Oct. 17, 2013  

Natasha Loder  
Midwest Correspondent – Chicago  
The Economist  

Dear Ms. Loder:  

This letter is in response to your request for information under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act. Your request was received on Oct. 9, 2013.  

You have requested “copies of the reports presented by the University of Chicago to the Illinois State Board of Education covering the survey of schools in the state.”  

We believe you are seeking the 5Essentials reports that take raw data from the survey administration and through a formula, produce a norm-referenced report that provides schools with a ranking. This year was the initial year for this statewide survey and at this point in time, final reports based on the raw data have not yet been produced. We are happy to release the final reports to you once they are produced.  

As part of the survey process, preliminary 5Essentials reports were produced, initially using data from a similar survey of the Chicago Public Schools in 2011 as a baseline. However, concerns were raised with the process of using data from a single district survey and trying to extrapolate that data to a universal, statewide survey.  

Because the initial reports were preliminary, we changed the policy for the benchmarking normative process and acted to instead use a more representative dataset. The ISBE worked with their consultants to conduct additional analyses and made adjustments to 5Essentials benchmarking, re-running the reports to use the Illinois state average as the benchmark rather than Chicago Public Schools.  

The preliminary results of the first administration of the 5Essentials Survey are being withheld pursuant to 5 ILCS 140/7 (1) (f) as “preliminary drafts, notes, recommendations, memoranda and other records in which opinions are expressed, or policies or actions are formulated.”  

An appeal of this denial may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General’s Public Access Counselor at 500 S. Second St., Springfield, IL 62706 or publicaccess@atg.state.il.us. If you choose to submit a request for review, you must do so within 60 days after the date of this response letter. The request for review must be in writing, signed by you and include (i) a copy of your FOIA request and (ii) this office’s response. In addition, you have the right to seek judicial review of this response.
If you have questions, please contact Amanda Simhauser at (217) 782-4648 or asimhaus@isbe.net.

Sincerely,

Matt Vanover
Director of Public Information