



**VISION** 20/20  
Fulfilling the Promise of Public Education

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# 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. 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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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Letter from the Vision 20/20 Partners</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Table of Contents</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Our Vision</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Vision 20/20 Process</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>The State of Illinois Education</b>
5	Illinois Public Education Outperforms National Averages
5	Large Inequities in Education Exist
6	Illinois Performs Well on College and Career Indicators
7	Achievement Gap Exacerbated by Illinois' Funding System
<b>9</b>	<b>From Vision to Action</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Highly Effective Educators</b>
11	Recruit and Retain High-Impact Educators
11	Provide Relevant Professional Development
<b>12</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning</b>
14	Develop the "Whole Child"
14	Preserve Instructional Time
15	Invest in Early Childhood Education
15	Link Students to College and Careers
15	Expand Equity in Technology Access
<b>16</b>	<b>Shared Accountability</b>
17	Expand Educator Role and Responsibility in State Governance
17	Implement a Differentiated Accountability System
17	Restructure Mandates
<b>18</b>	<b>Equitable and Adequate Funding</b>
19	Fund Education Based on Local Need
20	Stabilize State Funding for Education
20	Enhance District Flexibility to Increase Financial Efficiency
<b>20</b>	<b>Moving Forward</b>

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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. 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, 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, shared accountability, and equitable and 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.



## 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 and 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 improving equity in the funding model, 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.

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# 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.<sup>1</sup>

## **Vision 20/20 Committee Members**

Dr. Dan Bertrand, Marengo Comm. HS #154  
Dr. Kathryn Birkett, Indian Prairie #204  
Carolyne 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. Triesenberg, 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

# THE STATE OF ILLINOIS EDUCATION

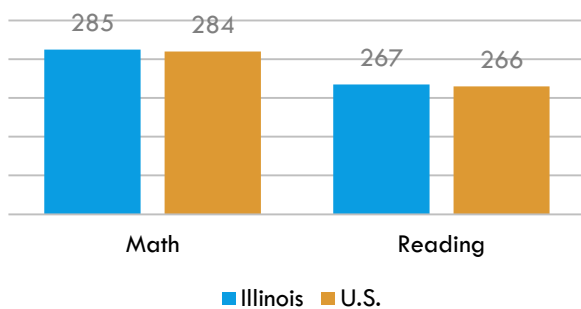
Despite being ranked nearly last nationally in state education funding, rising poverty affecting one in four students, and substantial increases in unfunded mandates Illinois students continue to perform well.

## Illinois Public Education Outperforms National Averages

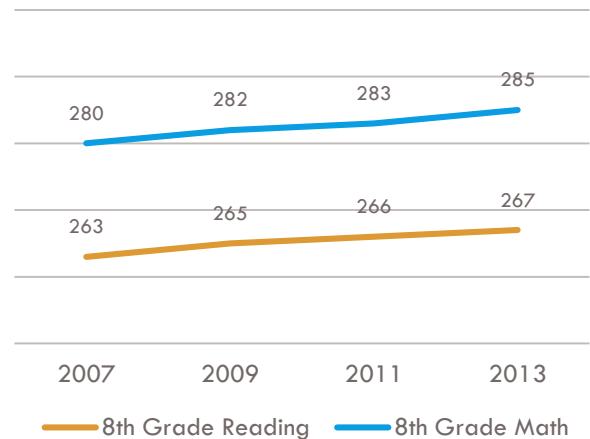
Every two years the federal government administers a national standardized assessment, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), for the purpose of comparing state performance. Illinois students exceed the national average in both reading and mathematics according to the most recent NAEP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

In addition, the performance of Illinois students has improved steadily on NAEP since 2007.

