

Telling Your School's Story

Turning Report Card Data Into Meaningful Messages

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What is the Illinois Report Card?

Comprehensive picture of school performance and student outcomes

FIND YOUR SCHOOL

Go beyond test scores and get a snapshot of every Illinois public school.

[Search](#)

[State Snapshot or Select from list](#)



GAIN A DEEPER
UNDERSTANDING OF THE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE
STATE OF ILLINOIS

[State Snapshot](#)

Profiles of Performance

AND MUCH MORE:

Academic Achievement

Graduation Rate

Student Growth

Attendance

College & Career Readiness

School Climate

Your Story Could Be Anywhere ...

A Framework for Effective Report Card Communication

Four questions can help guide your Report Card communications



Who Needs to Know?

Identify your **audiences** and understand what matters to them.



What's Your Headline?

Determine what you want stakeholders to **remember**.



What Does the Data Say?

Use the Illinois Report Card to support your story with **evidence**.



How Will You Share It?

Match your message to the right communication **channels**.

You Know Your Audience Best

Different stakeholders care about different aspects of the Report Card

Audience	What They Want to Know:
Families	How are students doing?
Board Members	Are our investments working?
Staff	What should we celebrate and improve ?
Media	What is the headline ?
Community	How can we help ?
Students	How does this affect me ?

Reaching Your Stakeholders

Match your message to the appropriate communications channel

Audience	How to Reach Them:
Families	Email, district website, social media, newsletters
Board Members	Board presentations, briefing memos
Staff	Staff meetings, internal newsletters
Media	Press releases, interviews
Community	Town halls, community presentations, civic groups
Students	Announcements, advisory periods, student leadership groups

Finding Your Headline

The best communications start with one main idea

-  Academic achievement continues to improve
-  More students graduate on time
-  Attendance continues to improve
-  Student growth remains a strength
-  More students are college and career ready
-  Success seen across multiple indicators

Strong Headlines Advance the Story

The strongest messages provide context, not just data

■ Weak

The Illinois Report Card was released today.

■ Good

ELA proficiency improved this year.

■ Better

Middle school students led districtwide literacy gains.

■ Best

Black students, low-income students, and students with disabilities all made gains in ELA proficiency, helping drive districtwide literacy improvement.

■ Weak

Graduation data is available on the Report Card.

■ Good

Graduation rates improved.

■ Better

Graduation rates reached the highest level in district history.

■ Best

English learners and students with IEPs posted some of the largest graduation gains, helping more students finish high school prepared for success.

The Data Doesn't Tell the Story, You Do

Illinois Report Card provides information, not conclusions

- Different stakeholders interpret the same data differently
- Strong communication provides context, not just statistics
- Every district has strengths and opportunities for growth
- Effective messaging connects data to students, staff, and family experiences
- The goal is not to communicate every data point



The Profile of Performance Is Only Part of the Story

Before leading with your Profile of Performance, ask yourself:

- What data best supports our story?
- Where did we improve?
- Which student groups improved?
- Which results exceed expectations?
- Which trends continued over time?
- What would our community most want to know?



Profiles of Performance: What's Changed?

The first year of Illinois' redesigned accountability system

Weighted Index

Schools compared to one another

Exemplary limited to top 10%

Nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ schools “Commendable”

