended funding levels increasing over time, as seen below.**



In 2011, due to the financial condition of the state, the Illinois legislature decided instead of allocating adequate funds to support the General State Aid formula, to only provide school districts with a portion of those funds, disproportionately affecting districts with the least local wealth and the largest percentage of students living in poverty. The analysis below is for FY2014, when appropriations were prorated at 89 percent.¹⁴

**Reductions per Pupil to General State Aid among Low and High Poverty Districts
As a Result of Proration, Fiscal Year 2014 ¹⁵**



Illinois cannot begin to address its achievement gap without first adequately funding education for all Illinois children. The amount of state funding each district receives is important because it has the potential to create an environment of equal opportunity, where every student can have access to basic resources.

Despite inadequate funding, national benchmarking shows a consistent picture of achievement across Illinois, with competitive performance on college and career readiness compared to the nation. Nonetheless, an unacceptable difference in educational outcomes between students based on their zip codes remains, which is further exacerbated by the state's funding system.

Armed with this knowledge, and with a sense of moral imperative, Vision 20/20 aims to address the inequality inherent in our state's education system while enhancing the educational experiences of all students.

FROM VISION TO ACTION

In districts throughout Illinois, there are concerns regarding equity, access, and opportunities for continuous improvement. Specifically, Vision 20/20 has identified four priorities for the State of Illinois in order to have the most immediate and profound impact on public education: highly effective educators, 21st century learning, shared accountability, and equitable & adequate funding. Specific policy proposals for each priority can be found in the following pages.

Vision 20/20 Priorities



- Recruit and Retain High-Impact Educators
- Provide Relevant Professional Development



- Develop the "Whole Child"
- Preserve Instructional Time
- Invest in Early Childhood Education
- Link Students to College and Careers
- Expand Equity in Technology Access



- Expand Educator Role and Responsibility in State Governance
- Implement a Balanced Accountability System
- Restructure Mandates



- Fund Education Based on Local Need
- Stabilize State Funding for Education
- Enhance District Flexibility to Increase Financial Efficiency

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE EDUCATORS

Our Vision for Highly Effective Educators

Research continues to show that teachers and administrators have the largest in-school impact on student achievement.¹⁶ The best thing we as a state can do to improve public education is attract and develop highly effective educators. In particular, every effort must be made to draw minorities to the education profession as 2014 represented a shift in the U.S. student population to a majority-minority ethnic representation.¹⁷

Accountability, professional development, and rigor are all essential to the development of high-quality educational leaders across Illinois and are essential to ensuring there are highly effective teachers in our schools delivering exceptional instruction. Educators should also be encouraged and supported to take advantage of ongoing professional development.

Guiding Principles

We believe:

- High-quality teachers and administrators have the most immediate, positive effect on student outcomes.
- Strong teachers and educational leaders are a key component of a high-quality education for our students and our communities.
- Continuous, high-quality, job-embedded professional development and opportunities for educator collaboration are proactive, research-based components of an effective continuous improvement process.
- More minority teachers and educational leaders are needed to serve Illinois' increasingly diverse student population.
- Educators must hold other educators accountable to rigorous professional standards.

Rationale

Nationally, a majority of Americans have trust and confidence in public school teachers.¹⁸ Yet finding and hiring the best teachers and administrators is becoming more challenging as fewer individuals are entering the education profession. Of those who do choose to become an educator, eight percent of the nation's teachers leave the profession every year.¹⁹

Illinois schools have an increasing need to find minority teachers and administrators. Approximately half of Illinois students are minority students, yet 83 percent of Illinois teachers are white.²⁰ Alternative licensure programs have been proven to recruit a higher percentage of minority candidates, math and science teachers, and candidates with experience outside of teaching and education.²¹ The recruitment of minority candidates is of particular benefit to minority students, who experience greater academic, personal, and social success when taught by teachers who belong to the same ethnic group.²²

What Americans Think
(PDK/Gallup, 2015)

A majority of Americans
have trust and
confidence in public
school teachers.