**Average Eighth Grade NAEP Scale Score, 2013<sup>2</sup>**



**Average Illinois NAEP Scale Score, 2007-2013<sup>3</sup>**



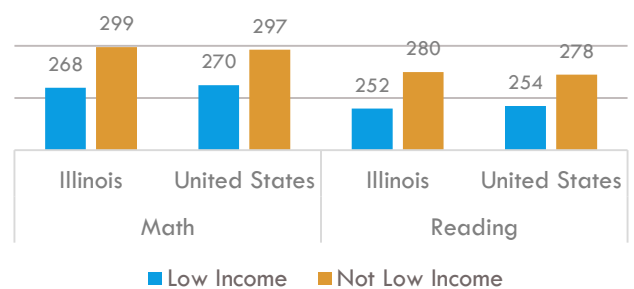
## Large Inequities in Education Exist

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

Both the United States and Illinois face the challenge of closing the achievement gap among students from different backgrounds, including students with disabilities, students from low-income backgrounds, and English Language Learner (ELL) students. The proportion of Illinois students in each of these populations, as well as their achievement on NAEP, is comparable to the 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, 2013<sup>4</sup>**



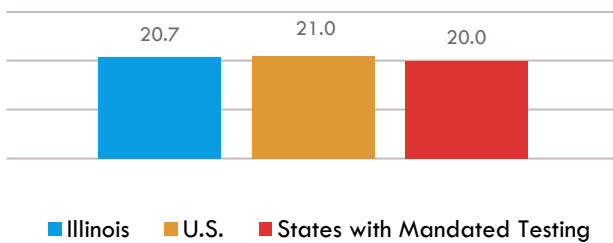
## Illinois Performs Well on College and Career Indicators

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

Beyond test scores, the 2012 Illinois graduation rate of 82 percent remains above the national average.<sup>5</sup> Illinois is ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation for its percentage of persons 25 years old and older with a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>6</sup> Composite scores for Illinois students on the ACT college admissions test are comparable to national composite scores.

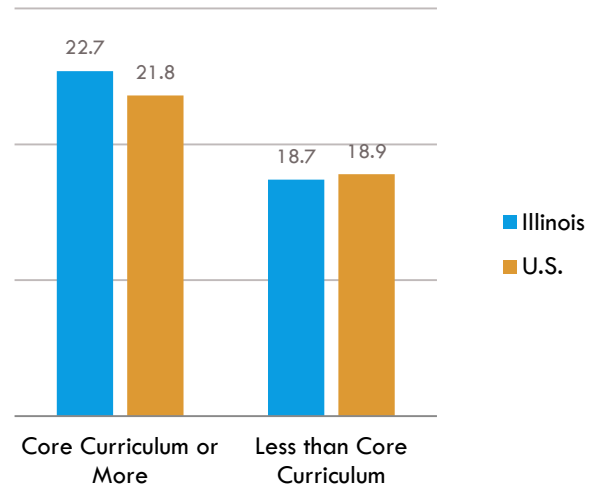
ACT identifies a student as prepared to take the ACT if the student took four years of English and three years each of mathematics, social studies, and natural science, which they define as the core curriculum. Students in Illinois receiving at least a core curriculum outperform their counterparts nationwide.<sup>8</sup>

**Average ACT Composite Scores by Category, Graduating Class 2014<sup>7</sup>**



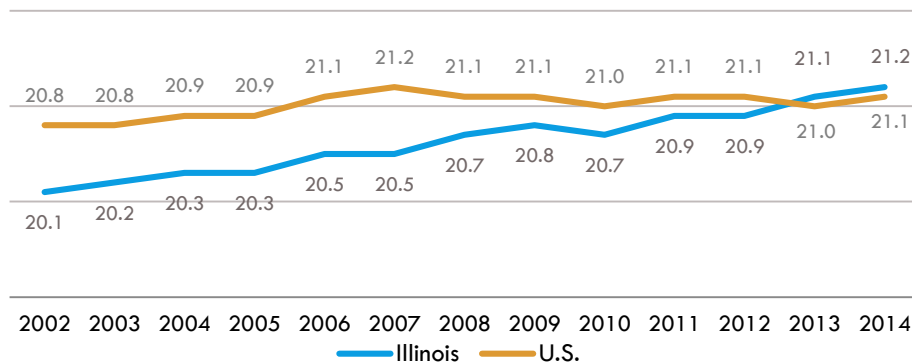
Across the United States, only 57 percent of eleventh grade students took the ACT, while in Illinois 100 percent of public school students took the test. Illinois students rank 2<sup>nd</sup> in achievement among the states that tested 100 percent of their public school student population (Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, and Wyoming).<sup>10</sup>

**Average Composite ACT Score by Preparation Level, Graduating Class 2014<sup>9</sup>**



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.<sup>11</sup> Students requiring extended time accommodations are excluded from the analysis. At the same time, average national scores have remained relatively constant.