Difficult to connect results to levels



Profiles of Performance

Schools evaluated against defined criteria

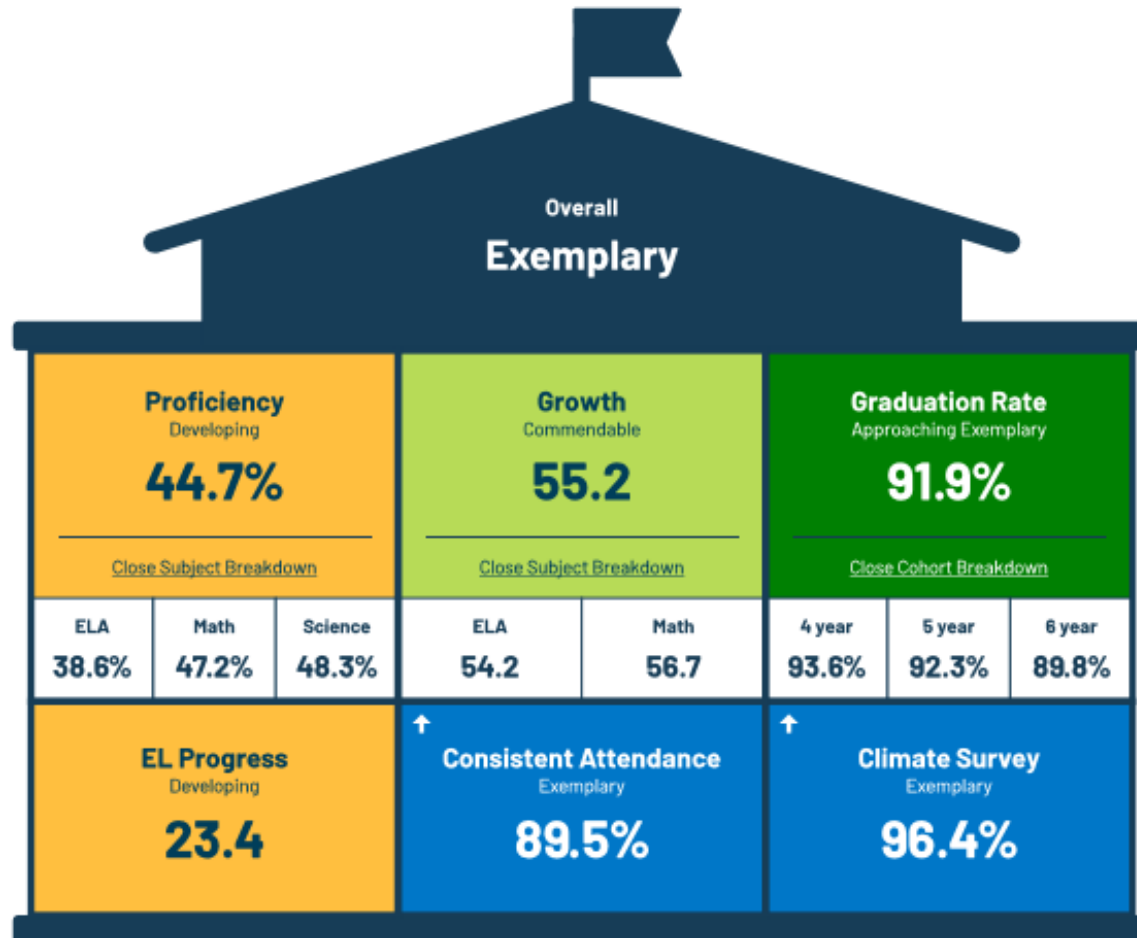
More schools earn Exemplary recognition

Profiles are more varied and meaningful

Clear expectations for each profile

What a Profile of Performance Measures

Multiple indicators create a more complete picture of success



Core Indicators

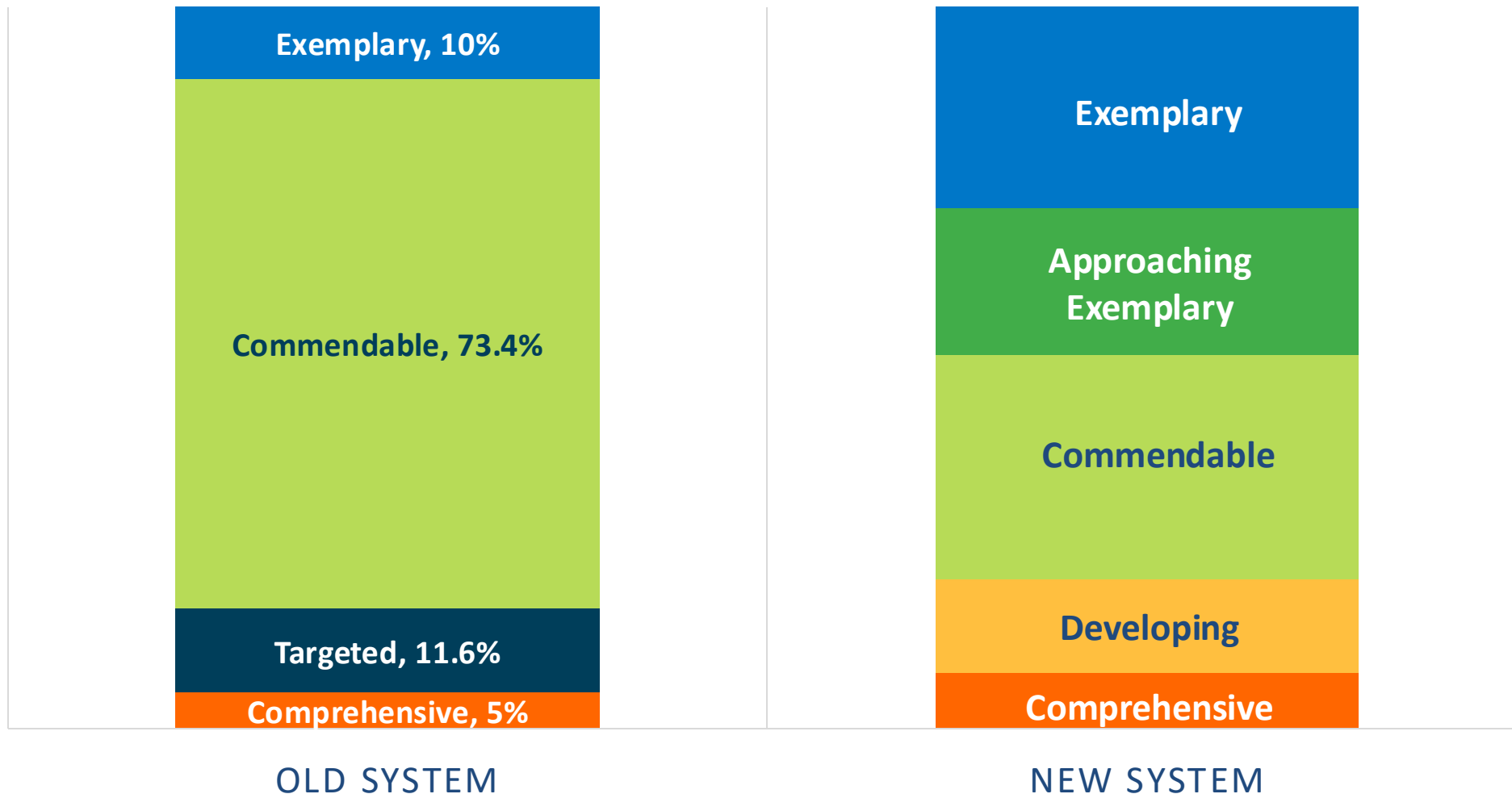
- ✓ Composite Proficiency
- ✓ Composite Growth
- ✓ Graduation Rate