The field of education continues to evolve as best practices are identified and new policies implemented. Especially in light of recent changes to the education system, professional development remains an integral part of the teaching and learning process. As such, professional development deserves appropriate attention. The ongoing, relevant professional development of educators is a necessary resource to ensure high-quality learning opportunities for our students.²³ One particular form of professional development, mentoring for new teachers, principals, and superintendents, has a substantial impact on turnover reductions.²⁴

Recommended State Policy

Recruit and Retain High-Impact Educators

Recruit Teachers into the Profession. Illinois must learn from successes in other states and nations to ensure all students have access to high-quality teachers through the development of a comprehensive teacher recruitment system that incorporates teaching clubs and scholarship programs targeted at middle and high school students, financial and social support services for students pursuing post-secondary education degrees, and alternative pathways.²⁵

Create Education Licensure Reciprocity Agreements (Enacted as Public Act 99-0058 Education Reciprocity Agreements). In order to recruit and retain highly qualified teacher and administrator candidates, the state should allow and streamline education licensure reciprocity agreements with states across the United States to ensure Illinois districts have access to the best quality candidates regardless of the state in which they received their initial license.

Expand Alternative Teaching Licensure Programs. Similarly, alternative teaching licensure should be expanded so desirable teacher candidates without licensure can participate in professional development programs and, with adequate and high-quality training, be allowed to teach at any school throughout the state with appropriate pedagogy courses, mentoring, and induction. Programs are particularly needed in low candidate pools, such as rural and high-poverty areas, and underserved content areas, including Career/Technical Education. To have the most immediate, positive impact alternative teaching programs should recruit well-educated individuals, incorporate tailored coursework, and provide mentorship.²⁶ Standards for entry into alternative teaching licensure programs must remain rigorous. Sufficient, high-quality professional development prior to teaching and a long-term commitment beyond two years is necessary.

Provide Student Loan Forgiveness. Similar to the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), and in order to ensure a more diverse teaching population, the state should continue to support and appropriate funds to expand student loan forgiveness to all licensed individuals so educators, particularly minority educators, at all districts, not just low-income districts, can benefit. The support and expansion of loan forgiveness for all licensed individuals in underserved content areas (i.e., math, science, and special education) and those willing to work in underserved parts of the state (i.e., high poverty and rural) should also be considered.

Establish Partnerships with Higher Education. ISBE and local districts should continue to partner with higher education institutions to establish consistent admission and program criteria, as well as classroom experience requirements for colleges and universities offering teacher and administrator licensures in Illinois. Each institution should involve an advisory council made up of active superintendents, principals, teachers, and business officials in the design of preparatory programs.

Provide Relevant Professional Development

Fully Fund Mentoring for New Educators. ISBE currently requires mentoring for new teachers, principals, and superintendents. The development of new educators is a high-priority. As such, the state should fully fund mentoring for new educators including immersion experiences with not-for-profit organizations such as YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, and Urban League to fully understand the various facets of community life. A community's racial and socio-economic context should be incorporated, so new educators fully understand the context of students' daily lives.

Allocate Collaboration Time. To create a culture of professional development, inclusive of teachers, staff, administrators, and Board members, districts should have sustained embedded professional development. Time for collaboration provides the opportunity to observe, discuss best practices, and develop effective instructional materials and strategies.

Enhance ROE/ISCs' Ability to Function as Regional Centers for Professional Learning and Innovation. Learning does not stop when an educator earns his or her degree; learning is a life-long process for educators. ISBE and the Regional Offices of Education/Intermediate Service Centers (ROE/ISCs), the Statewide School Management Alliance (IASA, IASB, IASBO, and IPA), teachers unions (IEA and IFT), other related organizations (e.g., ELN), and school districts should collaborate to create resources for professional development that meets the needs of each school. Across all forms of professional development, a focus on content, opportunities for active participation and learning, and alignment with other professional development leads to more successful learning experiences.²⁷

21ST CENTURY LEARNING



Our Vision for 21st Century Learning

Education in Illinois should modernize its approach by delivering 21st century instruction that provides all students access to modern learning environments. Education should allow students to learn and apply knowledge, think creatively, and be well-prepared for a global citizenry. The definition of learning should be expanded to include social and emotional development, creativity, innovation, and higher-level thinking where student inspiration, engagement, and motivation are goals of the education process. Learning is not limited to the classroom or school day.

