



Illinois State Board of Education

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State Superintendent of Education (Interim)

TO: The Honorable Emil Jones, Jr., Senate President
The Honorable Frank C. Watson, Senate Republican Leader
The Honorable Michael J. Madigan, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Tom Cross, House Republican Leader

FROM: Rebecca McCabe, Chairman
Illinois Growth Model Task Force

DATE: January 10, 2007

RE: Illinois Growth Model Task Force

In fulfillment of Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 87, the Illinois Growth Model Task Force submits the attached report. The Task Force has completed its work with the submission of this report, which:

- examines what other states are doing;
- provides information regarding an Illinois growth model proposal for the federal growth model pilot;
- explores the potential for a growth model to give a clearer, fairer picture of individual student progress, such as the progress of those students in alternative schools; and
- provides one to three models that Illinois should consider.

As stipulated in SJR 87, the Illinois Growth Model Task Force is dissolved upon completion of the attached report.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me in the Student Assessment Division at the Illinois State Board of Education at 217-782-4823.

cc: The Honorable Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor
Mark Mahoney, Clerk of the House
Linda Hawker, Secretary of the Senate
Legislative Research Unit
State Government Report Center

Illinois Task Force on Growth Models



*Report to the Illinois General Assembly
January, 2007*

Illinois Task Force on Growth Models

Introduction

In response to numerous requests and concerns from Illinois educators to change the process for calculating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) along with the Illinois Principals Association (IPA) and businesses and organizations in the assessment industry sponsored a conference in June, 2005, *You ARE Making Progress – Measuring Success Over Time*.

In response to this well-attended conference, State Superintendent of Education Randy Dunn created a task force to study and provide information about growth models that could be used to apply for the Federal pilot as outlined by United States Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings.

Concurrently, the Illinois state legislature passed Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 87 which urged the United States Department of Education (USDOE) to use more flexible criteria in determining adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. The resolution also stipulated the creation of an Illinois Task Force to study the feasibility of a growth model for Illinois.

Senate Joint Resolution No. 87

WHEREAS, United States Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings has announced guidelines, referred to as a New Path for the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, based on a set of "common sense" principles to guide states in meeting the Act's goals; and

WHEREAS, This New Path maintains the primary elements of the Act, such as the annual testing and reporting of student subgroup data, but also emphasizes increasing individual student achievement, narrowing the achievement gap and encouraging sound overall state education policies that ensure that progress is being made; and

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Education has recognized that schools serving certain designated subgroups, such as children who are limited-English speakers and children who have disabilities, require flexibility in determining adequate yearly progress; and

WHEREAS, This type of flexibility is also needed for schools that serve other vulnerable population groups, such as high school drop-outs who return to school and who, for reasons including but not limited to their low academic achievement levels, are often confronted with multiple barriers that impede their academic progress; and

WHEREAS, Some states have requested permission to implement growth-based accountability models, also called "value-added models," which give schools credit for student improvement over time by tracking individual student achievement from year to year and which show promise

as fair, reliable, flexible and innovative methods for measuring school and student improvement; and

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Education has responded to the states' requests by agreeing to a rigorous evaluation of growth-based accountability models and their ability to help meet the laudable goals of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING HEREIN, that we urge the United States Department of Education to use more flexible criteria in determining adequate yearly progress under the federal No Child Left Behind Act; and be it further

RESOLVED, That there is hereby created a No Child Left Behind Growth-Model Task Force to examine the models proposed by other states and to explore the potential for a growth model to give a clearer, fairer picture of individual student progress, such as the progress of those students in alternative schools; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall consist of (i) the Governor or his designee, (ii) the State Superintendent of Education or his designee, (iii) one member appointed by a statewide association representing principals, (iv) one member representing a charter school serving at-risk high school drop-outs who have returned to school, (v) one member appointed by an organization representing regional superintendents of schools, (vi) one member appointed by a statewide organization representing school administrators, (vii) one member appointed by a statewide organization that represents both parents and teachers, (viii) one member appointed by a statewide organization representing administrators of special education, (ix) one member who is a representative from a statewide alternative education association and (x) an additional member appointed by the State Superintendent of Education based on the individual's knowledge of NCLB regulations or growth model research and design or both; and that the State Board of Education shall provide such staff assistance to the Task Force as is reasonably required for the proper performance of its responsibilities; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall hold, at minimum, four meetings, with at least one meeting held in Chicago and one meeting held in Springfield and it shall report its findings to the General Assembly on or before January 1, 2007; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Task Force is abolished upon completing its report; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be delivered to the U.S. Secretary of Education, the State Board of Education, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the President pro tempore of the United States Senate and to each Member of the Illinois Congressional delegation.