Elevating Indicators

- ✓ Consistent Attendance
- ✓ Climate Survey
- ✓ English Learner Progress

Profiles of Performance: More Than a Ranking

Clear expectations provide greater differentiation among schools



How Should You Talk About Your Profile?

Profile provides context, but student outcomes should drive your story

Profile	Communication Focus
Exemplary	Celebrate success and sustain momentum
Approaching Exemplary	Highlight progress and continued growth
Commendable	Emphasize strengths and opportunities for growth
Developing	Acknowledge challenges and improvement efforts
Comprehensive	How can we help? Explain improvement plans and supports

Lead with student outcomes whenever possible!

Communicating Changes in Your Profile

The best messages explain what changed, why, and what comes next

Commendable to Exemplary

Our 2026 profile demonstrates strong performance and gives us important information about the areas contributing to that success. We will use our profile to sustain our strongest areas and continue addressing places where students can experience even greater success.

Commendable to Developing

(Acknowledge concern directly and avoid minimizing the areas needing improvement)

Our Developing designation identifies specific areas where we have opportunities to improve. We are taking that information seriously and using it to determine where our efforts can make the greatest difference.

Targeted to Developing

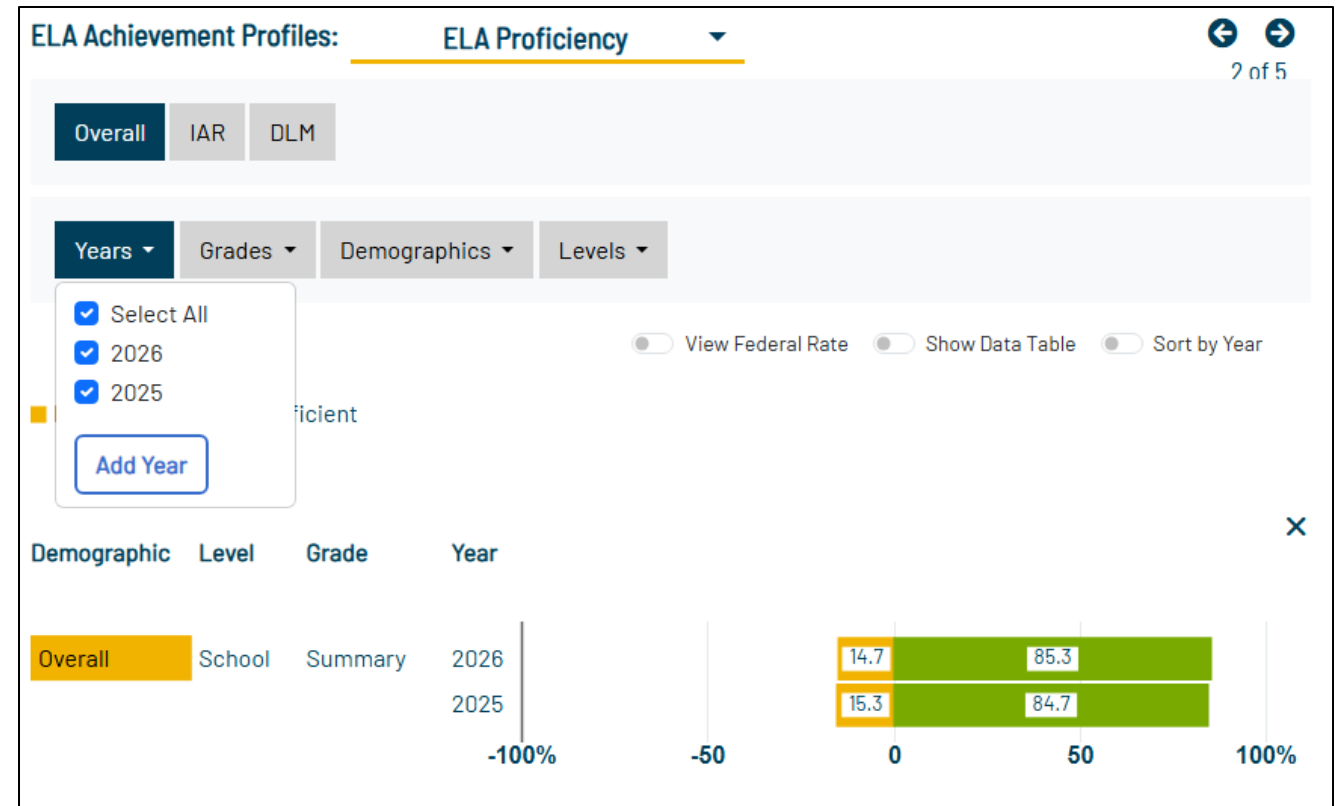
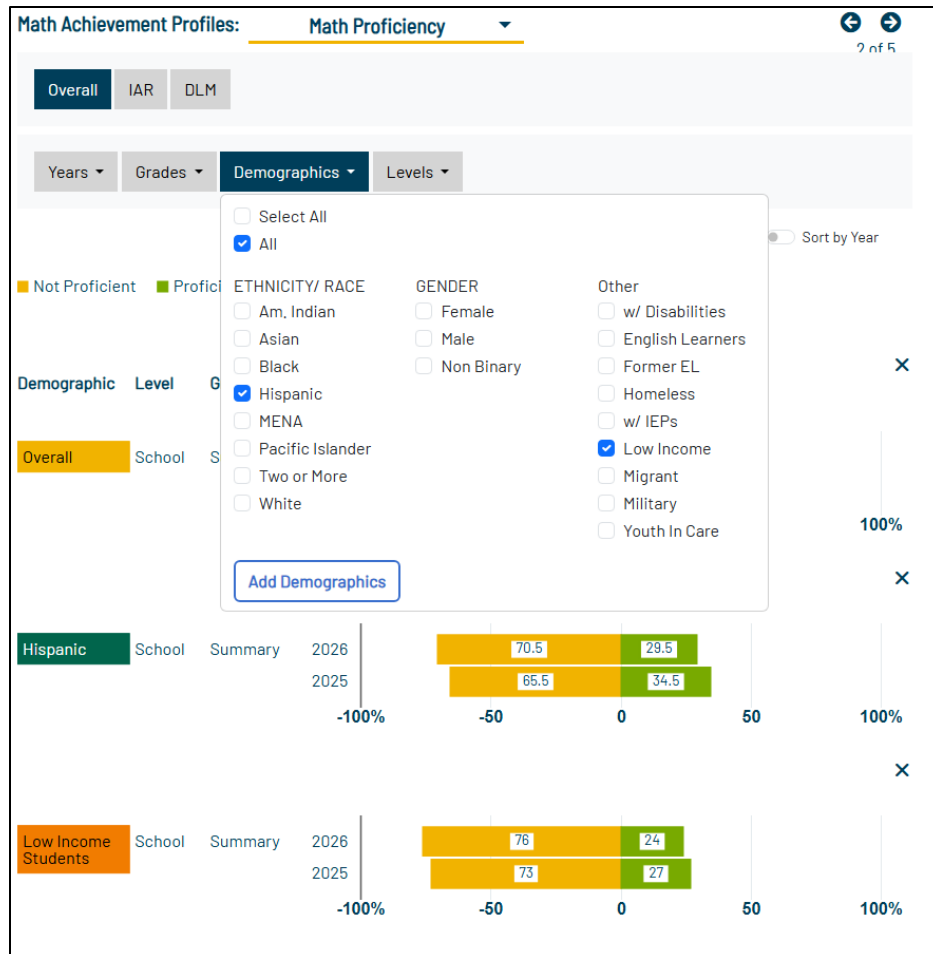
(Requires clear distinction between the former Targeted identification and the new Developing profile)

Our 2025 Targeted designation communicated something different: that one or more student groups met the criteria for identification under the previous system. The new Profile of Performance gives us a broader picture of our school and identifies specific areas of strength and areas that need improvement.

A profile change explains what happened. Student outcomes explain why it matters.

