



VISION 20/20

Fulfilling the Promise of Public Education

Updated August 9, 2018

FROM VISION TO ACTION

In districts throughout Illinois, there are concerns regarding equity, access, and opportunities for continuous improvement. Specifically, Vision 20/20 has identified four priorities for the State of Illinois in order to have the most immediate and profound impact on public education: highly effective educators, 21st century learning, shared accountability, and equitable & adequate funding. Specific policy proposals for each priority can be found in the following pages.

Vision 20/20 Priorities



- Recruit and Retain High-Impact Educators
- Provide Relevant Professional Development



- Develop the "Whole Child"
- Invest in Early Childhood Education
- College and Career Readiness
- Expand Equity in Technology Access

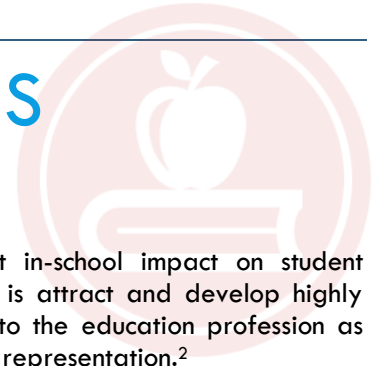


- Expand Educator Role and Responsibility in State Governance
- Implement a Balanced Accountability System
- Restructure Mandates



- Fund Education Based on Local Need
- Stabilize State Funding for Education
- Enhance District Flexibility to Increase Financial Efficiency

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE EDUCATORS



Our Vision for Highly Effective Educators

Research continues to show that teachers and administrators have the largest in-school impact on student achievement.¹ The best thing we as a state can do to improve public education is attract and develop highly effective educators. In particular, every effort must be made to draw minorities to the education profession as 2014 represented a shift in the U.S. student population to a majority-minority ethnic representation.²

Accountability, professional development, and rigor are all essential to the development of high-quality educational leaders across Illinois and are essential to ensuring there are highly effective teachers in our schools delivering exceptional instruction. Educators should also be encouraged and supported to take advantage of ongoing professional development.

Guiding Principles

We believe:

- High-quality teachers and administrators have the most immediate, positive effect on student outcomes.
- Strong teachers and educational leaders are a key component of a high-quality education for our students and our communities.
- Continuous, high-quality, job-embedded professional development and opportunities for educator collaboration are proactive, research-based components of an effective continuous improvement process.
- More minority teachers and educational leaders are needed to serve Illinois' increasingly diverse student population.
- Educators must hold other educators accountable to rigorous professional standards.

Rationale

Nationally, a majority of Americans have trust and confidence in public school teachers.³ Yet finding and hiring the best teachers and administrators is becoming more challenging as fewer individuals are entering the education profession. Of those who do choose to become an educator, eight percent of the nation's teachers leave the profession every year.⁴

Illinois schools have an increasing need to find minority teachers and administrators. Approximately half of Illinois students are minority students, yet 83 percent of Illinois teachers are white.⁵ Alternative licensure programs have been proven to recruit a higher percentage of minority candidates, math and science teachers, and candidates with experience outside of teaching and education.⁶ The recruitment of minority candidates is of particular benefit to minority students, who experience greater academic, personal, and social success when taught by teachers who belong to the same ethnic group.⁷

What Americans Think
(PDK/Gallup, 2015)

A majority of Americans
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The field of education continues to evolve as best practices are identified and new policies implemented. Especially in light of recent changes to the education system, professional development remains an integral part of the teaching and learning process. As such, professional development deserves appropriate attention. The ongoing, relevant professional development of educators is a necessary resource to ensure high-quality learning opportunities for our students.⁸ One particular form of professional development, mentoring for new teachers, principals, and superintendents, has a substantial impact on turnover reductions.⁹

Recommended State Policy

Recruit and Retain High-Impact Educators

Recruit Teachers into the Profession. Illinois must learn from successes in other states and nations to ensure all students have access to high-quality teachers through the development of a comprehensive teacher recruitment system that incorporates teaching clubs and scholarship programs targeted at middle and high school students, financial and social support services for students pursuing post-secondary education degrees, and alternative pathways.¹⁰ The development of a comprehensive guide and resources to becoming a teacher in Illinois should be created to address short-and long-term educator needs. Additional statewide recruitment strategies and incentives for hiring educators, along with more local control to grow your own educators, must be considered.

