In Fiscal Year 2011, Illinois’ Foundation Level of General State Aid remained at the same level it had been in Fiscal Year 2010 – $6,119. Despite the fiscal crisis, Illinois was able to increase the Foundation Level in both Fiscal Year 2009 and Fiscal Year 2010, largely because it received approximately $1 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) State Fiscal Stabilization Funds (SFSF) in both of these fiscal years. Illinois did not receive this $1 billion from federal sources in Fiscal Year 2011, however, GSA remained a priority for the Board and Illinois policy makers and sufficient funding was provided to maintain the Foundation Level at $6,119. This figure was $785, or nearly 15 percent, greater than the $5,334 Foundation Level used five years before in Fiscal Year 2007.

Learning Outcomes

The 2011 Report Card shows nine schools that were previously placed in improvement status based on performance have been removed because they were able to meet Adequate Yearly Progress for two consecutive years. Eight high schools and one high school district across Illinois made AYP in 2011 despite increasing performance benchmarks under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The Report Card results were announced amid talk of a No Child Left Behind waiver offered by the U.S. Department of Education due to the law’s largely criticized accountability measures. In the fall of 2011, the Illinois State Board of Education began developing a comprehensive waiver application with more flexible accountability measures. The application will be submitted by February 2012.

The tests were given in March and April. Students in third through eighth grades took the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) in reading and mathematics, while students in fourth and seventh grades were also tested in science. Students in 11th grade take the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE), which tests students in math, reading and science. Only reading and mathematics results are used in calculating AYP. In 2011, schools were expected to show 85 percent of students meeting or exceeding proficiency standards, up from 77.5 percent in 2010. The target high school graduation rate increased from 80 percent in 2010 to 82 percent in 2011. Attendance rate targets for elementary and middle schools in 2011 remained the same as the previous year at 91 percent.

The 2011 State Assessment data show 695 or 80 percent of Illinois districts and 2,548 or 65 percent of schools, up from 51 percent last year, failed to make AYP under NCLB. The statewide composite score for students meeting and exceeding on the ISAT saw an increase, going from 80.9 in 2010 to 82 percent in 2011. The composite score for the PSAE decreased from 53 in 2010 to 50.5 in 2011. One explanation for the decline may be the increase of about 12,500 PSAE test takers in 2011, per new state rules emphasizing that all 11th graders must take the exam, which includes the ACT. Overall since 2006, Illinois has seen a slight increase in ISAT performance and a slight decrease in PSAE performance.

The 2011 Report Card did show the achievement gap is narrowing at the elementary level, largely attributed to gains made by African American, special education and low-income students. The results come as Illinois' public school minority and low-income student populations have been on the rise. The achievement gap between white and black students has narrowed by 11.4 percent in math and 7.9 percent in reading. Since 2006, black students have made significant gains, with a 14.3 percent increase in black students meeting and exceeding proficiency in ISAT math and a 13 percent increase in ISAT reading. The percent of Hispanic students meeting and exceeding proficiency also increased, by 4.7 percent in ISAT math and 5.2 percent in ISAT reading. The achievement gap between students with disabilities with an Individualized Education Program (IEPs) and students without IEPs narrowed. Percent of students with an IEP meeting and exceeding proficiency has increased by 7.6 percent in ISAT math and 7 percent in ISAT reading since 2006. The achievement gap between low-income and non-low income students narrowed by 7 percent in math and
4 percent in reading. The percent of low-income students meeting and exceeding proficiency has increased by 10.8 percent in ISAT math and 10.4 percent in ISAT reading since 2006.

In addition to overall student academic performance, the 2011 School Report Card provides additional information for students, schools and districts, as well as parents and community members including the shifting of student demographics.

**Student Demographics**

The number of operating school districts declined from 891 in 2002 to 868 in 2011. There are currently 379 elementary districts, 101 high school districts and 388 unit districts. The number of public schools declined slightly from 3,911 in 2002 to 3,904 in 2011. Student enrollment in the regular Illinois public schools increased to 2,074,806 in 2011 from 2,029,821 in 2002.

Since 2002, the percentage of low-income students has increased from 37.5 percent to 48.1 percent in 2011. Pupils are considered low-income if they are from families receiving public aid, are living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, are being supported in foster homes with public funds, or are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

Students who are black, Hispanic, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Native American, or Two or More Races comprised 48.6% of student enrollment in 2011, an increase from 40.7% in 2002. The increase in percent of minority students is accounted for mainly by increases in the number of Hispanic students.

**Student Performance and Achievement**

In August of 2011, ISBE announced that the graduating Class of 2011’s composite ACT score was the highest of 10 states that test at least 90 percent of their students. Illinois students posted a composite score of 20.9 in 2011, up from 20.5 in 2007 and 20.7 last year. Illinois requires all 11th-graders (with some special exemptions) to take the ACT as part of the required state testing.

The graduation rate in Illinois has increased over time – up from 81.6 percent in 1997 to 83.8 in 2011 -- although saw a slight decrease in 2011 from the previous year due to a new federal definition for graduation rate calculation.