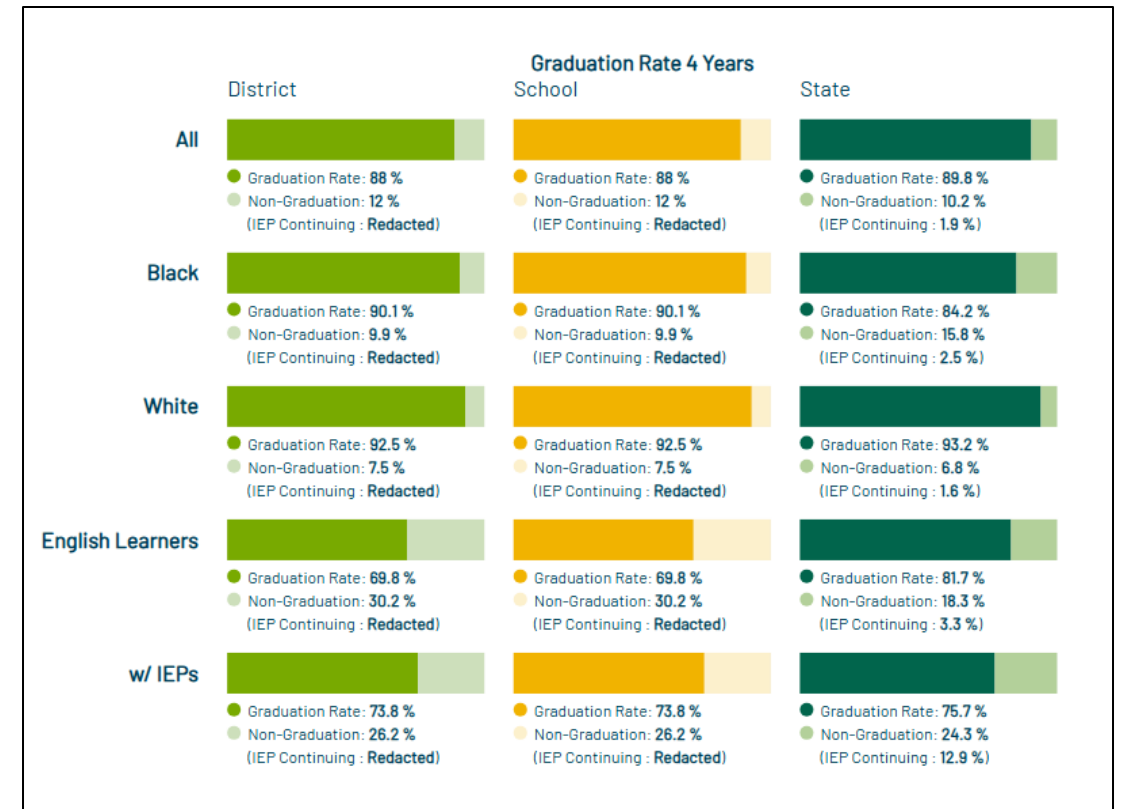
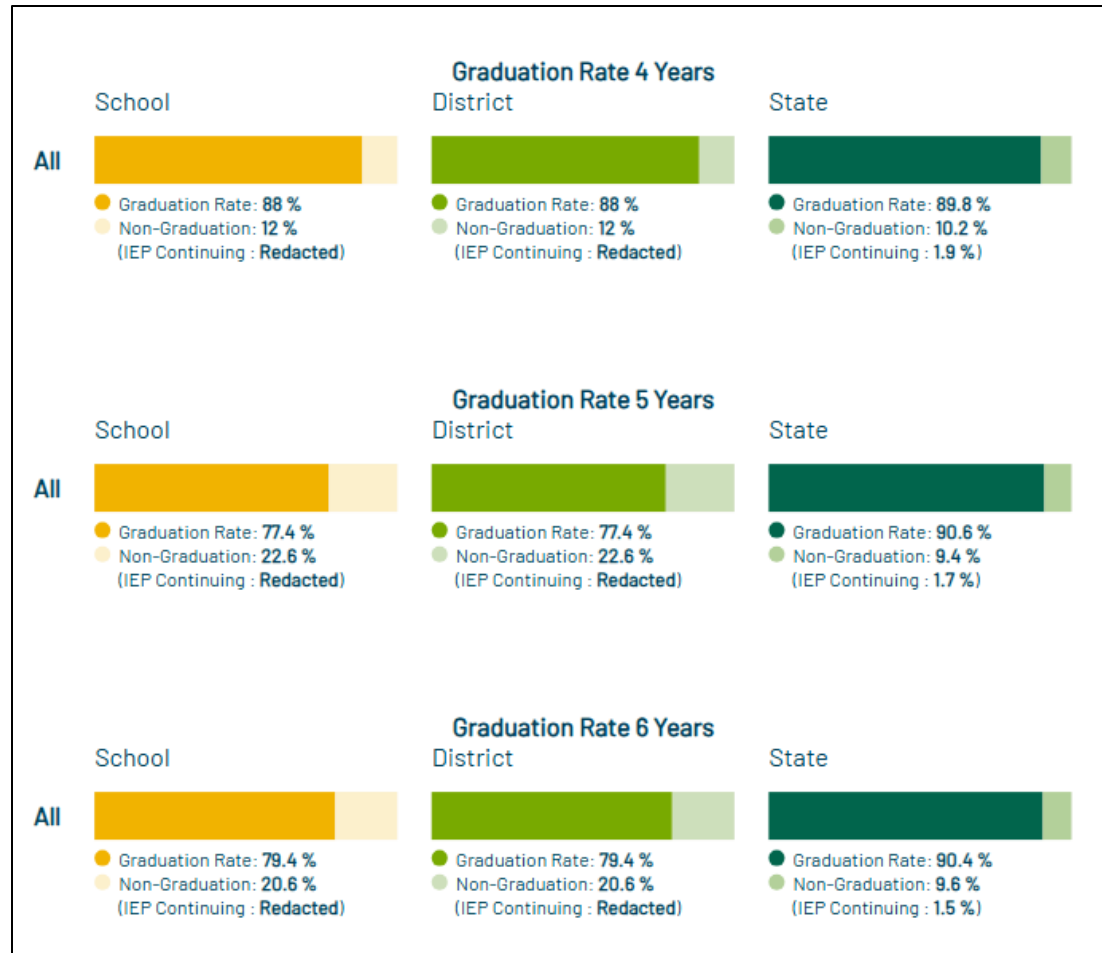
Finding Stories in Academic Achievement