Create Education Licensure Reciprocity Agreements (Enacted as Public Act 99-0058 Education Reciprocity Agreements). To recruit and retain highly qualified teacher and administrator candidates, the state should allow and streamline education licensure reciprocity agreements, including content area endorsements, with states across the United States to ensure Illinois districts have access to the best quality candidates regardless of the state in which they received their initial license.

Expand Alternative Teaching Licensure Programs. Similarly, alternative teaching licensure should be expanded so desirable teacher candidates without licensure can participate in professional development programs and, with adequate and high-quality training, be allowed to teach at any school throughout the state with appropriate pedagogy courses, mentoring, and induction. Programs are particularly needed in low candidate pools, such as rural and high-poverty areas, and underserved content areas, including Career/Technical Education. To have the most immediate, positive impact alternative teaching programs should recruit well-educated individuals, incorporate tailored coursework, and provide an intense mentorship program.¹¹ Standards for entry into alternative teaching licensure programs must remain rigorous but allow additional routes to credentialing. A process to review deficient courses for undergraduate education degree programs should be examined. Sufficient, high-quality professional development prior to teaching and a long-term commitment beyond two years is necessary. University partnerships for flexibility into student teaching placement should also be considered.

Provide Student Loan Forgiveness and Tiered Incentives. Similar to the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), and in order to ensure a more diverse teaching population, the state should continue to support and appropriate funds to expand student loan forgiveness to all licensed individuals so educators, particularly minority educators, at all districts, not just low-income districts, can benefit. The support and expansion of loan forgiveness for all licensed individuals in underserved content areas (i.e., math, science, and special education) and those willing to work in underserved parts of the state (i.e., high poverty and rural) should be considered. Additional forgiveness amounts should be expanded and incentives for entering the education field should assist with career retention.

Establish Partnerships with Higher Education. ISBE and local districts should continue to partner with higher education institutions to establish consistent admission and program criteria, as well as classroom experience requirements for colleges and universities offering teacher and administrator licensures in Illinois. Each institution should involve an advisory council made up of active superintendents, principals, teachers, and business officials in the design of preparatory programs. Partnerships should continue to create pathways into education and expand dual credit programs through grants or job placement.

Provide Relevant Professional Development

Fully Fund Mentoring for New Educators. ISBE currently requires mentoring for new teachers, principals, and superintendents. The development of new educators is a high-priority. As such, the state should fully fund mentoring for new educators including immersion experiences with not-for-profit organizations such as YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, and Urban League to fully understand the various facets of community life. A community's racial and socio-economic context should be incorporated, so new educators fully understand the context of students' daily lives.

Allocate Collaboration Time. To create a culture of professional development, inclusive of teachers, staff, administrators, and Board members, districts should have sustained embedded professional development. Time for collaboration provides the opportunity to observe, discuss best practices, and develop effective instructional materials and strategies. Additional professional development supports should be examined through IL-EMPOWER structure.

Enhance Professional Learning and Innovation. Learning does not stop when an educator earns his or her degree; learning is a life-long process for educators. ISBE and the Regional Offices of Education/Intermediate Service Centers (ROE/ISCs), the Statewide School Management Alliance (IASA, IASB, IASBO, and IPA), teachers unions (IEA and IFT), other related organizations (e.g., ELN), and school districts should collaborate to create resources for professional development that meets the needs of each school. Across all forms of professional development, a focus on content, opportunities for active participation and 21st century learning, and alignment with other professional development leads to more successful learning experiences.¹² More local control to tailor professional development and enrichment for teachers should be considered.