**Average ACT Composite Score by Graduating Class, 2002-2014<sup>12</sup>  
Extended Time Accommodations Excluded**

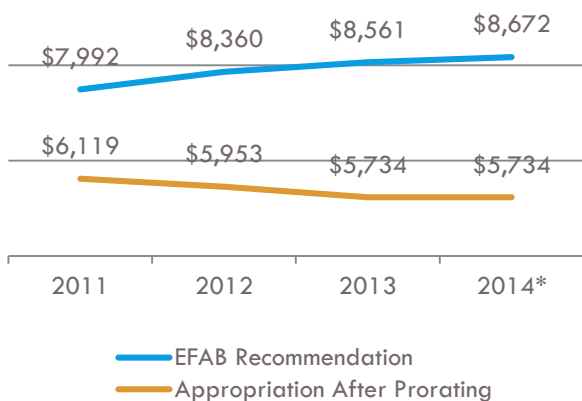


## Achievement Gap Exacerbated by Illinois' Funding System

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

Current funding in Illinois public schools is inadequate and contributes to inequities in public education. Across the nation, Illinois is ranked 50<sup>th</sup> in state funding for education, with Illinois funding only 28 percent of public education costs compared to 43 percent across the nation.<sup>13</sup> 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.”<sup>14</sup> **This minimum recommendation is routinely disregarded when appropriating funds, with the difference between appropriated and recommended funding levels increasing over time, as seen below.**

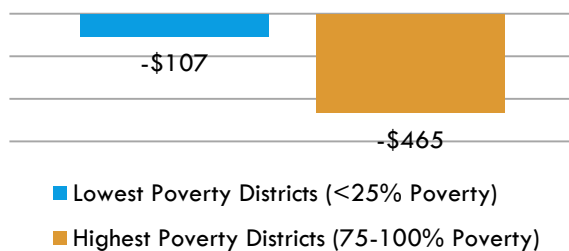
**EFAB Recommendations<sup>15</sup> versus Appropriations<sup>16</sup>  
Operational Dollars per Student  
Fiscal Year 2011 – Fiscal Year 2014**



In early 2011, due to Illinois' current financial condition, the 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 FY2012, where 95 percent proration was observed; the discrepancy has only increased as General State Aid was prorated at 89 percent in FY2013 and FY2014.<sup>17</sup>

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

**Reductions per Pupil to General State Aid among  
Low and High Poverty Districts  
As a Result of Proration, Fiscal Year 2012<sup>18</sup>**



District characteristics are strongly correlated to student achievement. For instance, income status accounts for 66 percent of the variance in the percentage of students meeting Illinois standards in reading and math at the district-level.<sup>19</sup> 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. States to examine include Minnesota, North Carolina, Michigan, California, and Ohio.

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.<sup>20</sup>

\* The appropriation after prorating was not officially calculated for 2014.



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Despite inadequate funding, national benchmarking shows a consistent picture of competitive 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.**

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# 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, 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, shared accountability, and equitable and adequate funding. Specific policy proposals for each priority can be found in the following pages.