Achievement stories are often found beyond overall averages



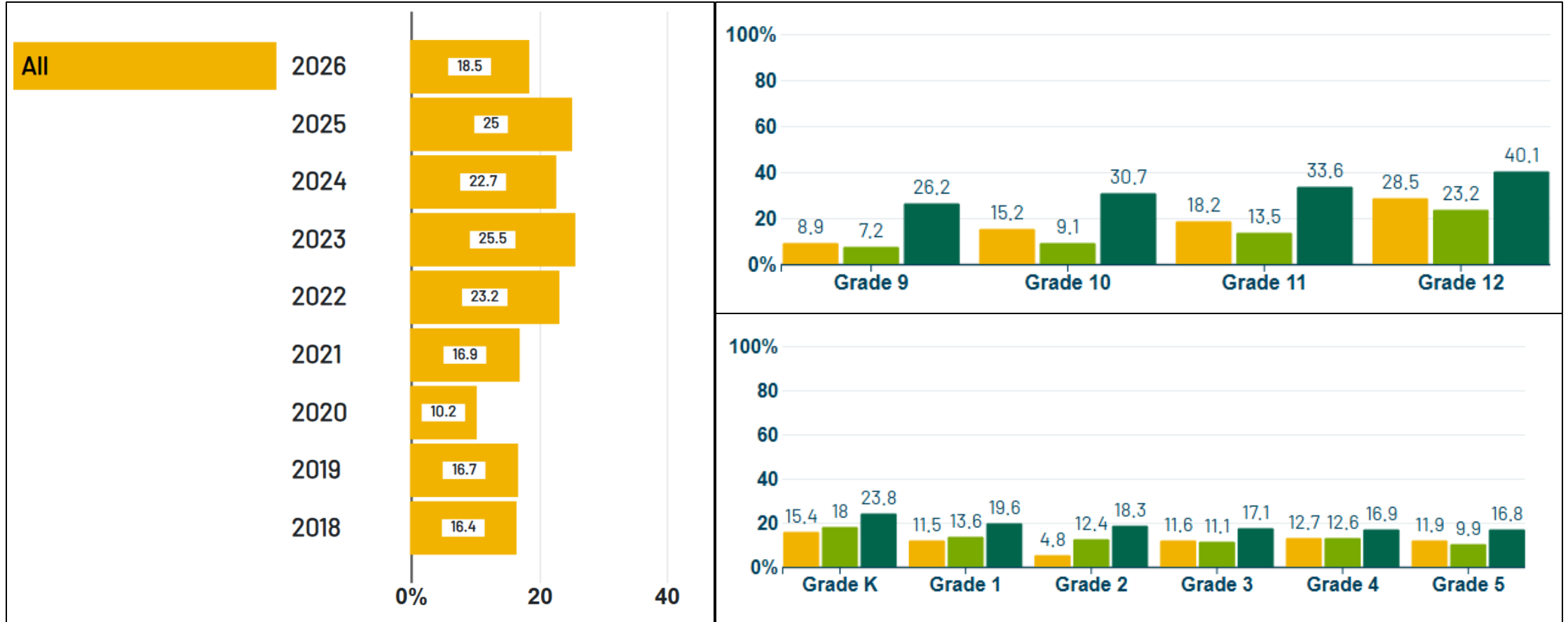
Finding Stories in Graduation Data

Don't forget to compare four-, five-, and six-year graduation rates



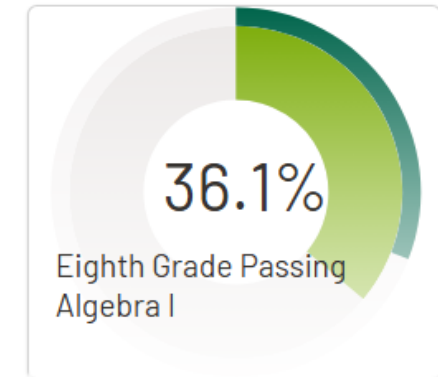
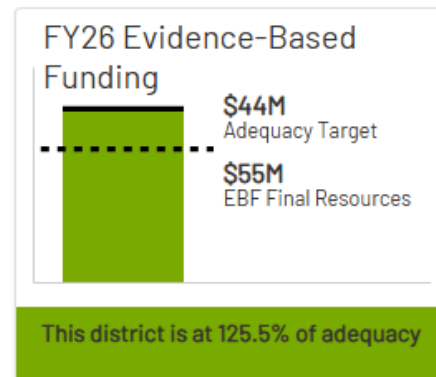
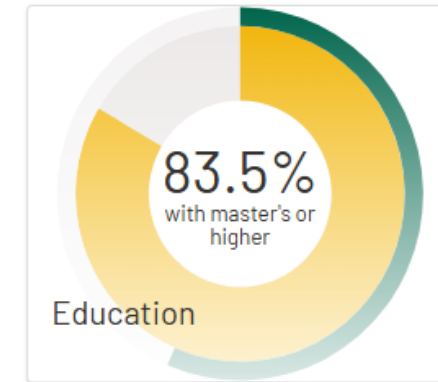
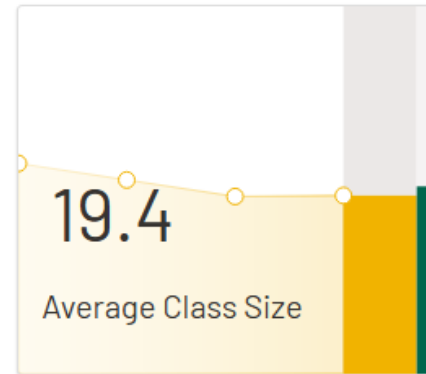
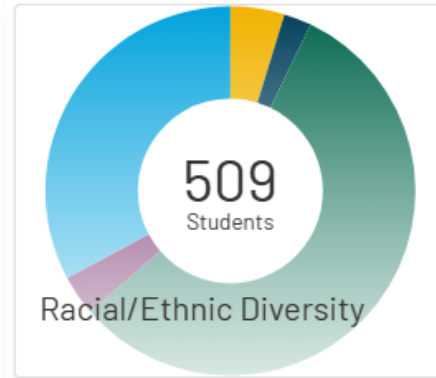
Finding Stories in Attendance Data