21ST CENTURY LEARNING



Our Vision for 21st Century Learning

Education in Illinois should modernize its approach by delivering 21st century instruction that provides all students access to modern learning environments. Education should allow students to learn and apply knowledge, think creatively, and be well-prepared for a global citizenry. The definition of learning should be expanded to include social and emotional development, creativity, innovation, and higher-level thinking where student inspiration, engagement, and motivation are goals of the education process. Learning is not limited to the classroom or school day.

A 21st century education must address the role of technology in the broad definition of learning. Technology is an important tool that can enhance and augment the teaching and learning processes in our schools by increasing efficiencies, encouraging higher-level thinking, increasing student engagement, aiding in individualized instruction, and enhancing adult collaboration. However, there is currently a technology gap in Illinois schools, with less affluent schools unable to provide their students the benefits of technology in instruction. Partnerships with local businesses, organizations, and colleges can enhance student educational experiences, expand and improve communication, put more resources in the classroom, and expand instruction to better prepare students for college and the workplace.

Guiding Principles

We believe:

- Quality education requires high standards and expectations.
- All students have the right to be educated in quality facilities that are conducive to learning.
- An effective education system ensures that all students have equal access to a quality education.
- Creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, innovation, and social and emotional learning must be embedded into classroom instruction.
- A balanced and coherent assessment system is needed to individualize instruction.
- Public education is responsible for preparing students for college and careers, both known and unknown, as well as for global citizenship.
- Educators must be provided an environment conducive to innovation and the application of emerging technologies and practices.
- Actively engaged partnerships between school districts, non-profits, businesses, institutes of higher education, and health and human service providers lead to healthier, better-educated children.
- A strong home-school connection, as well as community and business engagement, is vital to equal access and a high-quality educational process.
- Districts should be equipped with enterprise level components to provide students a 21st century learning experience allowing access to high speed internet.
- Access to high-quality early childhood education has a significant impact on the longitudinal success of Illinois children.

Rationale

Creativity and innovation are critical to the future of our children, state, and nation's future. Therefore care must be given to nurture the creative and innovative spirit of our students. Recent analysis of results from the *Torrance Test for Creative Thinking* shows that scores for U.S. students have been on the decline for the last few decades.¹³ Several factors in the home, school, and society are suspected for the decline. An overemphasis on standardized testing for accountability purposes has caused a narrowing of the curriculum, less risk-taking among educators, and has pushed out courses and instructional methods that encourage student creativity and innovation.

When families are involved in their children's education, students have higher academic achievement, enroll in more challenging courses, have higher attendance rates, have better social skills, and are more likely to graduate high school and go on to college.¹⁴ Despite positive outcomes, family involvement varies from school to school with low-income students across Illinois less likely to have the benefit of direct family involvement.¹⁵

Illinois schools are charged with developing young adults prepared to actively participate in a global society. Not only are social skills and wellness essential for healthy, happy, and productive lives, a focus on the "whole child" has a positive impact on academic achievement. Teachers consider early learners' physical, mental, social, and emotional health as some of the most important prerequisites for academic success.¹⁶ As students grow, their emotional and social well-being continues to significantly impact learning and academic success.¹⁷ Students who feel supported by their parents, teachers, and peers experience increased motivation and engagement in school,¹⁸ resulting in enhanced student learning.¹⁹ Moreover, teacher encouragement, social support, and a sense of belonging are particularly instrumental for disadvantaged students.²⁰

High-quality early childhood education is linked to improved social, economic, and behavioral outcomes, particularly for low-income students and other disadvantaged populations.²¹ A study tracking preschool students through the age of twenty-seven found former preschool students had significantly higher earnings, economic status, educational attainment, marriage rates, and lower rates of arrest.²² A majority of Americans value early childhood education, and 70 percent of Americans favor using federal money to make sure high-quality preschool programs are available for all children.²³

**What Americans Think
(Gallup, 2014)**

70% of Americans favor using federal money to make sure high-quality preschool programs are available for all children.