## Vision 20/20 Priorities

### Highly Effective Educators

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

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning

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

### Shared Accountability

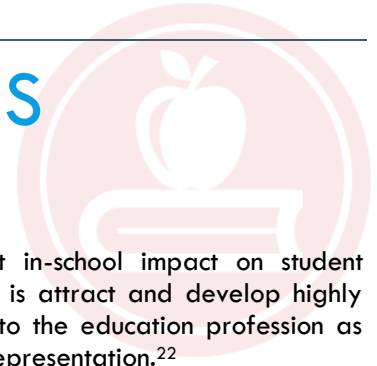
- Expand Educator Role and Responsibility in State Governance
- Implement a Differentiated Accountability System
- Restructure Mandates

### Equitable and Adequate Funding

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

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# 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.<sup>21</sup> 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 represents a shift in the U.S. student population to a majority-minority ethnic representation.<sup>22</sup>

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. Current educators should take a more active role in preparing future leaders through partnerships with higher education. 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 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, seventy-two percent of Americans have trust and confidence in public school teachers.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> Illinois makes the task of locating the best talent ever more difficult as the current Illinois educator licensure system restricts the ability of highly qualified teaching candidates from other states to be selected for Illinois schools. The emergence of greater consistency of educational standards and experiences across states paves the way for expanding reciprocity agreements.

**What Americans Think**  
(PDK/Gallup, 2013)

72% of Americans have trust and confidence in public school teachers.

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.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup>

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.<sup>28</sup> One particular form of professional development, mentoring for new teachers, principals, and superintendents, has a substantial impact on turnover reductions.<sup>29</sup>

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## Recommended State Policy

### Recruit and Retain High-Impact Educators

**Create Education Licensure 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 induction and mentoring. To have the most immediate, positive impact alternative teaching programs should recruit well-educated individuals, incorporate tailored coursework, and provide mentorship.<sup>30</sup> Sufficient, high quality professional development prior to teaching and a long-term commitment beyond two years is necessary.

**Provide Teacher 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 teacher student loan forgiveness so minority teachers at all districts, not just low-income districts, can benefit. The support and expansion of loan forgiveness for teachers in underserved content areas (i.e., math, science, and special education) and those willing to teach 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 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.

**Expand Educator Collaboration Opportunities.** To create a culture of professional development, inclusive of teachers, staff, administrators, and Board members, sufficient time for collaboration must be allocated during each educator's workday. Time for collaboration provides the time 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), and teachers unions (IEA and IFT) should collaborate to create consistent resources for professional development, starting with identifying what professional development is necessary. 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.<sup>31</sup>

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# 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY LEARNING



## Our Vision for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning

Education in Illinois should modernize its approach by delivering 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century education must address the role of technology in the broad definition of learning. Technology is not the total solution, but technology as a tool can enhance and augment the teaching and learning processes in our schools by increasing efficiencies, encouraging higher-level thinking, increasing student engagement, and aiding in individualized instruction. 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, 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.
- The effectiveness of an education system is measured by all students' equal access to a quality education.
- Creativity, critical thinking, innovation, and social and emotional intelligence must be infused in classroom instruction.
- A balanced assessment system is needed to inform instruction.
- Public education is responsible for preparing students for college and careers, as well as for global citizenship.
- Educators must be provided an environment conducive to innovation and cutting-edge education.
- Partnerships between school districts, non-profits, businesses, community colleges, and health and human service providers lead to healthier, better-educated children.
- Parent, family, community, and business engagement are vital to the education process.
- High-speed internet access is a fundamental infrastructure component in providing students with a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning experience.

## Rationale

Illinois schools are charged with developing young adults who are prepared to actively participate in society. Not only are social skills and wellness essential for healthy, happy, productive lives, a focus on the “whole child” has a positive impact on academic achievement. Teachers consider kindergarten students' physical, mental, social, and emotional health as some of the most important prerequisites for academic success.<sup>32</sup>

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As students grow, their emotional and social well-being continues to significantly impact learning and academic success.<sup>33</sup> Students who feel supported by their parents, teachers, and peers experience increased motivation and engagement in school,<sup>34</sup> resulting in enhanced student learning.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, teacher encouragement, social support, and a sense of belonging are particularly instrumental for disadvantaged students.<sup>36</sup>

Creativity and innovation are critical for our way of life. Care must be given to nurture the creative and innovative spirit of our students. Recent analysis of results from the *Torrence Test for Creative Thinking* show that scores for U.S. students have been on the decline for the last few decades.<sup>37</sup> 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 curriculum and educator risk-taking that 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.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup>

The current, single end-of-year state assessment schedule 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. Ongoing, formative assessments allow individual student data and feedback to be incorporated into instruction throughout the school year,<sup>40</sup> encouraging a learning-focused environment. With proper professional development, teachers can learn to review and use ongoing, formative assessments to personalize instruction for each student based on their individual strengths, weaknesses, interests, and learning style.

