

# Illinois ESSA Plan Executive Summary

March 12, 2018



**Illinois  
State Board of  
Education**

# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS ESSA?

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is the reauthorization of the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the country's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students. President Barack Obama signed the bipartisan measure into law on December 10, 2015. ESSA tasks individual states to create a plan to ensure every child is learning and on the path to college and career.

ESSA charged each state with engaging with local stakeholders and communities to create a plan that includes ambitious long-term goals, supports for low-performing schools, challenging academic standards and assessments, and universal indicators of school quality and student progress. The plan must account for the needs of special student populations, such as migratory children, youth in the state's care, English Learners, children experiencing homelessness, and children in rural areas. The plan must also address how the state uses federal funds to ensure equitable access to excellent teachers and to provide students a well-rounded education.

## WHAT IS THE ILLINOIS ESSA PLAN?

The vision of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is for Illinois to be a state of whole, healthy children nested in whole, healthy systems supporting communities wherein all people are socially and economically secure. All children deserve a quality education that helps them build the capacity to access opportunities of interest to them. ISBE has outlined ambitious and essential goals as the North Star for the Illinois ESSA Plan:

- All kindergartners are assessed for readiness.
- Ninety percent or more of third-grade students are reading at or above grade level.
- Ninety percent or more of fifth-grade students meet or exceed expectations in mathematics.
- Ninety percent or more of ninth-grade students are on track to graduate with their cohort.
- Ninety percent or more of students graduate from high school ready for college and career.
- All students are supported by highly prepared and effective teachers and school leaders.
- Every school offers a safe and healthy learning environment for all students.
- All English Learners achieve proficiency in English within five years of their identification as English Learners.

The Illinois ESSA Plan establishes a 15-year timeline to meet our four academic goals (the second through fourth bullets above).

Supporting students in achieving our state goals begins and ends with equity. The Illinois ESSA Plan represents the belief of ISBE and our stakeholders that the students with the greatest needs deserve the greatest share of our public education resources. Grounding our work in the practice of equity will ensure

that we provide all students with the supports they need to succeed from pre-K through high school and onto purposeful lives.

All students need safe and inclusive schools and challenging and individualized curriculum and instruction. Even so, each student comes to the classroom with different strengths. Equity requires that each child receives the attention, resources, access, and supports he or she needs to become socially and economically secure adults.

Equity must occur as we create the inclusionary conditions for whole schools, whole communities, and whole systems to work together. Students and schools are nested in communities with vastly different histories and resources. Achieving our goals requires a comprehensive approach to supporting students' cognitive growth, social and emotional development, and physical well-being. Illinois is committed to providing integrated, differentiated, transparent, and equitable supports to school districts.

The Illinois ESSA Plan aligns to the state's cross-agency goal of at least 60 percent of Illinoisans having high-quality degrees or credentials by 2025.

ISBE wanted to develop a state plan that reflected the ideas of those who are closest to the work and so sought out the voices, values, and vision of stakeholders and practitioners. The participation of diverse educators, communities, and advocates made the Illinois ESSA Plan durable. The process of writing the plan brought together people from across the state passionate about creating an equitable and supportive system for Illinois students, educators, schools, and communities. ISBE hosted more than 100 meetings and received input through more than 6,000 public comments. ISBE heard from thousands of educators and educational leaders over more than 16 months of gathering feedback, all of which strengthened our state's ESSA plan.

The Illinois State Board of Education submitted the Illinois ESSA Plan to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) on April 1, 2017. ED approved the plan on August 30, 2017. ESSA requires that we revisit our state plan every four years. ISBE is continuing to dialogue with stakeholders and communities as we implement and learn.

Please find a summary of the key elements of the Illinois ESSA Plan below. The complete and approved Illinois ESSA Plan, previous drafts of the plan, feedback from ED, and additional resources are available on the ISBE website at [www.isbe.net/essa](http://www.isbe.net/essa).

## IL-EMPOWER

The Illinois ESSA Plan introduces IL-EMPOWER, the new statewide structure of support for capacity development with schools and districts. The structure is designed to improve student outcomes by leveraging schools' strengths and building school staffs' capacity. ISBE believes the educators closest to students have the most valuable insight into their strengths, challenges, context, and change history. This insight is a pillar upon which differentiated supports are developed.

Children learn and develop in the school, the community, and the home. IL-EMPOWER recognizes students' unique circumstances and, in partnership with learning providers, guides schools through a process to meet the needs of the whole child – including social-emotional and physical health and development.

IL-EMPOWER replaces the single-provider model currently in place and empowers schools with greater choice and collaboration in the school improvement process. The IL-EMPOWER structure promotes collaboration and peer-to-peer learning, informed by data from the IL-EMPOWER needs assessment and equity analysis, as vehicles for educator-led and state-supported school improvement.