Task Force Charges, Membership and Meetings

SJR 87 charged the Illinois Task Force on Growth Models with a number of tasks in addition to the tasks the State Superintendent had previously assigned. These combined charges include: basic charges that covered both the Senate Joint Resolution and the State Superintendent's intentions:

- 1) Examine what other states are doing;
- 2) provide information regarding an Illinois growth model proposal for the federal growth model pilot;
- 3) explore the potential for a growth model to give a clearer, fairer picture of individual student progress, such as the progress of those students in alternative schools;
- 4) provide one to three models that Illinois should consider; and
- 5) provide a report of its study on growth models to the state legislature in January.

The following are the members of the Task Force, as specified in SJR 87:

<u>Governor or Designee</u> Elliot Regenstein Director of Education Reform Office of Governor Rod R. Blagojevich	<u>State Superintendent or Designee</u> Becky McCabe Director, Student Assessment Division Illinois State Board of Education
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Organizations

<u>Illinois Principals Association</u> Tyler Brown, Principal Mount Vernon City School #80	<u>Large Unit District Association</u> Dr. Alan E. Leis, Superintendent Naperville Community Unit #203
<u>Illinois Assn. of School Administrators</u> Dr. Paul Swanstrom, Superintendent High School District Organization Joliet TWP District #204	<u>Parent Teacher Association</u> Barbara Quinn, President Illinois PTA
<u>Alternate Education</u> Julie Wollerman, President Illinois Coalition on Educating At Risk Youth	<u>Illinois Education Association</u> Audrey Soglin, Director Center for Educational Innovation
<u>Illinois Federation of Teachers</u> Ava Harston Educational Issues Director	<u>Committee of Practitioners</u> Dr. Margaret Trybus Lyons Township #204
<u>Regional Offices of Education</u> Dr. Jane Quinlan Champaign-Ford ROE #9	<u>Regional Offices of Education</u> Dr. Jay Linksman, Executive Director ROE Professional Development Alliance

<u>State Testing Review Committee</u> Cheryl Jackson Board Member, Bloomington District #87	<u>State Testing Review Committee</u> Dr. Steve Cordogan, Director Research, Evaluation and Student Info Services Arlington Heights School District
<u>Charter Schools Representative</u> Sheila Venson, Director Youth Connections Charter School	<u>Illinois Assn. of Administrators of Special Education</u> Dr. Susan Ireland Eisenhower Cooperative
<u>Bilingual Directors</u> Dr. Marion-Friebus-Flaman Schaumburg #54	<u>Bilingual Education Advisory Comm.</u> Dr. Carmen Acevedo Plainfield CCS District 202
<u>IASCD</u> Dr. Linda Sloat Mahomet Seymour CUSD #3	

Higher Education/Researchers/Testing

Dr. Harvey Smith Northern Illinois University	Dr. John Wick, President Wick Partners
Dr. Steve Ponisciak Consortium on Chicago School Research	Dr. Rob Meyer, Director Value-Added Research Center Wisconsin Center on Education Research
Dr. Katherine Ryan, Associate Professor Department of Educational Psychology	

Geographic Representation

<u>Southern Illinois</u> Dr. Keith Talley, Superintendent Carmi-White County #5	<u>Southern Illinois</u> Jason D. Henry, Superintendent Sesser-Valier CUSD #196
<u>Southern Illinois</u> Linda Flowers, Principal Thomas Elementary School	<u>Northern Illinois</u> Dr. Dennis Thompson, Superintendent Rockford Public Schools #205
<u>Suburban</u> Dr. Joan McGarry, Principal Elm Middle School	<u>Chicago</u> Dan Bugler City of Chicago Public School District #299
<u>Small/Rural District</u> Dr. Christina Leahy, Superintendent Allen-Otter Creek CCSD #65	<u>Central Illinois</u> Mary Weaver, Principal Tolono School District #7

Dr. Brian Gong - Executive Director of the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc., consulted with the Task Force and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) staff to provide technical information about growth models. The National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc. (NCIEA) was founded to address the changes currently underway in assessment and accountability in the United States. The Center's mission is to contribute to improved student achievement through enhanced practices in educational assessment and accountability. Dr. Gong and his staff work with states and other educational agencies to design and implement effective assessment and accountability policies and programs.