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

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

One of the primary purposes of the public education system is to prepare students to be productive, successful members of a global society. High quality early childhood education is linked to improved social, economic, and behavioral outcomes, particularly for low-income students and other disadvantaged populations.<sup>41</sup> 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 as well as being less likely to be arrested.<sup>42</sup> Nationally, a majority of Americans value early childhood education, to the point where 70 percent of Americans favor using federal money to make sure high quality preschool programs are available for all children.<sup>43</sup>

Opportunities for students to experience college and careers while in high school support classroom learning and prepare students for post-high school success. Research indicates participation in a dual-credit program (taking courses at a local college for both high school and college credit) results in improved college attendance rates, college grades, college persistence, and college completion rates.<sup>44</sup> The decision to offer programming in conjunction with post-secondary institutions is currently voluntary, with students' ability to participate based on the district they attend. Minority and low-income students are less likely to attend a district that provides the opportunity to participate in these programs.<sup>45</sup>

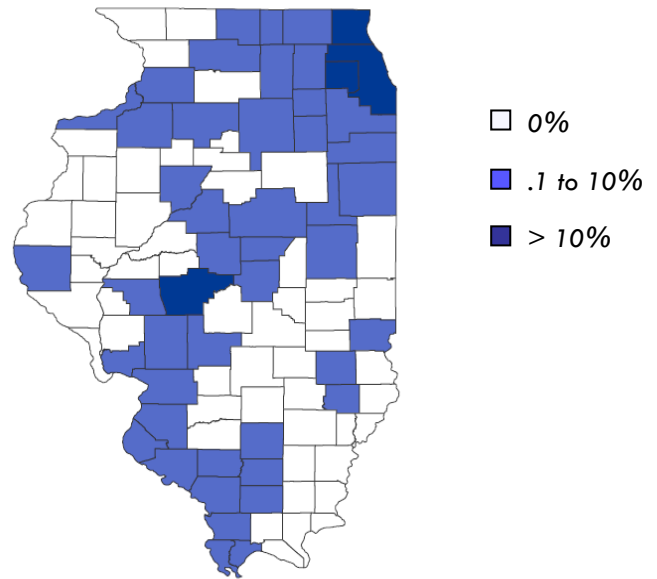
While dual-credit and comparable post-secondary programs allow students the opportunity to experience college prior to graduation, internship and apprenticeship programs allow students to explore career fields and gain real world skills and experiences. Young adults with meaningful work experiences are more likely to understand their career options and set attainable, well-informed career goals.<sup>46</sup> 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,<sup>47</sup> in many cases increasing the time and money spent on higher education and reducing persistence, particularly among lower income students.

Funding for many college- and career-related programs already exists. In 1996, Illinois made it possible for the participating students' local districts to receive funds based on average daily attendance for all courses taken at participating colleges. Therefore, districts can still receive full-time equivalent state aid for each participating student.

## Percent Area with Broadband Speeds Greater than One Gbps<sup>48</sup>

In addition, Accelerated College Enrollment (ACE) grants were developed to pay for some or all of the costs associated with dual-credit programs.<sup>49</sup> Thus, many dual-credit, technical education, internship, and apprenticeship programs can be offered without reducing district funds or placing additional strain on state finances.

Broadband has become a fundamental infrastructure need for instruction and assessment and yet only 26 percent of Illinois districts have adequate infrastructure to administer the state test (PARCC) online. Access to adequate bandwidth provides students with direct access to a world of learning materials. 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 education resources available online.<sup>50</sup>



## 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 family-school partnerships, districts should welcome all families into the school community, communicate effectively, and support student learning both at home and at school.<sup>51</sup>

### Preserve Instructional Time

**Develop a Balanced State Assessment System.** Educators need the state assessment to produce real 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.