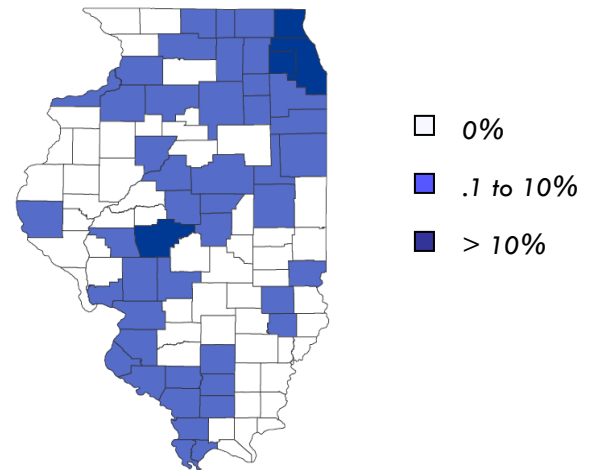
Ongoing, formative assessments allow individual student data and feedback to be incorporated into instruction throughout the school year,²⁴ encouraging a learning-focused environment. With high-quality, continuous professional development, teachers can learn to review and use formative assessment to individualize instruction for each student based on individual strengths, weaknesses, interests, and learning styles. The current, single end-of-year state summative assessment schedule, in contrast, provides information necessary for principal and teacher accountability measures without providing the ongoing assessment data necessary to have the greatest possible impact on student learning.

Research indicates participation in a dual-credit program (taking courses for both high school and college credit) results in improved college attendance rates, college grades, college persistence, and college completion rates.²⁵ Opportunities for students to experience college and careers while in high school support classroom learning and prepare students for post-high school success. Currently, the decision to offer programming in conjunction with post-secondary institutions is voluntary.²⁶ Our goal is to ensure equity and equitable access for all students in Illinois.

While dual-credit and comparable post-secondary programs allow students the opportunity to experience college prior to graduation, internship and apprenticeship programs allow students to explore career fields and gain real world skills and experiences. Young adults with meaningful work experiences are more likely to understand their career options and set attainable, well-informed career goals.²⁷ This focus on careers is especially important as nationally 40 percent of students change their major during their first three years of attendance at a four-year institution,²⁸ in many cases increasing the time and money spent on higher education and reducing persistence, particularly among lower income students.

Percent Area with Broadband Speeds Greater than One Gbps²⁹

The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) recommends an internet connection of at least one Gbps per 1,000 students and staff in order to fully access all the educational resources available online using best practices in strategic design of networks for education on scalable, affordable, reliable, resilient networks, using vendor neutral resources and tools.³⁰ Access to adequate bandwidth provides students with direct access to a world of learning materials and has become a fundamental infrastructure need for instruction and assessment.



Recommended State Policy

Develop the “Whole Child”

Align and Expand Social and Emotional Standards. As student outcomes expand from a pure academic focus to the “whole child,” the measures by which we evaluate school effectiveness should also change. Current social and emotional standards should be aligned across curriculum and expanded to include safely and cyberbullying resources.

Promote Individualized Learning, Creativity, and Innovation. Children learn in different ways and at different speeds. Attention should be paid to each student’s learning through individualized learning plans, student goal setting, and differentiated instruction. Additional time and resources are necessary to support teachers in providing individualized instruction and experiences to support each individual student’s learning. Students should be provided the flexibility to follow their own pursuits and passions that will motivate them to be life-long learners. Learning standards should include 21st Century needs and skills. We encourage an examination of current policies to maintain and enhance educational opportunities (STEAM) that encourage student creativity and innovation.

Engage Parents, Family, and Community. In order for students to achieve at high levels, families must be involved in the learning process. To encourage effective home-school partnerships, districts should welcome all families into the school community, communicate effectively, and support student learning both at home and at school.³¹ Providing additional education on the importance of student attendance should also be considered.