The Task Force on Growth Models held the following meetings which met the requirements of SJR 87:

- May 24, 2006, Illinois State Board of Education, Springfield
- July 14, 2006, Township High School District 214, Arlington Heights
- September 12, 2006, Youth Connection Charter School, Chicago
- October 31, Professional Development Alliance, Joliet
- November 14, Educational Services Center, District 87, Bloomington

Why Use Growth Models?

There are a variety of ways to analyze and interpret data. NCLB law requires that in calculating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) states must use a status model. These models are developed by individual states with federal approval. Illinois' model status model is attached.

However, most educators believe that Growth models, which show progress over time, are a more fair way to judge a school's improvement.

Status Models

Status models are "one-look-in-time" approaches to evaluating school performance. Schools, districts and states are required by NCLB to take a snapshot of students once a year. Status models typically use proficiency scores to evaluate performance, e.g., "exceeds standards", "meets standards", "below standards" and "academic warning".

Status models often use cross-cohort (or across grades) samples. An example would be looking at last year's fourth grade math performance and comparing it to this year's fourth grade math performance. This comparison has merit, but it doesn't capture the effects of specific grade level cohorts. The two grade level cohorts may significantly differ due to any number of factors that affect academic achievement. Last year's fourth grade class might have been exceptional and this year's class might have been average. In this case, scores in math (i.e., percent exceeds or meets standards) might have actually gone down. Would a drop in scores be reflective of schools or districts that are performing poorly? Not necessarily. Something is needed to ameliorate the effects of different grade level cohorts.

NCLB provides some flexibility by allowing states to average status scores across—at most—three years. Nonetheless, status models do not capture student growth over time. This type of

information is more effective in determining how students, classrooms, schools and districts are performing. Looking at how students perform over time, from grade to grade, is the focus of Growth Models.

Growth Models

Growth Models refer to a series of methods for looking at student performance over time. Two specific models are of particular interest: average growth models and value-added models. Note that there is not an agreed upon set of terms for growth models. What one researcher calls average growth models another might call average gain and still another might call value-added. Others might use the terms interchangeably.

Average Growth Models examine every individual student's performance from year to year. To determine the average growth for a classroom, grade level, school or district the appropriate formula is applied. Average growth is reported in scaled scores and are most reliable when the assessment used has a continuous range of score intervals, like that of a thermometer. Students at upper grade levels would have a higher range of scores than students at lower grade levels. To determine the effectiveness of classroom instruction or that of a grade level, school or district, the average growth per the unit in question (classroom, grade level, school, or district) is compared from year to year.

However, when students' scores are averaged some important data are obscured or eliminated. Demographic information, analysis of specific academic skills and other data are not used when student scores are averaged across any unit.

Value-added Models are statistical techniques that take multiple years of students' test data to estimate growth/gain in student performance at the classroom, school or district level. Value-added models are sophisticated techniques that make several assumptions and require substantial resources to calculate. They are estimates and thus have error associated with them. A variety of value-added methods have been employed by researchers and there is still substantial debate on which model is best, if any. Value-added techniques have shown promise in exploring aspects of growth in student performance in classrooms, schools and districts and have begun to be applied broadly in educational contexts. Value-added models often use scaled scores as their metrics, although other scores (e.g., NCEs) can and have been used as well. Value-added models are best estimated using tests with vertical scales - , but a vertically scaled test (continuous scale over grades) is not necessary to conduct a value-added analysis.

Through data reviews, schools can gain useful feedback about student and school performance. Educators can see how data support the work of the school community , measure progress in reading and math, identify improvement objectives and evaluate the effectiveness of school improvement interventions. Data reviews can also provide educators with information needed to set a direction for enhanced teaching and learning.

