TO: Illinois State Board of Education

FROM: Robert E. Schiller, Superintendent
Lynne Haeffele Curry, Director

Agenda Topic: Action Item: State Accountability System

Materials: Board Accountability Guidelines
Summary of 2000 Designation Task Force Recommendations
Federal Summary of Required Elements for State Accountability Systems

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Purpose of Agenda Item

- To inform the Board of the federal requirements for state accountability systems and the timetable for alignment.
- To provide the Board with background information regarding a comprehensive educational accountability system for the state.

Expected Outcome(s) of Agenda Item

The Board will be prepared to take action in the coming months regarding components of the state educational accountability system.

Background Information

Accountability
Illinois has implemented various versions of school accountability over many years. Schools have long been accredited on the basis of their compliance with School Code requirements. Beginning with the comprehensive state school reform legislation of 1985, various components of an educational accountability system have been constructed over time.
Basic System Components
The parts of a basic accountability system are described below:

- **Learning Standards** (Board adoption July 1997)
- **Tests that measure student achievement** (Board authorized in 1997)
- **Support structures for schools, including training and materials** (Board budgets have included these supports for the past 6 years)
- **Accountability measures** that provide incentives and pressure for reform (legislative action in 1992 and revised in 1994 created Warning List, Watch List, rewards and sanctions)

In 1998, the Board adopted **educational accountability guidelines** (See Attachment A).

In 2000, the Board authorized the formation of a **School Designation Task Force** to study school performance indicators and recommend ways of reporting school performance and progress. The Board adopted the Task Force recommendations in October 2000. A summary of those recommendations appears in Attachment B. The report predated the new federal requirements, so some of the recommendations are now outdated. However, other components of the report still represent important policy direction regarding comprehensive accountability. **Some highlights are described below**:

- The Task Force used **“design parameters”** for a comprehensive accountability system. These included:
  - Using state test scores as the primary indicator
  - Including progress over time
  - Using additional indicators
  - Using disaggregated data
  - Including both school and district information
  - Providing for fair comparisons
  - Communicating school performance clearly and fairly
  - Providing for rewards and interventions
  - Minimizing unintended consequences
  - Maximizing continuous improvement
  - Supporting schools and districts with adequate resources

- The Task Force provided a sample **“school profile”** to display in a simple, graphic format a school’s achievement and accomplishments as well as areas needing improvement.

- The Task Force recommended **annual testing and a system of individual student records**, in order to be able to show **student and school progress over time**.

- The Task Force incorporated **additional indicators** into its school profile that represent important components of a quality education. These included **“special endorsements”** for programs that met state criteria for excellence, such as early childhood, fine arts, health/physical development or for improving attendance rates, dropout rates, truancy, graduation, etc.
Federal law now requires that states align their educational accountability systems with federal accountability components. All states must submit final applications for federal approval by May 2003. The basic criteria for federal compliance are found in Attachment C.

States follow several steps to apply for federal approval:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 02-Jan.03</td>
<td>Compare current state laws, regulations and processes with the new federal requirements. Using a checklist provided by USDOE, determine which accountability components are complete, in proposed policy form, or still being formulated. Include timelines for policy adoption.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 31 ‘03</td>
<td>Submit a draft application to USDOE.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 03—Mar ’03</td>
<td>Participate in a peer review process with other states.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar. ‘03 – Apr. ‘03</td>
<td>Revise the draft as appropriate and submit to USDOE for a preliminary evaluation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 1 ’03</td>
<td>Submit final application.</td>
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**Analysis and Implications for Policy, Budget, Legislative Action and Communications**

**Policy Implications**
The Superintendent is committed to using this opportunity to improve educational accountability to create a system that is comprehensive, useful and fair. At the same time, the system will meet the basic requirements of federal law.

He will provide the Assessment and Accountability Task Force Task Force with the previous (2000) school designation report as well as newer state models, in order to build on previous work and to take advantage of recent innovations across the country.

The Superintendent will bring forward these recommendations in February, March and April.

**Budget Implications**
The FY04 proposed ISBE budget adopted by the Board on January 7, 2003, reflects the necessary costs of implementing the first year of anticipated accountability requirements. These fall particularly in the area of standards, assessment and system of support programs.

**Legislative Action**
Bringing state and federal requirements into alignment will require specific School Code modifications. The Governmental Relations Division is preparing draft language to address these changes as they are approved.
Communication
Accountability is the most high-stakes component of state and federal education law. Changes will require clear and specific information for school boards, school district staff, parents and the public.

Superintendent’s Recommendation
The Board should renew its endorsement of a multiple-indicator comprehensive accountability system, and direct the Superintendent and staff to bring forward recommendations in February, March and April that meet Board policy directives, best practice parameters and also comply with federal accountability requirements.

Next Steps
- The Superintendent will continue meetings with the Assessment and Accountability Task Force to address accountability issues and elicit recommendations.
- The Superintendent will bring his recommendations for aligning the components of the accountability system to the Board in February, March and April of 2003.
- The Superintendent and staff will meet with USDOE Under Secretary of Education Hickok in January to discuss the Illinois draft plan as it evolves.