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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 track students throughout the school year, identifying students who are struggling or need assistance early in the school year.

### Invest in Early Childhood Education

**Offer Incentives for Expanding Preschool 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 preschool programs and partnered effectively with other early childhood providers in their communities, and 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 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 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 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.<sup>52</sup>

### Expand Equity in Technology Access

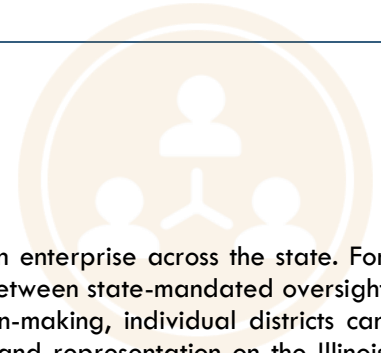
**Provide High Speed Internet Connectivity to Every School and Community.** Large investments in technology infrastructure to meet SETDA internet connection recommendations are needed to ensure adequacy and equity. Infrastructure investments should be pursued through funding partnerships with higher 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 consolidate the state technology standards in a meaningful manner with the new Illinois Learning Standards. At the same time, districts should align instructional plans, professional development plans, technology plans, and school improvement plans with the revised state learning standards in a way that satisfies both compliance requirements and enhances grant opportunities.



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# 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) can 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

A majority of Americans believe local governing authorities, versus the state or federal government, should have the largest influence on what public schools teach.<sup>53</sup> 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-two percent hold a master's degree,<sup>54</sup> and a master's degree is required for nearly all administrator positions.<sup>55</sup> 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.

### What Americans Think (PDK/Gallup, 2014)

A majority of Americans believe local governing authorities, versus the state or federal government, should have the largest influence on what public schools teach.

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.<sup>56</sup>

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.

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## 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 Differentiated Accountability System

**Adopt a Differentiated Accountability Model.** The state should adopt a differentiated accountability model to focus on continuous improvement, recognize the diversity of struggling schools, and eliminate achievement gaps across the state. A differentiated accountability model would allow local flexibility, promote shared accountability, and be sensitive to local district improvements.

Multiple measures should be used to develop a dashboard for each district inclusive of student performance, adherence to best practices, and contextual evidence of 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. 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.

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# EQUITABLE AND ADEQUATE FUNDING



## Our Vision for Equitable and 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 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 distribution of state education funds should be proportional to the percentage of high-need students in each district.
- The state is responsible for equity and 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, 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.

**Equity:** Assumes that every school district will receive adequate 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. Local support is based on a minimum expectation of taxpayer effort and state support compensates for the difference between the cost of an adequate program and the amount of local support.

**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

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## 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, 2014)

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.<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup> 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.<sup>59</sup>

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 equity 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.<sup>60</sup>

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.

## 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.

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\* 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 (15:1 for half the number of low income students), regular school day class size (15:1 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.

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## 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 and equitable 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 21<sup>st</sup> Century Economy.** Revisions to the current state revenue structure are necessary to match our 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

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# 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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- <sup>56</sup> Darling-Hammond, L., Wilhoit, G. & Pittenger, L. (2014). Accountability for college and career readiness: Developing a new paradigm. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 22(86), 1-38.
- <sup>57</sup> See note 53 above.
- <sup>58</sup> Psacharopoulos, G. & Patrinos, H. A. (2002). *Returns to investment in education: a further update*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, Education Sector Unit.
- <sup>59</sup> Berger, N. & Fisher, P. (2013). *A well-educated workforce is key to state prosperity*. Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute.
- <sup>60</sup> Mangan, M. T. & Purinton, T. (2010). *Evidence-based school finance adequacy in Illinois: A subcommittee report for the education funding advisory board advisory board committee*. Education Funding Advisory Board (EFAB). Retrieved from [http://www.isbe.net/EFAB/pdf/Appendix\\_IV\\_fy11.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/EFAB/pdf/Appendix_IV_fy11.pdf)