“Growth” measures are based on the learning done by individual students over time, essentially seeking to answer the question, “Did these students increase in what they know and is this increase enough?” Many people believe that growth is more valid because it focuses on students’

learning over time and it is related to schools helping students learn. In contrast, the status is a snapshot that measures performance at one point in time.

Federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Requirements – Pilot Program

In April 2005, Secretary Spellings announced a *New Path for the No Child Left Behind Act*—a set of principles and approaches to guide states as they measure their progress in meeting the No Child Left Behind goals. These goals include assessing all students in grades 3-8 and once in high school every year, breaking down results by student subgroup to help close the achievement gap, improving teacher quality and informing parents of their options in a timely manner. Above all, they must lead to all students achieving at grade level or better in reading and mathematics by 2014.

One approach requested by many states is the use of growth-based accountability models. These models hold promise as reliable and innovative methods to measure student achievement over time.

Therefore, in November 2005, Secretary Spellings announced a pilot program for qualified states to request the use of growth-based accountability models so their fairness and effectiveness could be evaluated. A qualified state must meet the assessment expectations of NCLB.

The USDOE received many requests by states to participate. Last May, the first two states, Tennessee and North Carolina, were approved for the pilot, which is ongoing. For 2006-2007, the State of Delaware was approved to use the growth model for the 2006-07 school year, while Arkansas and Florida are approved provided that their standards and assessment systems receive Departmental authorization by the end of the 2006-07 school year.

As a condition of participation, the states must share data on which schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under each model, the original status model and the new growth model. The USDOE will then gather this data and share it with other states and the public.

These states are meeting the principles of NCLB and their growth model proposals meet all seven core principles outlined by the USDOE last November. These principles are:

1. Ensure that all students are proficient by 2014 and set annual goals to ensure that the achievement gap is closing for all groups of students;
2. Set expectations for annual achievement based on meeting grade-level proficiency, not on student background or school characteristics;
3. Hold schools accountable for student achievement in reading / language arts and mathematics;
4. Ensure that all students in tested grades are included in the assessment and accountability system, hold schools and districts accountable for the performance of each student subgroup and include all schools and districts;
5. Include assessments in each of grades 3-8 and in high school for both reading/language arts and mathematics and ensure that they have been operational for more than one year and receive approval through the NCLB peer review process for the 2005-06 school year. The

assessment system must also produce comparable results from grade to grade and year to year;

6. Track student progress as part of the state data system; and
7. Include student participation rates and student achievement on a separate academic indicator in the state accountability system.

Illinois educators had expected and anticipated that growth models would be considered in the federal pilot for the purposes of providing a better and more accurate portrayal of how schools are performing to meet the requirements of higher student achievement and closing the achievement gap. However, after Secretary Spellings provided the guidance above, it became clear that AYP must still be met based on the current model. Thus, growth models are not intended to replace the current requirement that 100% of students meet AYP goals in 2014.

Task Force Meetings' Overview

The Task Force met as a whole four times over the last six months. Each meeting clarified and supported the recommendations that are listed at the end of this report. The members provided valuable feedback and input throughout each session.

At the first two meetings, Dr. Brian Gong presented to the Task Force a number of issues that need to be considered in building a statewide growth model system. He discussed how growth models were being used by the US Department of Education for school accountability.

Dr. Gong led the group through several exercises related to student performance which focused the Task Force on how a growth model would benefit schools, districts and the state. The Task Force felt the use of a growth model could be an engine to cause improvement. The group determined that the goals need to be clear, have links to teaching and learning, and do no harm to students, schools or districts.

Dr. Gong worked with the Task Force to consider the following questions in outlining what needs to be addressed as Illinois determines Growth Model development and purpose. Some of these questions are yet to be answered and need further study.

- ***What grades?*** To show growth over time, growth models need data which come from numerous points in time. Illinois tests grades 3 through 8 and then grade 11. Because Illinois only tests one grade in high school, the federal pilot would not accept Illinois high schools. However, with the focus on high school reform, educators are in need of more information about progress of their students and so the Task Force felt it was important to include high schools in the development of the growth model.