Educators and educational leaders participate in a collaborative process within their schools, districts, and communities to identify areas for supports. These areas include Curriculum and Instruction, Governance and Management, and Climate and Culture. The school's strengths and challenges guide the individualized supports provided through IL-EMPOWER. ISBE provides a network of pre-approved, quality-vetted, and cost-controlled Professional Learning Partners to serve as options for the IL-EMPOWER school teams. IL-EMPOWER allows schools, districts, partners, and ISBE to work together to ensure that we meet the needs of each child fully and equitably to achieve set goals.

Several dozen districts are participating in an IL-EMPOWER pilot over the course of the 2017-18 school year in order to further refine the specific implementation expectations for the statewide launch of IL-EMPOWER in the 2018-19 school year.

Each school's overall performance – across a set of balanced indicators and considering each student demographic group's individual performance – corresponds to one of four tiers. The designations reinforce our shared responsibility to support all students in meeting our common, high expectations. Each tier contains specific opportunities for growth and support.

The designations, criteria, and opportunities for each tier include:

- **Tier 1: Exemplary School**

A school that has **no student demographic groups performing at or below the level of the “all students” group in the lowest 5 percent of all schools, a graduation rate greater than 67 percent, and whose performance is in the top 10 percent of schools statewide.** Schools that receive a Tier 1: Exemplary School designation may apply to serve in the IL-EMPOWER network of partners.

- **Tier 2: Commendable School**

A school that has **no student demographic groups performing at or below the level of the “all students” group in the lowest 5 percent of all schools, a graduation rate greater than 67 percent, and whose performance is not in the top 10 percent of schools statewide.** Schools that receive a Tier 2: Commendable School designation may apply to serve in the IL-EMPOWER network of partners.

- **Tier 3: Underperforming School**

A school in which **one or more student demographic groups are performing at or below the level of the “all students” group in the lowest 5 percent of all schools.** Schools that receive a Tier 3: Underperforming School designation will receive targeted support.

- **Tier 4: Lowest-Performing School**

A school that is in the **lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools in Illinois and those high schools that have a graduation rate of 67 percent or less.** Schools identified as “Tier 4: Lowest Performing” receive “Comprehensive” supports through collaboration with ISBE and partners to build on their strengths and address their individual challenges in serving all students fully and equitably. These schools develop a work plan with timelines and targets approved by ISBE and receive funding to access services through IL-EMPOWER.

Schools will receive their designations annually beginning with the 2018-19 school year. The identification of cohorts to receive Targeted and Comprehensive services occurs every three years.

The tier designations provide families and communities a clear understanding of how well their schools are serving their students. ISBE will include school designations on the Illinois Report Card at [www.illinoisreportcard.com](http://www.illinoisreportcard.com). ISBE believes in empowering families, communities, and educators with holistic and transparent information on school performance.

## MEANINGFUL DIFFERENTIATION OF PROGRESS

The Illinois ESSA Plan establishes common, high expectations for all students through the identification of challenging state standards, as well as measures of interim progress and long-term goals. The IL-EMPOWER differentiated system of supports builds schools’ capacity to meet students’ individual needs in reaching those high expectations. A balanced set of indicators measures our progress toward equity.

Our stakeholders identified key principles to guide the design of the progress indicators. The Illinois ESSA Plan includes indicators that are educative, providing information the school community can learn from; equitable, recognizing the unequal circumstances of Illinois’ students and educators; and non-punitive in the identification and support of schools.

The balanced set of indicators looks at the whole school to see how well our schools are supporting students in meeting our common, high expectations. The set of indicators includes 10 different measures of academic progress and student success. The system endeavors to provide a more complete and nuanced picture of the learning environment and student outcomes at every school.

The Illinois ESSA Plan, which resulted from deep dialogue with stakeholders, weights student growth more heavily than student attainment. Academic indicators comprise 75 percent of a school’s total score, while other student success or school quality indicators comprise 25 percent.

The high school grades and the preschool through eighth grades have different sets of indicators. Each indicator has a specific weight on a 100-point scale.

	Academic Indicators (75%)	School Quality/Student Success Indicators (25%)
P-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PARCC and DLM-AA (2018-19: ELA 10%, Math 10%; thereafter: ELA 7.5%, Math 7.5%)</li> <li>• Growth (Linear Regression) (50%)</li> <li>• English Learner Proficiency (ACCESS) (5%)</li> <li>• Science (ISA) (2018-19: 0%; thereafter: 5%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic Absenteeism (10%)</li> <li>• Climate Survey (Participation) (5%)</li> <li>• Fine Arts (2018-19: 0%; <math>\geq 0\%</math> by 2021-22)</li> <li>• Preschool to Second Grade Indicator (5%)</li> <li>• Elementary/Middle Indicator (5%)</li> </ul>
High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SAT (2018-19: ELA 10%, Math 10%; thereafter: ELA 7.5%, Math 7.5%)</li> <li>• Graduation (4-, 5-, and 6-year Rates) (50%)</li> <li>• English Learner Proficiency (ACCESS) (5%)</li> <li>• Science (ISA) (2018-19: 0%; thereafter: 5%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic Absenteeism (7.5%)</li> <li>• Climate Survey (Participation) (6.25%)</li> <li>• College and Career Readiness (6.25%)</li> <li>• Fine Arts (2018-19: 0%, <math>\geq 0\%</math> by 2021-22)</li> </ul>