A 21st century education must address the role of technology in the broad definition of learning. Technology is an important tool that can enhance and augment the teaching and learning processes in our schools by increasing efficiencies, encouraging higher-level thinking, increasing student engagement, aiding in individualized instruction, and enhancing adult collaboration. However, there is currently a technology gap in Illinois schools, with less affluent schools unable to provide their students the benefits of technology in instruction. Partnerships with local businesses, organizations, and colleges can enhance student educational experiences, expand and improve communication, put more resources in the classroom, and expand instruction to better prepare students for college and the workplace.

Guiding Principles

We believe:

- Quality education requires high standards and expectations.
- All students have the right to be educated in quality facilities that are conducive to learning.
- An effective education system ensures that all students have equal access to a quality education.
- Creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, innovation, and social and emotional learning must be embedded into classroom instruction.
- A balanced and coherent assessment system is needed to individualize instruction.
- Public education is responsible for preparing students for college and careers, both known and unknown, as well as for global citizenship.
- Educators must be provided an environment conducive to innovation and the application of emerging technologies and practices.
- Actively engaged partnerships between school districts, non-profits, businesses, institutes of higher education, and health and human service providers lead to healthier, better-educated children.
- A strong home-school connection, as well as community and business engagement, is vital to equal access and a high-quality educational process.
- Districts should be equipped with enterprise level components to provide students a 21st century learning experience allowing access to high speed internet.
- Access to high-quality early childhood education has a significant impact on the longitudinal success of Illinois children.

Rationale

Creativity and innovation are critical to the future of our children, state, and nation's future. Therefore care must be given to nurture the creative and innovative spirit of our students. Recent analysis of results from the *Torrance Test for Creative Thinking* shows that scores for U.S. students have been on the decline for the last few decades.²⁸

Several factors in the home, school, and society are suspected for the decline. However, overemphasis on standardized testing for accountability purposes has caused a narrowing of the curriculum and educator risk-taking has pushed out courses and instructional methods that encourage student creativity and innovation.

When families are involved in their children's education, students have higher academic achievement, enroll in more challenging courses, have higher attendance rates, have better social skills, and are more likely to graduate high school and go on to college.²⁹ Despite positive outcomes, family involvement varies from school to school with low-income students across Illinois less likely to have the benefit of direct family involvement.³⁰

Illinois schools are charged with developing young adults prepared to actively participate in a global society. Not only are social skills and wellness essential for healthy, happy, and productive lives, a focus on the "whole child" has a positive impact on academic achievement. Teachers consider early learners' physical, mental, social, and emotional health as some of the most important prerequisites for academic success.³¹ As students grow, their emotional and social well-being continues to significantly impact learning and academic success.³² Students who feel supported by their parents, teachers, and peers experience increased motivation and engagement in school,³³ resulting in enhanced student learning.³⁴ Moreover, teacher encouragement, social support, and a sense of belonging are particularly instrumental for disadvantaged students.³⁵

High-quality early childhood education is linked to improved social, economic, and behavioral outcomes, particularly for low-income students and other disadvantaged populations.³⁶ A study tracking preschool students through the age of twenty-seven found former preschool students had significantly higher earnings, economic status, educational attainment, and marriage rates, and were less likely to be arrested.³⁷ Nationally, a majority of Americans value early childhood education, and 70 percent of Americans favor using federal money to make sure high-quality preschool programs are available for all children.³⁸

**What Americans Think
(Gallup, 2014)**

70% of Americans favor
using federal money to
make sure high-quality
preschool programs are
available for all children.