A subcommittee of the Task Force was formed to address the high school situation. That information is provided further in this report.

- ***How long?*** How much time does Illinois want to give students to meet a growth target? Growth models can use different time periods in which students would have to meet the targets. This needs to be studied further before a model is proposed.
- ***What model should be used?*** The State should study different models before decisions are made to adopt one.
- ***What are other states using?*** Tennessee is using a confidence interval model. They have been using a “value-added” approach for years for college admission. This could be a more reliable method for smaller schools and districts. The State should run a study on this.
- ***What resources are needed?*** If a growth model is utilized in Illinois, what resources are needed at the state and local levels?

The recommendations at the end of this report reflect the summary of the Task Force’s discussions. The above questions will need to be addressed if an Illinois growth model policy is developed.

Additional issues that were specific to Illinois and came from the Task Force discussions include the following:

1) **High School Growth Model Issues**

In July, 2006, a subcommittee of the Task Force met to discuss growth models for high schools. In Illinois, the state tests grades three through eight and grade 11. These are the data points from which the growth model can be developed. The distance between grade eight and grade 11 causes technical problems for validity of a growth model.

To determine growth for high schools, the state needs to have a mechanism to match students from eighth to 11th grade. With no test data points to include and with only one year of data from Student Information System (SIS), Illinois does not have data to link individual students from eighth grade to 11th grade.

Therefore, the committee considered three options for developing a method for growth models for high schools:

Review of Options for High Schools

There are three options for addressing the need for a high school growth model in Illinois:

1. Submit application to the US Department of Education for the growth model pilot - developed statewide
2. Develop a growth model statewide that meets Illinois’ needs but may not be accepted by US DOE
3. Develop a growth model for volunteer high schools statewide.

Considerations of options:

1. US DOE application for growth model pilot:

- No state has included high school for USDOE consideration in a pilot program for growth models.
- Illinois does not have the multi-year test data to support a growth model for high schools, nor will the three-year gap in data between 8th and 11th grade meet the needs of a growth model.
- Using pilot schools will not meet USDOE needs because they only recognize models including all schools.
- Illinois needs several years of annual test data for this to be feasible.
- The task force subgroup did not seem to feel that this line of action was feasible.

2) Statewide, even if not accepted by USDOE:

- Illinois would need to provide additional testing at high school level in order to have test data over time at the high school level.
- Currently, the most common growth model used at many high schools in Illinois involves ACT's EPAS system, with its eighth/ninth grade EXPLORE test, its ninth/10th grade PLAN and the use of retired ACT tests.
- This would require state funding for either state developed tests or purchased testing materials (such as EPAS) that could be used by all high schools.
- Illinois could develop an additional layer of accountability that would inform school improvement with a growth model.
- If Illinois added another layer of accountability, funds would have to be appropriated to provide for such a plan.

3) Statewide volunteers only:

- Currently, the most common growth model used at many high schools in Illinois involves ACT's EPAS system, with its eighth/ninth grade EXPLORE test, its ninth/10th grade PLAN and the use of retired ACT tests.
- The purchase of the EPAS system is a local district's decision. Not all districts have the resources to purchase the tests.
- Since the test results are processed for local districts, the state would need a way to warehouse student EXPLORE or PLAN data. The State would have to attach scores to the student ID numbers.
- The Illinois Interactive Report Card system (IIRC) is storing some of that data now on an individual district basis.
- At this time, there is no equating from EPAS to the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE).

While the above options should be considered, the Task Force felt strongly that if Illinois includes high schools the model should serve as a support to the schools rather than create another accountability system.

2) Alternative Schools

SJR 87 charged the Task Force with addressing Alternative Schools and their needs regarding Growth Model information. The Task Force needs more data and time to address the Alternative

School issues in detail. The Task Force recognizes the distinctiveness of alternative school student populations and goals. The Task Force recognizes that very few alternative schools have sufficient valid test scores to receive valid state accountability under the current NCLB/AYP requirements. The technical limitations of AYP for most alternative schools include highly mobile populations and population characteristics that limit full application of state/federal accountability models.

The Task Force recommends that alternative schools be included in a growth model/value added pilot to better understand accountability options for using data to measure school performance of students in alternative education programs and vulnerable student population groups in high schools.