*Note: ISBE and working groups are determining the definitions of the growth, preschool to second grade, elementary/middle, and college and career readiness indicators. Federal law requires all states to administer statewide assessments in certain subjects and grades.*

The system also measures the academic progress of individual student demographic groups across the 10 indicators. We include and value every student to hold ourselves accountable for meeting all students’ needs. The student demographic groups include:

- Economically disadvantaged students
- Students with disabilities
- Students formerly with a disability
- English Learners
- Former English Learners
- Racial and ethnic groups
  - Hispanic or Latino
  - American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Asian
  - Black or African American
  - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - White
  - Two or More Races

Schools with any student demographic group performing at or below the level of the “all students” group in the lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools qualify for either the “Tier 3: Underperforming” designation and “Targeted” supports or the “Tier 4: Lowest Performing” designation and “Comprehensive” supports.

*Note: A demographic group must consist of at least 20 students in order to factor into a school’s summative designation.*

## SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS

All children deserve to feel safe and connected to their peers and to caring adults. Further, all children deserve a sense of belonging and purpose, fostered by individual attention and relevant and rigorous content. Children also come to school each day with individual strengths and interests. The Illinois ESSA Plan focuses on the strengths of a child and of her or his school and community and outlines a path for educators and educational leaders to layer and differentiate supports. The objective is to meet the individual needs of every child, no matter his or her starting point.

### **Language Instruction for English Learners**

The Illinois ESSA Plan establishes the goal of each English Learner (EL) to reach language proficiency within five years of her or his identification. Districts, through administration of a home language survey, identify students to receive EL services. Students must take an English language development assessment annually. An EL student no longer receives EL services once she or he attains language proficiency. ISBE continues to monitor the performance and progress of former EL students annually through 12th grade.

The shift to EL performance accountability under ESSA from Title III to Title I requires the coordination and integration of supports. ISBE will work closely with districts to ensure the appropriate transition and integration required to support EL students successfully.

### **Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk**

ISBE works with other state agencies and school districts to coordinate services and create comprehensive strategies to re-engage youth in the state’s care. ISBE’s programs provide essential educational support services to ensure the success of youth. Services include orientation, tutoring, mentoring opportunities, counseling, psychological and social work services, and instruction and training in alternative schools and learning centers. These services support educational continuity for adjudicated or incarcerated youth. Youth may audit or attend postsecondary courses in an institutional setting. Work-site partnerships and job placement services also help youth transition successfully from education to employment.

ISBE, districts, and other state agencies support community services that make youth less likely to re-offend and reduce the likelihood of re-entry and recidivism. ISBE and districts meet the educational needs of youth in the state’s care by re-engaging, reigniting, and assisting in the student’s transition back to the

community. ISBE's programs and the services in the community aim to ensure youth in the state's care have the same opportunities to achieve as if they were in their local district.

### **Students Experiencing Homelessness: McKinney-Vento Act**

ISBE has established procedures to ensure all children and youth experiencing homelessness receive the same opportunities to learn and succeed as all other children and youth. Homelessness has increased over the past five years, making cross-coordination of programs even more essential.

Illinois has a state coordinator for the education of homeless children and youth who oversees the Office of the Coordinator and each region's lead area liaisons. The lead area liaisons provide professional development and technical assistance to homeless liaisons employed by local education agencies and school staff in an effort to remove barriers to equitably educating children experiencing homelessness.

### **Students who Move Frequently: Migrant Education Program**

Students who qualify for the Migrant Education Program (MEP) move frequently, on their own or with parents and family members who participate in agricultural work. Illinois' MEP identifies eligible children and youth and coordinates with local, state, and federal education programs to develop a service delivery plan with distinct strategies and measurable program outcomes. Educational support services fall into the following areas: reading and mathematics; school readiness; high school graduation services to secondary-aged youth, including students who have dropped out of school and other out-of-school youth; and ancillary support services.

MEP continually adjusts to meet the unique needs of children who move frequently. Additionally, Illinois participates in several multistate consortia that seek to improve identification and recruitment, policies, and educational services for students participating in MEP. Illinois also convenes a Migrant Parent Advisory Group at the state level, and local projects convene parent groups to provide feedback on how the MEP could better meet their children's needs.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers**

Funding for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) supports academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours, particularly for students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools.