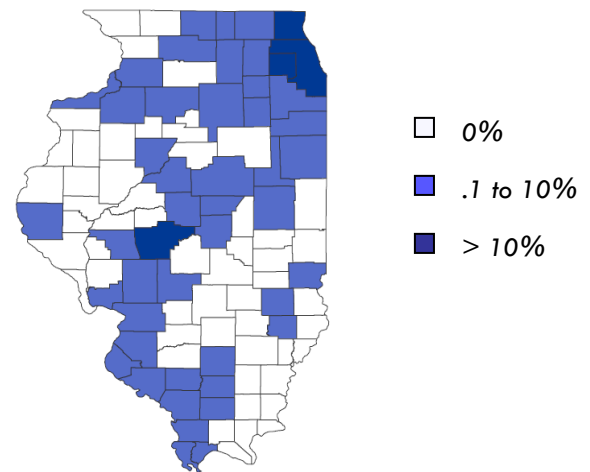
Ongoing, formative assessments allow individual student data and feedback to be incorporated into instruction throughout the school year,³⁹ encouraging a learning-focused environment. With high-quality, continuous professional development, teachers can learn to review and use formative assessment to individualize instruction for each student based on individual strengths, weaknesses, interests, and learning styles. The current, single end-of-year state summative assessment schedule, in contrast, provides information necessary for principal and teacher accountability measures without providing the ongoing assessment data necessary to have the greatest possible impact on student learning.

Research indicates participation in a dual-credit program (taking courses for both high school and college credit) results in improved college attendance rates, college grades, college persistence, and college completion rates.⁴⁰ Opportunities for students to experience college and careers while in high school support classroom learning and prepare students for post-high school success. Currently, the decision to offer programming in conjunction with post-secondary institutions is voluntary.⁴¹ Our goal is to ensure equity and equitable access for all students in Illinois.

While dual-credit and comparable post-secondary programs allow students the opportunity to experience college prior to graduation, internship and apprenticeship programs allow students to explore career fields and gain real world skills and experiences. Young adults with meaningful work experiences are more likely to understand their career options and set attainable, well-informed career goals.⁴² This focus on careers is especially important as nationally 40 percent of students change their major during their first three years of attendance at a four-year institution,⁴³ in many cases increasing the time and money spent on higher education and reducing persistence, particularly among lower income students.

Percent Area with Broadband Speeds Greater than One Gbps⁴⁴

The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) recommends an internet connection of at least one Gbps per 1,000 students and staff in order to fully access all the educational resources available online using best practices in strategic design of networks for education on scalable, affordable, reliable, resilient networks, using vendor neutral resources and tools.⁴⁵ Access to adequate bandwidth provides students with direct access to a world of learning materials and has become a fundamental infrastructure need for instruction and assessment.



Recommended State Policy

Develop the “Whole Child”

Align Social and Emotional Standards. As student outcomes expand from a pure academic focus to the “whole child,” the measures by which we evaluate school effectiveness should also change. Current social and emotional standards should be clarified and aligned with the new Illinois Learning Standards. Appropriate instructional resources should be made available to support districts interested in incorporating social and emotional learning best practices.

Support Student Creativity and Innovation. Every effort should be made to maintain and enhance educational opportunities that encourage student creativity and innovation. Students should be provided the flexibility to follow their own pursuits and passions that will motivate them to be life-long learners.

Promote Individualized Learning. Children learn in different ways and at different speeds. Attention should be paid to each student’s learning through individualized learning plans, student goal setting, and differentiated instruction. Additional time and resources are necessary to support teachers in providing individualized instruction and experiences to support each individual student’s learning.

Engage Parents, Family, and Community. In order for students to achieve at high levels, families must be involved in the learning process. To encourage effective home-school partnerships, districts should welcome all families into the school community, communicate effectively, and support student learning both at home and at school.⁴⁶

Preserve Instructional Time

Develop a Balanced State Assessment System. Educators need the state assessment to produce real, timely data that can effectively inform instruction and support innovative instructional practices. A robust and balanced state testing program that meets the needs of local districts would allow districts to forgo local assessments, decreasing the overall time spent administering standardized assessments during the school year. This, in turn, would decrease costs associated with testing and eliminate the challenge of testing mobile student populations.

A balanced state assessment system should be aligned, consistent, flexible, fully funded by the state, based on realistic and effectively communicated timelines, and offer relevant professional development. The assessment system should also be expanded to include multiple optional iterations every year instead of continuing a system that demands additional assessment supplements that are not directly aligned to the end-of-year state assessment or the new Illinois Learning Standards. By committing to the implementation of a robust state assessment system, teachers can monitor students throughout the school year, identifying students who are struggling or need assistance early in the school year.

