

Illinois 5Essentials Survey: Organizing Schools for Improvement Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the 5Essentials Survey?

5Essentials is an evidence-based system designed to drive improvement in schools nationwide. 5Essentials is based on more than 20 years of research by the [University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research](#) on schools and what makes them successful. Specifically, researchers determined five essential components for school success:

- **Effective Leaders** The principal works with teachers to implement a clear and strategic vision for school success.
- **Collaborative Teachers** The staff is committed to the school, receives strong professional development, and works together to improve the school.
- **Involved Families** The entire school staff builds strong relationships with families and communities to support learning.
- **Supportive Environment** The school is safe and orderly. Teachers have high expectations for students. Students are supported by their teachers and peers.
- **Ambitious Instruction** Classes are academically demanding and engage students by emphasizing the application of knowledge.

2. Why is The Illinois State Board of Education implementing this survey?

The State Board has long recognized that test scores alone do not provide a full picture of teaching and learning in any one school. Under recent legislation ([Senate Bill 7](#), [PERA](#)), the State Board is now mandated on a biennial basis to implement a learning conditions survey that will finally help paint that fuller picture. While this survey may help inform state policy and improvement initiatives, it is primarily intended to help local administrators identify strengths and weaknesses at the district and school level and target the necessary resources and interventions. Aggregated data from this anonymous survey will also be shared with parents and the general public on school report cards.

3. How might my school benefit from participating?

This survey provides an opportunity for students and teachers to have a voice in improving their schools. Your school's participation can help identify areas of strength and those in need of support. Equipped with

this knowledge, school leadership will be better positioned to drive improvement efforts.

4. When will the survey be conducted?

2012-13 will be the first year the Illinois 5Essentials Survey will be administered. This year the survey will be administered between February 1- March 31 2013.

5. What schools are required to participate in the survey?

All district schools, including alternative schools that fall under the district's domain, are required, by legislation, to participate in the survey.

6. Who takes the survey?

All sixth – 12th grade school students and all K-12 certified teachers. The University of Chicago is currently piloting a fourth-fifth grade survey, which may be available in the future years.

7. Can parents participate in the survey, as well?

Yes. As part of the Illinois 5Essentials Survey, schools will have the opportunity to hear from their parent community. Schools are not required to facilitate the implementation of the parent survey this year. However, ISBE is considering making this a requirement for survey administration in the 2013-14 school year.

8. How will parents be able to access the survey?

The parent survey will be made available on the ISBE and Illinois 5Essentials websites and parents can access the survey even if the school itself is not facilitating the process. Parents can organize, using their local PTA or other available avenues, to ensure 30 percent of parents or more respond in order to generate a report. The 30 percent parent response rate will be based on the total number of students at the school.

9. Why are administrators and support staff not included as survey participants?

The purpose of the survey is to help principals with their continuous school improvement, and principals have the opportunity to provide input into this process. The 5Essentials Survey for teachers and students

collects data from a broad set of respondents to understand the context within the school. These data form the basis for reliably predicting student outcomes and school improvement. Within a school there are often fewer than a handful of principals and administrators. As a result, there are not enough respondents for a principal survey to accurately and reliably measure aspects of school performance. Moreover, the small number of principal/administrator respondents for a school risks compromising confidentiality.

Nonetheless, principal and administrator perceptions are important for schooling. Interested administrator may use this [reflection framework](#) for considering their own impressions of performance on each of the Essentials. Principals will have the opportunity on the report card to include information about the programs they are implementing to address the needs of stakeholders and the metrics they use to gauge the success of their programs.

10. What do the surveys ask?

All survey questions offer multiple choice responses. There are no open ended questions.

- The student survey asks questions about students' experiences, attitudes, and activities in school.
- The teacher survey asks questions about a variety of topics, including instruction, professional development, and the school as a workplace.
- The parent survey asks questions about the parent's overall relationship with the school.

11. Are survey questions available to preview?

Yes. [Survey questions](#) for all three groups (teacher, student, and parent) are available on the Illinois 5Essentials website.