Develop a Balanced State Assessment System. Educators need the state assessment to produce timely and reliable data that can effectively inform instruction and support innovative instructional practices. A balanced state assessment system (consistent for at least five to seven years) should be aligned, consistent, flexible, fully funded by the state, based on realistic and effectively communicated timelines, and offer relevant professional development. The assessment system should also be expanded to include multiple optional iterations every year instead of continuing a system that demands additional assessment supplements that are not directly aligned to the end-of-year state assessment or the new Illinois Learning Standards. By committing to the implementation of a robust state assessment system, teachers can monitor students throughout the school year, identifying students who are struggling or need assistance early in the school year.

Invest in High-quality Early Childhood Education

Offer Incentives for Expanding Early Learning Opportunities and Full Day Kindergarten Education. In order to capitalize on the benefits of early childhood education, the state should continue to increase funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant and create better incentives for districts to invest in early learning. Districts have successfully offered infant, toddler, and preschool programs and partnered effectively with other early

childhood providers in their communities. The state should continue efforts to support districts in that work. Additional incentives to support full-day kindergarten, parent education, and support services should also be explored while expanding and protecting existing programs.

College and Career Readiness

Promote Partnerships with Business, Industry, and Post-Secondary Institutions. Promoting district and student participation would increase the number of students, particularly low-income, minority and students with disabilities, reaping the long-term benefits of programs offered in conjunction with business, industry, and post-secondary institutions. Greater strides should be made to offer a wide-range of quality dual-credit and technical education programs consistently throughout the state, so all students can benefit. For instance, the state could allow students completing college level coursework to substitute the course for core graduation requirements to promote participation. In addition, high school course progressions and testing should be aligned with community colleges, local industry requirements, and other post-secondary institutions. Additional incentives for teachers to teach dual credit courses should also be considered.

Encourage Career Exploration. To encourage local partnerships with businesses, the state should increase graduation requirement flexibility for students who participate in internships or apprenticeships. To increase outcomes, districts should focus on business-sponsored experiences, which are more likely to provide meaningful learning opportunities, limit options to only those companies with a plan to integrate students in a manner that enhances their education experience, and require the assignment of a mentor at the worksite.³²

Expand Equity in Technology Access

Provide High Speed Internet Connectivity to Every School and Community. Large investments in technology and infrastructure to meet SETDA internet connection recommendations are needed to ensure adequacy and equity. Infrastructure investments should be pursued through funding partnerships with higher education, health and human services, and government entities for both school and community internet access to ensure learning continues beyond the school building and can enhance local economic opportunities. Access to connectivity and technology devices should be expanded.

Incorporate Technology in State Learning Standards. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) should ensure that digital learning skills are embedded into the Illinois Learning Standards. ISBE should continue to support educators with digital learning professional development into the curriculum.

SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY



Our Vision for Shared Accountability

Effective governance structures are essential to ensuring a high-quality education enterprise across the state. For governance and accountability systems to be effective there must be a balance between state-mandated oversight structures and local governance. By allowing greater flexibility in local decision-making, individual districts can innovate and best impact student performance. Greater current educator input and representation on the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) would provide practitioner perspectives to support, involve, and advocate for local districts and their students, leading to results-driven legislation and policy that benefits the student learning process.

Guiding Principles

We believe:

- Student learning should be the number one priority of the education system.
- Educators should be held to the highest professional standards and be accountable for student learning.
- Accountability for student learning rests in the local school district.
- Educators' experiences and voices are essential to crafting effective education policy.
- Unfunded state mandates and regulations limit school effectiveness.

Rationale

Educators work with students every day, teaching students and managing schools. In addition to hands-on work experience, teachers and administrators have completed extensive coursework both prior to and throughout their careers. Among Illinois teachers, sixty-one percent hold a master's degree,³³ and a master's degree is required for nearly all administrator positions.³⁴ Educators' experience is invaluable to legislators, and they should be consulted in crafting education policy, specifically regarding current strengths and weaknesses of the education system, feasibility, unintended consequences, and implementation planning.