Invest in High-quality Early Childhood Education

Offer Incentives for Expanding Early Learning Opportunities and Full Day Kindergarten Education. In order to capitalize on the benefits of early childhood education, the state should continue to increase funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant and create better incentives for districts to invest in early learning. Districts have successfully offered infant, toddler, and preschool programs and partnered effectively with other early childhood providers in their communities. The state should continue efforts to support districts in that work. Additional incentives to support full-day kindergarten, parent education, and support services should also be explored.

Link Students to College and Careers

Promote Partnerships with Business, Industry, and Post-Secondary Institutions. Promoting district and student participation would increase the number of students, particularly low-income and minority students, reaping the long-term benefits of programs offered in conjunction with business, industry, and post-secondary institutions. Greater strides should be made to offer a wide-range of quality dual-credit and technical education programs consistently throughout the state, so all students can benefit. For instance, the state could allow students completing college level coursework to substitute the course for core graduation requirements to promote participation. In addition, high school course progressions and testing should be aligned with community colleges, local industry requirements, and other post-secondary institutions.

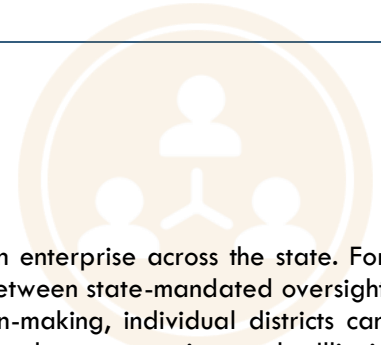
Encourage Career Exploration. To encourage local partnerships with businesses, the state should increase graduation requirement flexibility for students who participate in internships or apprenticeships. To increase outcomes, districts should focus on business-sponsored experiences, which are more likely to provide meaningful learning opportunities, limit options to only those companies with a plan to integrate students in a manner that enhances their education experience, and require the assignment of a mentor at the worksite.⁴⁷

Expand Equity in Technology Access

Provide High Speed Internet Connectivity to Every School and Community. Large investments in technology infrastructure to meet SETDA internet connection recommendations are needed to ensure adequacy and equity. Infrastructure investments should be pursued through funding partnerships with higher education, health and human services, and government entities for both school and community internet access to ensure learning continues beyond the school building and can enhance local economic opportunities.

Incorporate Technology in State Learning Standards. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) should ensure that digital learning skills are embedded into the Illinois Learning Standards.

SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY



Our Vision for Shared Accountability

Effective governance structures are essential to ensuring a high-quality education enterprise across the state. For governance and accountability systems to be effective there must be a balance between state-mandated oversight structures and local governance. By allowing greater flexibility in local decision-making, individual districts can innovate and best impact student performance. Greater current educator input and representation on the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) would provide practitioner perspectives to support, involve, and advocate for local districts and their students, leading to results-driven legislation and policy that benefits the student learning process.

Guiding Principles

We believe:

- Student learning should be the number one priority of the education system.
- Educators should be held to the highest professional standards and be accountable for student learning.
- Accountability for student learning rests in the local school district.
- Educators' experiences and voices are essential to crafting effective education policy.
- Unfunded state mandates and regulations limit school effectiveness.

Rationale

Educators work with students every day, teaching students and managing schools. In addition to hands-on work experience, teachers and administrators have completed extensive coursework both prior to and throughout their careers. Among Illinois teachers, sixty-one percent hold a master's degree,⁴⁸ and a master's degree is required for nearly all administrator positions.⁴⁹ Educators' experience is invaluable to legislators, and they should be consulted in crafting education policy, specifically regarding current strengths and weaknesses of the education system, feasibility, unintended consequences, and implementation planning.

Teacher and administrator accountability is an important tool to assist teachers and administrators in continuously improving their profession. However, in order to achieve desired outcomes, accountability must measure districts against historical performance, focusing on continuous improvement versus the comparison of diverse districts to a single standard or to each other. Multiple measures must also be utilized to provide a comprehensive view of performance and take a deeper look at outcomes.⁵⁰

When educator accountability occurs, there is a reduced need for strict oversight. Currently, the state has a large scope of guidelines established for everything from requiring districts to provide drivers' education to requiring the use of upgraded biodiesel fuel and green cleaning products. Mandates and other burdensome regulations necessitate additional cost and bureaucracy for compliance, which may result in decreased resources for student learning. Improved student outcomes and student experiences in the classroom must remain the priority of Illinois' public education system. Any mandate that does not directly support that mission should be reconsidered.