Compare years and grade levels to identify trends and areas of concern



Where Will You Find Your Story?

Your strongest message may come from a section you weren't expecting



Turning Data Into Meaningful Messages

Use data to inform, context to explain, and action to build confidence

1. Lead With Your Headline

What is the one thing you want people to remember?



2. Support It With Evidence

Use Report Card data to support your message.



3. Provide Context

Why does the result matter? What contributed to it?



4. Explain What's Next

How will your district build on strengths and address opportunities for growth?

Building Your Narrative

ISBE resources can help turn data into clear and meaningful messages

DRAFT

2026 Illinois Report Card Highlights School Performance Across [District Name]

New Profiles of Performance provide a clearer picture of school strengths and opportunities for growth.

[City] – New data released today through the 2026 Illinois Report Card highlight [key result] in [District], offering families, educators, and the broader community new information about student outcomes and school performance during the 2025-26 school year.

[District Name]'s 2026 Illinois Report Card [link to Report Card] offers a detailed look at student outcomes, school performance, and opportunities for continued growth. Beginning this year, Illinois schools are evaluated using Profiles of Performance, a redesigned accountability system that establishes clear expectations and provides a more comprehensive picture of school success.

"[District-specific quote about results or a key accomplishment]," said [Superintendent Name], superintendent of [District Name].

Highlights from the 2026 Illinois Report Card

[District Name] recorded several notable outcomes during the 2025-26 school year, including:

- [Key achievement #1]
- [Key achievement #2]
- [Key achievement #3]
- [Key achievement #4]
- [Key achievement #5]

Possible examples:

- ELA proficiency increased from [X%] to [Y%]
- Student growth exceeds all state expectations in ELA
- Graduation rates increased to [X%]
- Chronic absenteeism declined from [X%] to [Y%]
- Consistent attendance improved by [X%]
- Advanced Placement participation increased by [X%]

Illinois Report Card | Ask Gemini

isbe.net/reportcard

Resources

2026 Report Card Resources

- 2026 Report Card Narrative Guidance
 - [District Narrative Guidance](#)
 - [Summative Designation Narrative Guidance](#)
 - [Equity Journey Continuum Narrative Guidance](#)

2025 Report Card Resources

2024 Report Card Resources

2023 Report Card Resources

2022 Report Card Resources

Dear [District] Community,

Families can now access [District's] Illinois School Report Card, which offers a comprehensive look at how students and schools are performing across a variety of measures, including academic achievement, student growth, attendance, graduation rates, college and career readiness, and more.

The annual Report Card, released by the Illinois State Board of Education, provides a snapshot of school performance, highlighting areas of success as well as opportunities for continued improvement.

This year's Report Card highlights several positive outcomes for [District], including:

- [HIGHLIGHT #1]
- [HIGHLIGHT #2]
- [HIGHLIGHT #3]

In addition to reporting student outcomes and school performance data, this year's Report Card includes updated school designations. These designations are based on multiple measures rather than a single score and help provide context about how schools are performing.

[OPTIONAL: INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL'S OR DISTRICT'S DESIGNATIONS], WHAT THEY MEAN, AND ANY CHANGES FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

We encourage families to review the full Report Card to learn more about student outcomes and school performance in [District]. The Report Card is one of many tools that can help our community celebrate successes, understand areas for growth, and support continuous improvement for all students.

The full Illinois School Report Card for [District] is available at [LINK].

Thank you for your continued partnership in supporting the success of our students and schools.

Sincerely,
[SUPERINTENDENT NAME]
[TITLE]

ISBE.net/ReportCard

Don't Forget the Narrative Sections

The Report Card offers opportunities to add context in your own words

IRC/PDF District Narrative Submission

Starting with the School Year 2020-2021 Illinois Report Card will include a new reporting feature that will replace both the At-A-Glance reports and the Classic PDF reports. This new feature, titled "Custom Report Card Builder," will allow users to pick a single report card year (School Year 2020-2021 and forward) and then select for themselves which data points to include in the screen or print output from nearly the entire range of data available on the interactive report card site.