12. Will the survey be available in languages other than English?

Yes, the parent and student portions of the survey will also be available in Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Polish and Russian.

13. How long will the survey take?

On average the survey should only take 15-20 minutes for participants to complete. In almost all cases the survey is completed in less than 30 minutes.

14. How will the survey be administered?

The survey will be conducted online and will be accessible via the Illinois 5Essentials [website](#). Detailed information regarding access and log-in will be provided at a later date.

15. Are there any technical requirements to access the survey online?

Yes, you will need one of the following browsers in order to access the online survey:

- Mozilla Firefox (version 4 or newer)
- Internet Explorer (version 7 or newer)
- Google Chrome
- Safari (version 5 or newer)

16. Who sees these data? How will the data be shared and published?

Responses from eligible students (grades 6-12) and teachers will be compiled into a web-based report, available only via the 5Essentials web reporting tool. In June 2013 school principals and district administrators will be given access to view the data. School reports will be available to the public via the website and Illinois State report card in the fall.

All results are presented at a group level such as, *“The majority of students from sixth through 10th grade indicate that their teachers watch them closely enough to know when they are having trouble learning,”* or *“The majority of teachers report that the professional development activities at their school address the needs of their students.”*

17. When will reports be available?

Schools and districts will receive their 2012-13 Illinois 5Essentials Report in June 2013. The results of these surveys will also be included in the State report card that will be released in October 2013.

18. Are responses confidential?

All survey responses are strictly confidential. No student or teacher names or other unique identifiers will be connected with individual responses or used in any report.

19. My school/district already has a survey in place, do we need to participate?

Yes. 5Essential School Reports will be included in the new State report card. The Illinois State Board of Education is trying to compile state-wide data on school climate to not only target areas of improvement but also those areas where schools have realized success. It's important information to consider as the State sets policy and recognizes schools for performance that may not be reflected in test scores alone.

20. Is student and teacher participation mandatory?

Individual participation in the Illinois 5Essentials Survey is completely voluntary. However, at least 50% percent of your teaching/instructional staff must participate in order for your school to receive a report. Therefore, it is important to encourage complete participation from both teachers and students. Also,

- If a student does not wish to answer specific questions, he/she may skip them by clicking "Next" at the bottom of the survey screen.
- Teachers may also skip questions if they do not wish to answer.

21. Will the parent survey require 50% response rate as well?

No. The parent survey will, however, require a 30% response rate in order to generate a report for these measures. Results of the parent will be displayed as supplement measures on the 5Essentials School Report and will not be included in the State report card.

22. Will survey results be used in principal evaluations?

Districts may choose to use the Illinois 5Essentials Report as part of their administrator evaluation process. Districts electing to do this should follow the [guidelines](#) developed by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Committee (PEAC).

23. Is the State Board providing the funding for this survey? If so, how long will funding for this survey be available?

Legislation requires that schools implement a climate survey. ISBE is making a long-term commitment to implement the 5Essentials survey in every school across the state in order to provide schools with the information they need to position themselves for improvement. The State has secured funding through Race to the Top to implement the survey in the first three years.

24. Does the 5Essentials Survey align with the Rising Star Framework for school improvement?

Yes. Rising Star is a performance positioning system that provides a structure for teams to examine their practices so they can improve performance. Each of the eight Rising Star elements is represented through measures and questions on the 5Essentials Survey. Consequently, the results from the 5Essentials Report will serve as an important tool for districts to use towards their comprehensive planning initiatives.

25. Who is conducting this survey?

UChicago Impact, a division of the Urban Education Institute at the University of Chicago, on behalf of The Illinois State Board of Education.

26. Where can I find more information about the Illinois 5Essentials Survey?

Additional information, including survey questions, calendar of upcoming webinars, news, etc. can be found on the Illinois 5Essentials [website](#).

27. Who can I contact if I have questions?

Please contact 5Essentials Client Services at 5essentials@uchicago.edu or 1.866.440.1874.