Recommended State Policy

Expand Educator Role and Responsibility in State Governance

Allow Current Educators Representation on the Illinois State Board of Education. Illinois state policy should be revised to allow current educators to serve on the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Allowing practicing educators to serve on ISBE provides professional expertise that would help guide the implementation of state initiatives and help ensure that oversight and regulatory efforts positively impact student learning.

Implement a Balanced Accountability System

Adopt a Balanced Accountability Model (Enacted as Public Act 99-193 Balanced Accountability Model). The state should adopt a balanced accountability model to focus on continuous improvement, recognize the diversity of struggling schools, measure systems' capacities, and eliminate achievement gaps across the state. A balanced accountability model would allow local flexibility, identification of systems' capacities, promote shared accountability, and be sensitive to local district improvements.

Multiple measures should be used to enhance a dashboard for each district inclusive of student performance, adherence to best practices, and contextual evidence of systems' capacities and continuous improvement at the local district level. The dashboard should provide the data necessary to determine the process by which schools and districts are reviewed in an effort to improve student outcomes, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve instructional quality for college and career/workforce readiness to produce a productive citizenry. The model should include a series of incentives and disincentives at the district-level based on a district's initial results and subsequent performance.

Restructure Mandates

Distinguish Between Essential and Discretionary Regulations. Schools are required to abide by numerous funded and unfunded mandates and regulations. To promote flexibility and local decision-making, as well as address financial and operational hardships, legislative and ISBE regulations should be the subject of renewed discussion to assign mandates into one of two compliance categories:

- Essential (focused primarily on fully funded, federal, student safety, and civil rights related mandates)
- Discretionary (focused primarily on unfunded, non-federal, educational process related mandates)

A task force of broad representation would be assembled to determine the categorization. School districts would be required to conduct board hearings and request input from the public and local bargaining units prior to approving decisions related to discretionary regulations. This process provides transparency and allows local public input and opportunity to respond to any proposed changes in compliance with discretionary regulations. The ISBE/Regional Offices of Education/Intermediate Service Centers Compliance Probe would serve as a tool to review applicable regulations to measure school district accountability and distinguish between essential and discretionary mandates.

Allow Districts to Opt Out of Mandates and Regulations. Legislation should be passed to allow school districts that forego state funding or demonstrate high performance to operate with greater flexibility from state-level regulations, consistent with existing policies and the original intent of charter schools. Legislation should be passed to allow districts that meet the criteria described above to submit a flexibility request. If approved, the district would be granted a four-year opt out from identified mandates consistent with the statutory freedoms afforded to Illinois charter schools. By allowing districts operating without state funds, or exceeding desired student outcomes, to opt out of process-specific mandates, the state can focus on supporting and improving the districts that need assistance the most while reducing state education costs.

EQUITABLE & ADEQUATE FUNDING



Our Vision for Equitable & Adequate Funding

Central to the mission of education in our democracy is providing equal educational access and opportunities to all students. To accomplish that end, it is time to update the state's funding system, which cyclically fails to fund our poorest schools. It is our state's moral duty to do all we can to ensure equitable and adequate funding is distributed for every student through increased state fiscal stability and greater flexibility in funding decisions based on local need. It is also to our state's economic advantage for its educational systems to develop a highly educated citizenry and a prepared workforce for the future.

Guiding Principles

We believe:

- The State has the primary responsibility of financing an efficient system of high-quality public educational institutions and services.
- The distribution of state education funds should be proportional to the percentage of high-need students in each district.
- The state is responsible for adequacy in education funding, ensuring every student across the state a quality educational experience in an instructional setting conducive to learning.
- The "Five Funding Principles" of Adequacy, Simplicity, Transparency, Equity, and Outcomes-Focused (ISBE) are relevant and should be primary considerations in the development of a new funding plan.
- Investing in education now is fundamental to job creation and improving the general state economy, reduces the risk of incarceration, and lowers the potential costs of welfare, therefore making it beneficial to all stakeholders including small business, large business, and all taxpayers.
- Providing autonomy and flexibility to local districts allows them to match resources most effectively with local needs.

