

Executive Summary: Amendment to the Illinois Every Student Succeeds Act Plan

Illinois is proposing an amendment to its State Plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to implement a comprehensive redesign of its school accountability system. The proposed changes are intended to address identified problems of practice in the current system and to ensure that accountability information supports continuous school improvement for all schools, regardless of designation. Illinois is accepting public comment on the proposed amendment from January 12 through February 25, 2026. Comments may be submitted through the Illinois State Board of Education Accountability Redesign site at www.isbe.net/feedback.

The proposed amendment **replaces the current accountability framework with a Profile of Performance model**. This redesigned system moves away from norm-referenced comparisons and ranking and instead applies clear, criterion-based expectations to describe patterns of school performance. Under the proposed model, every school continues to receive an annual designation, but designations are intended to communicate starting points for improvement rather than relative standing among schools. The system is designed to provide clearer signals about performance, better differentiate areas of strength and need, and support schools in setting and prioritizing improvement goals.

Consistent with ESSA requirements, the redesigned accountability system uses multiple statewide indicators. The proposal streamlines and aligns indicators across grade spans, including redesigned composite indicators for academic proficiency and academic growth, continues use of English Learner Progress, graduation rate, and climate survey indicators, and transforms chronic absenteeism into consistent attendance. Indicator thresholds were developed through a structured, data-informed process that examined statewide performance distributions, prior policy anchors, student-level modeling results, and stakeholder feedback to ensure meaningful differentiation across schools.

The Profile of Performance model distinguishes between core indicators, which define a school's foundational performance pattern, and elevating indicators, which may strengthen but not lower a school's designation. This structure is intended to retain multiple measures of performance while ensuring that accountability results clearly indicate where focused improvement is needed. The model also preserves incentives for growth and progress over time and supports schools in identifying strategic areas for action rather than responding to a single composite score.

Additional refinements were made to ensure continuity across elementary, middle, and high school grade spans. These refinements include adjustments to core performance requirements for high schools, updated elevation rules, and modest threshold adjustments informed by current data. Together, these changes are intended to improve alignment across grade spans

and ensure that accountability results reflect comparable expectations while recognizing differences in school contexts.

The proposed amendment reflects feedback received during multiple rounds of public engagement, including listening tours, live feedback sessions, and extended public comment periods. Stakeholder input informed refinements to designation names, threshold placement, and system rules. This feedback was used to improve clarity, strengthen alignment to identified problems of practice, and ensure the accountability system better supports continuous improvement across the full range of school performance patterns.

If approved, the redesigned accountability system will be implemented on the Illinois State Report Card beginning in October 2026, following State Board approval and U.S. Department of Education review. Supporting technical documentation, modeling data, and additional explanatory materials are being made available alongside this proposed amendment to support informed public comment and engagement.

Finally, as is standard practice, ISBE has also made a number of other non-substantive edits to its plan to reflect current practice. Non-substantive edits are grammatical or preferential changes to the text that do not represent programmatic changes, or programmatic changes that do not require the prior approval of the U.S. Department of Education.