Teacher and administrator accountability is an important tool to assist teachers and administrators in continuously improving their profession. However, in order to achieve desired outcomes, accountability must measure districts against historical performance, focusing on continuous improvement versus the comparison of diverse districts to a single standard or to each other. Multiple measures must also be utilized to provide a comprehensive view of performance and take a deeper look at outcomes.³⁵

When educator accountability occurs, there is a reduced need for strict oversight. Currently, the state has a large scope of guidelines established for everything from requiring districts to provide drivers' education to requiring the use of upgraded biodiesel fuel and green cleaning products. Mandates and other burdensome regulations necessitate additional cost and bureaucracy for compliance, which may result in decreased resources for student learning. Improved student outcomes and student experiences in the classroom must remain the priority of Illinois' public education system. Any mandate that does not directly support that mission should be reconsidered.

Recommended State Policy

Expand Educator Role and Responsibility in State Governance

Allow Current Educators Representation on the Illinois State Board of Education (HB4284 - Anticipated to be signed by the Governor - sent June 21, 2018). HB4284 amends the configuration of the Illinois State Board requiring that three members must represent the educator community. Allowing practicing educators to serve on ISBE provides professional expertise that would help guide the implementation of state initiatives and help ensure that oversight and regulatory efforts positively impact student learning. This legislation needs to be monitored to

ensure proper implementation and that educator experience is translated into effective educational practice at the State Board level.

Implement a Balanced Accountability System

Adopt a Balanced Accountability Model (Enacted as Public Act 99-193 Balanced Accountability Model). The state must carefully monitor the implementation of the new accountability model to ensure a focus on continuous improvement, recognize the diversity of struggling schools, measure systems' capacities, and eliminate achievement gaps across the state. A balanced accountability model would allow local flexibility, identification of systems' capacities, promote shared accountability, and be sensitive to local district improvements.

Multiple measures should be used to enhance a dashboard for each district inclusive of student performance, adherence to best practices, and contextual evidence of systems' capacities and continuous improvement at the local district level. The dashboard should provide the data necessary to determine the process by which schools and districts are reviewed in an effort to improve student outcomes, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve instructional quality for college and career/workforce readiness to produce a productive citizenry. The model should include a series of incentives and disincentives at the district-level based on a district's initial results and subsequent performance. Districts should be the central story teller of the quality of the educational system.

Restructure Mandates

Distinguish Between Essential and Discretionary Regulations. Schools are required to abide by numerous funded and unfunded mandates and regulations that impede the localities ability to focus on serving students. To ensure educating students is the first and foremost priority of schools, promote flexibility and local decision-making, as well as address financial and operational hardships, before prorogating any new legislation or regulations, the General Assembly and ISBE must first have met an educational standards test:

1. The legislation or regulation is locally supported,
2. The legislation or regulation will be of educational value to a significant population impacted (students, teachers, etc.),
3. The legislation or regulation will be funded at the level necessary for full implementation, and
4. The legislation or regulation will not go into effect for at least one year from the time of passage to allow for adequate planning.

School districts would be required to conduct board hearings and request input from the public and local bargaining units prior to approving decisions related to supporting new legislation or regulations.

Allow Districts to Opt Out of Mandates and Regulations. Legislation should be passed to allow school districts that forego state funding or demonstrate high performance to operate with greater flexibility from state-level regulations, consistent with existing policies and the original intent of charter schools. Legislation should be passed to allow districts that meet the criteria described above to submit a flexibility request. If approved, the district would be granted a four-year opt out from identified mandates consistent with the statutory freedoms afforded to Illinois charter schools. By allowing districts operating without state funds, or exceeding desired student outcomes, to opt out of process-specific mandates, the state can focus on supporting and improving the districts that need assistance the most while reducing state education costs.

EQUITABLE & ADEQUATE FUNDING



Our Vision for Equitable & Adequate Funding

Central to the mission of education in our democracy is providing equal educational access and opportunities to all students. To accomplish that end, it is time to update the state's funding system, which cyclically fails to fund our poorest schools. It is our state's moral duty to do all we can to ensure equitable and adequate funding is distributed for every student through increased state fiscal stability and greater flexibility in funding decisions based on local need. It is also to our state's economic advantage for its educational systems to develop a highly educated citizenry and a prepared workforce for the future.