Definitions

Terms referenced in school funding discussions are often undefined, leading to confusion and varied understanding of intended meaning. To that end, we define the following:

Adequacy: Refers to the level of funding sufficient for every child in a school district to have access to a high-quality education that provides meaningful opportunities to learn.

Equity: The responsibility of the state to ensure that every school district will receive sufficient funding from a combination of local, state, and federal sources to provide a program of instruction where every child has the access and support to achieve a high-quality education.

Evidence-Based Funding Model: Identifies how much money per pupil is needed in each district to educate all students according to research and best practices. To determine this per pupil need, the model:

- Draws from research and evidence-based best practices to identify those educational delivery strategies and their resource needs that are linked to student learning gains
- Attempts to "back" each resource recommendation with references to research and/or best practices
- Draws from several comprehensive school reform models, which are based on research-based practices
- Draws from a synthesis of the best professional judgment panels

Rationale

As an industry, education is one of the largest employers in the state. School leaders run a business, in many cases one of the largest businesses in their communities. At their core, school leaders are business managers as well as educators. School districts are not-for-profit businesses, but still strive for the same goals of all businesses: better outcomes through greater efficiency. Districts need the autonomy and reliable financing to operate effectively according to sound business practices.

What Americans Think (PDK/Gallup, 2015)

Americans consider lack of financial support as the biggest problem facing public schools in their community.

Nationally, Americans consider lack of financial support as the biggest problem facing public schools in their community.⁵¹ Investments in public education not only contribute directly to local economies, but also result in an average ten percent return on investment in income across a student's life.⁵² The addition of non-financial benefits to society for each dollar spent on education result in an even greater return on investment. As states across the nation struggle to increase the competitiveness of their economies, research indicates expanding access to quality education is the single best thing a state can do to improve their economy, with increases in educational attainment linked to increased worker productivity and a reduction in reliance on state and federal aid.⁵³

One funding model that addresses these concerns is the Evidence-Based Model developed as part of the Illinois School Finance Adequacy Study in 2010,* which provides a logical, research-based approach to account for adequacy in educational funding. The evidence-based model is built to align funding with research-proven techniques for improving student achievement. As a result, the model accounts for diversity in student populations instead of proposing funding guidelines that are consistent across student populations.⁵⁴

Illinois' current financial condition creates a challenge to ensuring adequacy of funding for all Illinois students. Illinois struggles with a structural deficit, meaning costs for basic human services, adjusting only for inflation and population growth, increase at a faster rate than revenues. Therefore, systemic modifications are essential for the sustainability of our state and education system. Inadequacies of the current Illinois funding model do not provide the children of Illinois the opportunities necessary to compete in an ever-changing global economy.

Recommended State Policy

Fund Education Based on Local Need

Adopt an Evidence-Based Funding Model. An evidence-based funding model, such as the model developed as part of the Illinois School Finance Adequacy Study, takes into account the cost associated with delivering quality, research-based programming, including allotments for teacher salaries and small class sizes. An evidence-based model should be used to assign the appropriate foundation level for each district individually, taking into account geographic conditions and student needs. Fully funding districts based on the model would ensure adequate funding for districts to locally determine and deliver appropriate and effective educational experiences to every student. For greatest efficiency, districts should be allowed flexibility to allocate state funds throughout their local district allowing them to better align resources to student needs. Resource accountability and transparency are also achievable with this model, especially for districts that have high student needs and do not produce adequate student outcomes or maintain financial stability.

* The Illinois School Finance Adequacy Study Evidenced-Based Model incorporates the following research-based elements in their calculations: specialist teachers (20 percent of number of core teachers for elementary and middle, 33 percent for high school), instructional facilitators (1 per 200 students), summer school and extended day class size (1.5:1 for half the number of low income students), regular school day class size (1.5:1 for K-3, 25:1 for 4-12, and 7:1 for alternative and small schools), tutors (minimum of 1 or 1 for every 100 low income students), English Language Learner (ELL) teachers (1 per 100 ELL students), special education teachers (1 per 150 students), special education aides (0.5 per 150 students), one principal, one assistant principal, one secretary, clerical staff (1 per elementary and middle, 3 per high school), non-instructional aides (2 per elementary and middle, 3 per high school), guidance counselors (1 per 250 students in middle and high school), pupil support staff (1 per 100 low income students), one library and media tech (1 per 600 students above 1,000). In addition, money is set aside for supplies, technology, student activities, gifted and talented education, professional development, assessments, and central office costs on a per student basis.