Programs supported by this funding provide art, music, character building activities, physical education, and other enrichment activities to students to help them understand real-world applications of key academic concepts and engage in their learning in new and different ways. The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs provide literacy, computer training, and other educational services for the families of participating children. The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC also act as a magnet for other philanthropic and social service programs and funds to support students' social-emotional and physical health and remove barriers to learning.

### **Rural and Low-Income School Program**

ISBE works with rural districts in meeting the needs of rural, low-income schools. ISBE's Rural and Low-Income School Program coordinates with other programs in order to improve students' academic



achievement and decrease dropout rates by increasing parent and family engagement, supporting effective academic instruction, supporting effective language instruction for English Learners and students who have immigrated, and increasing academic enrichment and other supports for students. The program aims to help students in rural, low-income schools meet the state's rigorous learning standards and graduate well-rounded and prepared for college and career.

## SUPPORTING EXCELLENT EDUCATORS

Illinois' excellent teachers drive student learning and support the growth of the whole child. The civic and economic success of our state depends on thriving schools powered by equitable access to excellent educators. The care and creativity exhibited by educators and educational leaders help produce the conditions for students to feel included and challenged. Illinois needs to do more to develop and retain highly prepared and effective educators. The Illinois ESSA Plan describes one prong in a multi-pronged approach to ensure all students have access to a well-rounded education and relevant and rigorous instruction in all content areas.

Teachers across Illinois shared their values and thinking in the development of the Illinois ESSA Plan. They expressed a need for better preparation before entering the classroom and more meaningful leadership opportunities throughout their teaching careers.

Educator feedback informed the development of two grants for districts:

- **Fostering Teacher Leadership:** ISBE will launch a competitive grant program wherein educators will propose 30-, 60-, and 90-day research projects focused on specific problems of practice.
- **Supporting Teacher Preparation:** ISBE created the Innovative Fieldwork competitive grant program, which will provide funding for districts and institutions of higher education with approved teacher preparation programs to partner and develop innovative approaches to fieldwork requirements. The innovative fieldwork will provide candidates rich and extended opportunities to work with, learn from, and practice their developing craft with practicing teachers.

Additionally, ISBE developed and piloted Ed360, a free, optional, data dashboard for educators. Ed360 empowers educators with access to near real-time data on student performance and context, as well as corresponding professional learning opportunities and classroom instructional resources. ISBE will launch Ed360 statewide in February of 2018. More information is available at [www.isbe.net/ed360](http://www.isbe.net/ed360).

## TRANSPARENT DISTRICT SPENDING

For the first time, ESSA requires all districts to report per-pupil expenditure data at not only the district level but also at the school level, disaggregated by source of funds, beginning with school year 2018-19 data. This reporting will give the state, districts, and local communities an unprecedented opportunity to assess, celebrate, and advocate for improved equity in funding between individual schools and to better understand the relationship between student outcomes and financial investments. Clearer financial data, coupled with a strong understanding of context, will allow leaders to make data-driven decisions for the benefit of children.

To implement this new requirement, ISBE convened an advisory group of 25 superintendents, school business officials, and representatives from various statewide organizations. The advisory group designed its own value proposition to highlight the opportunities contained within the new site-based data and established guiding principles to reflect the needs of diverse districts as they implement site-based expenditure reporting for the first time. The group reached its first major implementation milestone on January 30, 2018, with the release of [guidance](#) that sets the state's expectations for reporting.

ISBE will anchor its support to districts in an important guiding principle of the advisory group: districts know their data best and can tell their own story. The guidance and training will grant districts flexibility while still yielding meaningful data for communities' consideration. ISBE defines its role as encouraging inquiry while protecting local ownership of the data and the story they tell.

## CONCLUSION

This is an exciting time for education in Illinois. Achieving our state goals begins and ends with equity. The Illinois ESSA Plan sets us firmly on the path toward all students graduating with the skills, confidence, attitudes, and knowledge to thrive in college and career. Practicing equity as a grounding principle will ensure that we can provide all students with the supports they need to learn and thrive. ESSA requires that we revisit our state plan every four years. ISBE will continue to have a dialogue with stakeholders and communities as we implement and learn.

Find more information about ESSA on the ISBE website at [www.isbe.net/essa](http://www.isbe.net/essa).

*Note: ISBE will receive recommendations for the approach to calculate growth and the procedures for averaging the individual indicators into a summative designation from the Technical Advisory Council in May 2018. ISBE will share the recommendations for public comment with final board action in June. Per ESSA, prior to the 2018-19 school year, ISBE will identify schools receiving comprehensive supports beginning in the 2018-19 school year. ISBE will add new details and updates to this executive summary as implementation moves forward.*