Guiding Principles

We believe:

- The State has the primary responsibility of financing an efficient system of high-quality public educational institutions and services.
- The distribution of state education funds should be proportional to the percentage of high-need students in each district.
- The state is responsible for adequacy in education funding, ensuring every student across the state a quality educational experience in an instructional setting conducive to learning.
- The "Five Funding Principles" of Adequacy, Simplicity, Transparency, Equity, and Outcomes-Focused (ISBE) are relevant and should be primary considerations in the development of a new funding plan.
- Investing in education now is fundamental to job creation and improving the general state economy, reduces the risk of incarceration, and lowers the potential costs of welfare, therefore making it beneficial to all stakeholders including small business, large business, and all taxpayers.
- Providing autonomy and flexibility to local districts allows them to match resources most effectively with local needs.

Definitions

Terms referenced in school funding discussions are often undefined, leading to confusion and varied understanding of intended meaning. To that end, we define the following:

Adequacy: Refers to the level of funding sufficient for every child in a school district to have access to a high-quality education that provides meaningful opportunities to learn.

Equity: The responsibility of the state to ensure that every school district will receive sufficient funding from a combination of local, state, and federal sources to provide a program of instruction where every child has the access and support to achieve a high-quality education.

Evidence-Based Funding Model: Identifies how much money per pupil is needed in each district to educate all students according to research and best practices. To determine this per pupil need, the model:

- Draws from research and evidence-based best practices to identify those educational delivery strategies and their resource needs that are linked to student learning gains
- Attempts to "back" each resource recommendation with references to research and/or best practices
- Draws from several comprehensive school reform models, which are based on research-based practices
- Draws from a synthesis of the best professional judgment panels

Rationale

As an industry, education is one of the largest employers in the state. School leaders run a business, in many cases one of the largest businesses in their communities. At their core, school leaders are business managers as well as educators. School districts are not-for-profit businesses, but still strive for the same goals of all businesses: better outcomes through greater efficiency. Districts need the autonomy and reliable financing to operate effectively according to sound business practices.

What Americans Think
(PDK/Gallup, 2015)

Americans consider lack of financial support as the biggest problem facing public schools in their community.

Nationally, Americans consider lack of financial support as the biggest problem facing public schools in their community.³⁶ Investments in public education not only contribute directly to local economies, but also result in an average ten percent return on investment in income across a student's life.³⁷ The addition of non-financial benefits to society for each dollar spent on education result in an even greater return on investment. As states across the nation struggle to increase the competitiveness of their economies, research indicates expanding access to quality education is the single best thing a state can do to improve their economy, with increases in educational attainment linked to increased worker productivity and a reduction in reliance on state and federal aid.³⁸

One funding model that addresses these concerns is the Evidence-Based Model developed as part of the Illinois School Finance Adequacy Study in 2010,* which provides a logical, research-based approach to account for adequacy in educational funding. The evidence-based model is built to align funding with research-proven techniques for improving student achievement. As a result, the model accounts for diversity in student populations instead of proposing funding guidelines that are consistent across student populations.³⁹

Illinois' current financial condition creates a challenge to ensuring adequacy of funding for all Illinois students. Illinois struggles with a structural deficit, meaning costs for basic human services, adjusting only for inflation and population growth, increase at a faster rate than revenues. Therefore, systemic modifications are essential for the sustainability of our state and education system. Inadequacies of the current Illinois funding model do not provide the children of Illinois the opportunities necessary to compete in an ever-changing global economy.

Recommended State Policy

Fund Education Based on Local Need

Adopt an Evidence-Based Funding Model. (Enacted as Public Act 100-0465 - Evidence-Based Funding for Student Success Act). Fully funding districts based on the model would ensure adequate funding for districts to locally determine and deliver appropriate and effective educational experiences to every student. For greatest efficiency, districts should be allowed flexibility to allocate state funds throughout their local district allowing them to better align resources to student needs. Resource accountability and transparency are also achievable with this model, especially for districts that have high student needs and do not produce adequate student outcomes or maintain financial stability.