Integrate a “Hold Harmless” Component to New Legislation. As the state explores evidenced-based funding models, it is essential that the solution does not create “winners” and “losers” and instead should ensure no school district will get less state funding than they already receive. This concept of “hold harmless” should be a cornerstone of any legislation passed in the General Assembly and sent to the Governor.

Determine a Reasonable “Local Share.” The establishment of a local contribution expectation for each type of district is a critical component of a funding formula. This should be based on a calculation of local wealth using either a tax rate or a comparative ratio of adequacy to EAV. If a tax rate is used, it should represent a median or average operating tax rate of all districts in Illinois and ensure the equalization of rates between unit, high school, and elementary district type. If an adequacy ratio is used, the percentage of local contribution would be determined based on a comparison of a district’s ratio to a statewide ratio. The median statewide ratio would represent the type of scenario where the combination of state and local shares would result in a state contribution of 51 percent and a local contribution of 49 percent, thereby achieving the goal in the Illinois Constitution that states that the state has the primary responsibility of financing an efficient system of high-quality public educational institutions and services. Either method would result in greater student and taxpayer equity, which should be the goal of any new education financing legislation.

Develop Scalable Phase-In Methodology. Scaling new resources into school districts over the next five to seven years should have the effect of increasing education funding by several billion dollars and eliminating the gap between adequacy and current spending. To ensure this, districts that are already at adequacy with a combination of local and hold harmless state funds would receive no new state revenue until all other districts are at adequacy. Districts the farthest away from adequacy would receive proportionally more new revenue.

Stabilize State Funding for Education

Enhance State Spending. Enhanced state funding should be identified and secured to meet the needs of students and the continually expanding services that public schools are counted on to deliver. Educational leaders understand school finances can only be healthy with state assistance and that providing adequate school funding for children is a primary responsibility of state government. At the same time, districts should continue to pursue efficiencies, including but not limited to shared service agreements and other cooperative arrangements.

Restructure State Revenues to Match the 21st Century Economy. Revisions to the current state revenue structure are necessary to match our 21st century economy, better serve all Illinois taxpayers, and ensure sufficient funding for education. Legislation should be passed to both eliminate the Illinois state deficit and provide necessary funds for essential services, including education.

Enhance District Flexibility to Increase Financial Efficiency

Create a Two-Year Funding Cycle with Year Ahead Budgeting. In the spirit of shared interest and to support long-range planning, Illinois school districts support a two-year budget cycle. Public schools desire the ability to function according to sound business practices. Education has been forced by the state budgeting process to make expenditure decisions before state funding decisions are final. State budgeting has to support local decision-making, especially in regards to personnel decisions, which account for 80 percent of district budgets.

The origin of the budget should begin with an adequate funding level. Creating a two-year funding cycle increases fund stability from year-to-year while reducing state bureaucracy. Once solvency and appropriate budgeting are achieved, the state should provide “year ahead budgeting,” so districts can plan two years into the future when budgeting and allocating funds for programs and personnel.

MOVING FORWARD

Vision 20/20 is a process that will lead to meaningful and lasting change by serving as a blueprint for public education policy and is intended to be a decision-making framework to guide ongoing advocacy and align public educators around a common vision for the future. In collaboration with lawmakers and other stakeholders, the policies outlined in this document can be enacted as part of a continuous improvement process to improve the education experiences and outcomes of all Illinois students for the benefit of the entire state of Illinois.

Vision 20/20 is a long-term plan that challenges the State Legislature and Governor, along with all stakeholders, to take action to fulfill the promise of public education in Illinois by the year 2020.

For more information about the Vision 20/20 Initiative please visit <http://www.illinoisvision2020.org>

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