

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

Illinois is amending its State Plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to redesign its school accountability system. The proposed changes address identified problems of practice and aim to ensure that accountability information supports continuous school improvement for all schools, regardless of designation. The redesign process occurred in four phases, beginning with stakeholder input and followed by successive draft releases that included formal public comment opportunities.

- Phase I (September 2024 – May 2025)
Input was solicited on model type, desired system features, and intended outcomes through public events and stakeholder conferences.
- Phase II (October 2025 – December 2025)
The redesigned accountability model was introduced through public and virtual events and posted for a 72-day public comment period.
- Phase III (January 2026 – February 2026)
A full amendment draft reflecting Phase II feedback was published, accompanied by virtual engagement events and a 45-day public comment period.
- Phase IV (March 2026 – April 2026)
A final amendment draft incorporating additional stakeholder feedback was published, followed by virtual engagement, presentation, and discussion by the Board of Education, and Board approval after a 30-day public comment period.

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 to instead apply 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 a school's starting point for improvement rather than its relative rank 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 the existing 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.

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.

A school's final profile of performance is determined by considering (1) core performance, (2) elevating indicators, and (3) the performance of individual student groups.

1. Core performance is broadly determined by a school's strongest core indicator.
 - For high schools, core performance is considered Exemplary only when there is:
 - Exemplary proficiency or growth; or
 - Exemplary graduation rate paired with Approaching Exemplary proficiency or growth.
 - All other core performance levels are determined by the single strongest core indicator.
 - However, if any core indicator is Comprehensive, core performance is set one level below the strongest core indicator.
 - Additionally, if the "All Students" group falls in the Automatic Comprehensive range on any core indicator, the school's overall profile is Comprehensive, *regardless of performance on elevating indicators or student group results.*
2. Next, performance on elevating indicators is factored into the profile.
 - If core performance is Exemplary, the school proceeds directly to consideration of student group performance. (For student groups, the process ends here.)
 - If core performance is Approaching Exemplary or Commendable, the school or group may be elevated one level with two Exemplary elevating indicators.
 - If core performance is Developing or Comprehensive, the school or group may be elevated one level with one Exemplary and one Approaching Exemplary elevating indicator, *except as noted under core performance.*
3. Last, if a school has one or more student groups with a Comprehensive profile of performance, the school's profile can be no higher than Commendable.

Schools with an overall profile of performance of Comprehensive will be identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement status, and schools where one or more student groups have a Comprehensive profile of performance will be identified for Targeted Support and Improvement status. Schools will have one planning year and three implementation years before needing to either meet state exit criteria or be escalated to a more rigorous level of support.

Other Changes

Finally, as is standard practice, the Illinois State Board of Education has also made a number of other non-substantive edits to its plan to reflect current practice. Non-substantive edits include grammatical or stylistic revisions that do not represent programmatic changes, as well as programmatic updates that do not require prior approval from the U.S. Department of Education.

If you have any questions about this amendment, or its impact on school summative designations, please contact Rae Clementz, Executive Director of Data, Accountability and Assessment, at 217-524-4614 or email essa@isbe.net.