To accomplish this, Illinois needs an alternative school accountability model that is consistent with mandates, reliable/valid across alternative schools, feasible at the local level and provides fair accountability for students and schools serving vulnerable student population groups.

It is further recommended that state lawmakers consider requiring school districts that have alternative schools to *annually evaluate* such schools. Such an accountability mandate should include “value-added” assessments to acknowledge/reward academic progress of students who begin far behind and are not yet achieving to the standards measured by state tests. Student Performance data from such evaluations could be used to supplement accountability information provided by AYP measures and could serve as back-up accountability information when there is insufficient test data to report to adequately evaluate AYP.

3) School Improvement Status and Growth Models

The Task Force would like to recommend that the growth model be considered as part of school improvement status. A growth model could be used to help determine school improvement status either using growth over time or as an option when schools are in status.

The Task Force believes that using growth data would focus school improvement work on how curriculum, instruction and assessment feed into restructuring.

Task Force Conclusions

The Task Force has come to the following determinations in the use and development of a growth model in Illinois:

- Illinois is not eligible to participate in the 2007 pilot due to the lateness of scores and peer review results.
- To participate in the pilot, Illinois must follow Federal requirements.
- Growth pilots are not intended to replace AYP goals for 100 percent of all students to achieve proficiency in 2014.
- High schools are difficult to measure with the current system due to one data point.
- Sufficient test data are not available yet for building growth models.

Even faced with these realities, the Task Force on Growth Models would like the State of Illinois to consider using a growth model approach to testing data but only if the following points are the foundation of the development:

- Build a model that is best for Illinois students and does no harm through additional sanctions.
- Shift the focus from sanctions to learning and instruction to improve achievement.
- Make the model and system fairer than the current system by showing improvement, even for schools with a high percentage of underperforming students who none-the-less are making progress.
- Focus on recognition rather than sanctions. Recognize those schools that make high gains in achievement growth.
- Make the data more useful to school improvement. Provide the necessary information/data to educators so districts can identify and drill down to the factors that influence learning.
- Provide support to educators in understanding data and its meaning.

Recommendations

Using these basic tenets, the Illinois Task Force on Growth Models makes the following recommendations. They are listed under four major categories:

I. Growth Model Development

- Provide support at the state level to research, develop algorithms and report growth model data to school/districts.
- Use a state algorithm that provides schools/districts with state average growth
 - Over time
 - For subgroups
 - For similar schools
- Provide resources for the Illinois State Board of Education to produce growth model reporting to schools.
- Consider how formative assessments can be used at the state level.
- Consider how growth can be used to recognize the progress and gains of schools in status.

II. Research

- Support local and state wide pilots using growth models including alternative schools. Use the results to help determine next steps and policy decisions.

- Research the impact of growth models on schools, districts and the state. Include the challenges and successes as well as the unintended consequences. Provide more study on how mobility impacts student improvement.
- Study and implement ways that growth model data could be used to support school improvement work.
- Study and implement ways that growth model data could be used for schools in status.

III. Support to Schools and Districts:

- Provide resources for professional development in data literacy.
- Provide funding for every district to be registered on the Interactive Illinois Report Card so they can easily access and analyze individual student data.
- Fund optional local benchmark assessments including the Explore/Plan for high schools.
- Integrate school improvement activities to include curriculum/instruction and assessment AND professional development.

IV. Alternative Schools:

Illinois needs an alternative school accountability model that is consistent with mandates, reliable/valid across alternative schools, feasible at the local level and provides a fair method of accountability for students and schools serving this vulnerable student population group.

It is recommended that state lawmakers consider requiring school districts that have alternative schools to *annually evaluate* such schools. Such an accountability mandate should include “value-added” assessments to acknowledge/reward academic progress of students who begin far behind and are not yet achieving to the standards measured by state tests. Student Performance data from such evaluations could be supplemental accountability information to AYP and be back-up accountability information when there is insufficient test data to report to adequately evaluate AYP.

In conclusion, the Task Force on Growth Models has now completed its charges as outlined above. The Task Force recommendations should be considered seriously in any state wide policy. For further information, please contact Becky McCabe, Division Administrator, Student Assessment, Illinois State Board of Education.