To reach the goal of adequate funding by 2027 the General Assembly must allocate more than the minimum funding level. Maximizing new resources into school districts over the next two to five years should have the effect of increasing education funding by several billion dollars and eliminating the gap between adequacy and

* The Illinois School Finance Adequacy Study Evidenced-Based Model incorporates the following research-based elements in their calculations: specialist teachers (20 percent of number of core teachers for elementary and middle, 33 percent for high school), instructional facilitators (1 per 200 students), summer school and extended day class size (15:1 for half the number of low income students), regular school day class size (15:1 for K-3, 25:1 for 4-12, and 7:1 for alternative and small schools), tutors (minimum of 1 or 1 for every 100 low income students), English Language Learner (ELL) teachers (1 per 100 ELL students), special education teachers (1 per 150 students), special education aides (0.5 per 150 students), one principal, one assistant principal, one secretary, clerical staff (1 per elementary and middle, 3 per high school), non-instructional aides (2 per elementary and middle, 3 per high school), guidance counselors (1 per 250 students in middle and high school), pupil support staff (1 per 100 low income students), one library and media tech (1 per 600 students above 1,000). In addition, money is set aside for supplies, technology, student activities, gifted and talented education, professional development, assessments, and central office costs on a per student basis.

current spending. Until funding for all schools is close to adequacy, it will be unfair to make any universal analysis with the new accountability system results.

Stabilize State Funding for Education

Enhance State Spending. Enhanced state funding should be identified and secured to meet the needs of students and the continually expanding services that public schools are counted on to deliver above and beyond those provided through the evidence-based funding model. For example, differences and inequities remain in the areas of special education, early childhood and transportation. Additional and dedicated resources are needed to address these areas. Educational leaders understand school finances can only be healthy with state assistance and that providing adequate school funding for children is a primary responsibility of state government. At the same time, districts should continue to pursue efficiencies, including but not limited to shared service agreements and other cooperative arrangements.

Ensure Safe Schools. Dedicated funding needs to be provided to ensure the ongoing safety of our students when they go to school each day. Each local district should determine how to best utilize these dollars to maximize their effectiveness based on their unique needs; be it upgrading facilities, installing security cameras, hiring resource officers, training teachers or conducting school climate seminars with students. There is no one-size-fits-all answer to address school safety, but each school and district needs additional resources to ensure each school is safe.

Restructure State Revenues to Match the 21st Century Economy. Revisions to the current state revenue structure are necessary to match our 21st century economy, better serve all Illinois taxpayers, and ensure sufficient funding for education. Legislation should be passed to both eliminate the Illinois state deficit and provide necessary funds for essential services, including education.

Protect Local Resources. Localities need stability in their revenue streams. Measures need to be taken to prohibit any reduction of revenues of funds that have been previously allocated to schools. This can occur in situations such as Tax-Increment Financing (TIF) or Cook County Personal Property Replacement Tax (CCPRT). School districts should be allowed to vote, for example, how much of their funding should be allocated for an approved project.

Restructure the Ramp for Unfunded Pension Obligations. With more and more of the incremental increase in annual revenues going to the “pension ramp” it is imperative that the ramp be restructured to allow for more certainty that revenues will be available to fund the evidence-based formula and enhance state funds for other needs as previously noted.

MOVING FORWARD

Vision 20/20 is a process that will lead to meaningful and lasting change by serving as a blueprint for public education policy and is intended to be a decision-making framework to guide ongoing advocacy and align public educators around a common vision for the future. In collaboration with lawmakers and other stakeholders, the policies outlined in this document can be enacted as part of a continuous improvement process to improve the education experiences and outcomes of all Illinois students for the benefit of the entire state of Illinois.

Vision 20/20 is a long-term plan that challenges the State Legislature and Governor, along with all stakeholders, to take action to fulfill the promise of public education in Illinois by the year 2020.

For more information about the Vision 20/20 Initiative please visit <http://www.illinoisvision2020.org>

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