For the first time, both the Illinois Report Card site and the Custom Report Card Builder will support the inclusion of a descriptive paragraph provided by districts as an introduction to the reader. This paragraph will appear on the initial profile page of the interactive site and the first page of the Custom Report Card PDF for your district and all buildings within the district.

This will operate similarly to the narrative a district can currently submit that appears on the EBF displays to provide context for what visitors see on those pages, but with much more prominent placement and a much broader scope. It is your opportunity to bring the data further into your district's own local narrative – to make it a part of your story.

Providing this narrative is entirely optional, and will reset with each new report card release in October so that your comments can be updated to remain relevant as your district's reported data changes over time.

There is no save or autosave feature. We recommend drafting in a separate application.

2025/2026 (Educator Preview) ▼ Revision in progress Cancel Undo Change Publish to public site

Enter narrative here

Characters left: 429

Warning: This entry for advanced text formatting

Custom Report Card Builder

Current District Superintendent Visit District Website

Address Download Historical District Report Cards

District Provided Statement
This is an example district narrative.

**My Narratives and Highlights**
Update your school highlights on the Illinois Report Card at any time.

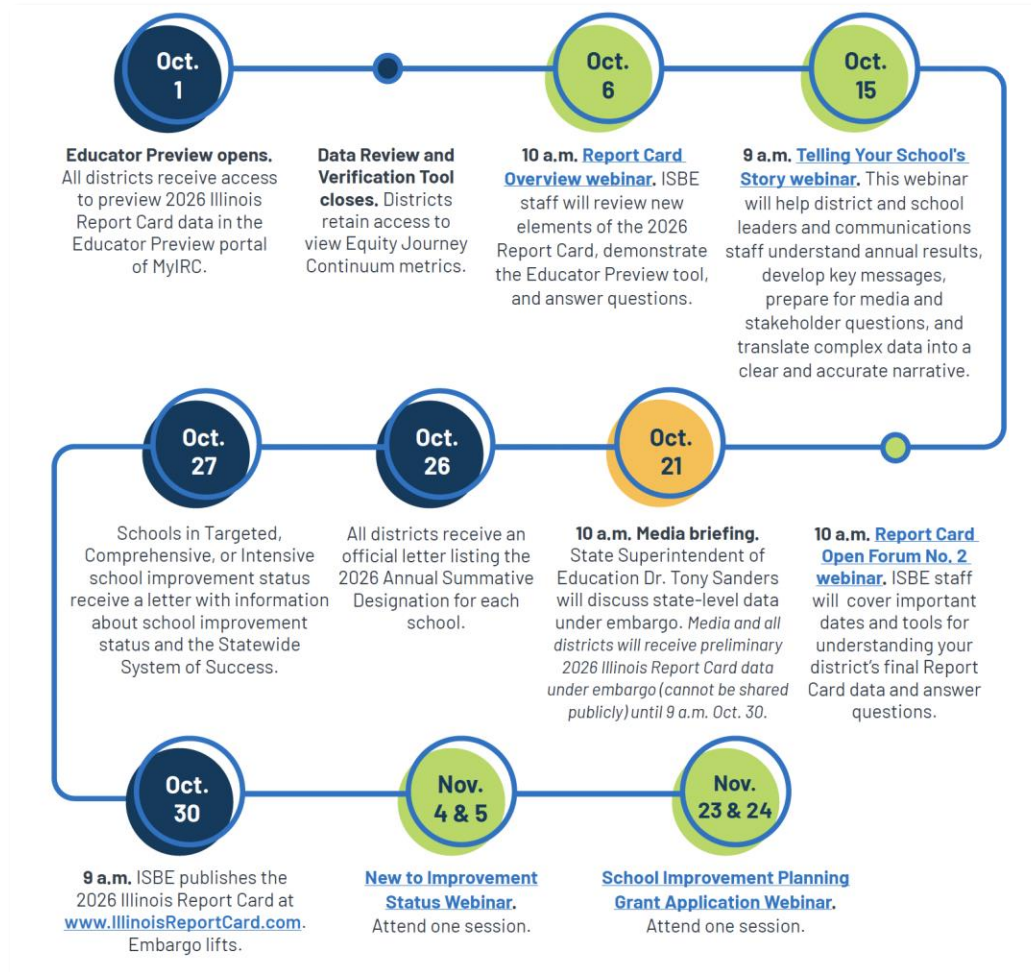
**My Educator Preview**
View your school(s) data on the Illinois Report Card public-facing website.

**My Data Dashboard**
My Data Dashboard (formerly Ed360) provides data related to critical performance metrics.
Contact MyIRC@niu.edu for more information regarding access to this application.

**My Data Review and Verification Tool**
Update your school highlights on the Illinois Report Card at any time.
Contact MyIRC@niu.edu for more information regarding access to this application.

Know What to Expect: 2026 Illinois Report Card

Plan ahead to ensure your communications are accurate and effective



2026 Illinois Report Card: Key Takeaways

A clear story helps stakeholders understand not only what your school's Report Card says but also why the results matter

1

Know your audience

2

Lead with your headline

3

Support your message with evidence

4

Use your profile to support the story, not replace it

5

Explain what comes next

Questions?