



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 12, 2008

CONTACTS:

Brian Williamsen

217/782.7355

Matt Vanover

217/782.4648 (ISBE)

Illinois joins American Diploma Project, Moves to Tighten Academic Standards and Better Prepare Students for College and the Workforce

Illinois among first states to look at international standards in review of what students need to know for success after graduation

SPRINGFIELD — Governor Rod R. Blagojevich, along with the Illinois State Board of Education, announced today that Illinois is joining more than 30 other states in the American Diploma Project (ADP) in better positioning itself to prepare students for college and the workforce. Illinois joins an ADP class that includes California and Florida in reviewing and revising what students need to know and should be able to do in order to be successful in both college and their careers.

Illinois' class will be the first group of states to not only use national benchmarks, but also look at what other countries require of their students. Once completed, it is expected that Illinois Learning Standards will be more focused, easier to understand and more rigorous.

"Illinois businesses are not only competing against companies in other states, but in other nations as well. We have to look globally at what students need to know in order to be successful after they graduate," said Governor Blagojevich. "We need to challenge our students every day so they can meet the challenges that wait for them after high school."

Thirty-three states are currently participating in the project. States that join ADP agree to develop high school learning standards that prepare students for success, using national benchmarks to guide them. The group which includes Illinois will be the first to use international models in reviewing and revising state standards.

"Membership in the American Diploma Project will help us to provide coherence between standards, curriculum, assessments and college entry requirements," said State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch. "I want to thank Governor Blagojevich, the Community College Board, Board of Higher Education, and our business community for joining educators as we work to put standards in place that will lead our students to 21st century success."

2330**08

ADP is an initiative of Achieve, Inc., a non-profit created by the nation's governors and business leaders to help raise academic standards. Earlier this year, Achieve did a review of the Illinois Learning Standards for grades 8 through 12 at the request of the Illinois State Board of Education. The Illinois Learning Standards were developed in 1997 and had not been reviewed since that time.

The review found that while Illinois' standards were strong in some areas, standards were significantly lower than what would be considered national benchmarks in English, math and science. The review also found that in many areas the Illinois standards were unclear and vague, making it difficult for teachers to know exactly what students should be learning.

Work on revising the Illinois Learning Standards has already begun and is expected to last 18 to 24 months. The overall goal is to produce fewer, clearer and higher Illinois Learning Standards and to promote rigor and relevance in curriculum.