




**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** The Honorable JB Pritzker, Governor  
The Honorable Jim Durkin, House Minority Leader  
The Honorable Don Harmon, Senate President  
The Honorable Dan McConchie, Senate Minority Leader  
The Honorable Emanuel “Chris” Welch, Speaker of the House

**FROM:** Dr. Carmen I. Ayala   
State Superintendent of Education

**DATE:** September 15, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Competency-Based Education Pilot Program Recommendation

The completion of the mandated evaluation of the Competency-Based Education Pilot Program and subsequent recommendation on the future of the pilot program has been issued by Superintendent Ayala, as presented to the Illinois State Board of Education regular meeting on August 17, 2022. The evaluation and recommendation were completed and are being transmitted to the General Assembly pursuant to [110 ILCS 148/](#) Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act and commensurate with the guidelines set forth for the pilot program in [Part 1.423 Competency-Based High School Graduation Requirements Pilot Program](#). The attached document includes a summary of the evaluation and the Superintendent’s recommendation to continue the pilot program for a minimum of three years.

This report is transmitted on behalf of the State Superintendent of Education. For additional copies of this report or for more specific information, please contact Amanda Elliott, Executive Director, Legislative Affairs at (217) 782-6510 or [aelliott@isbe.net](mailto:aelliott@isbe.net).

**cc:** Secretary of the Senate  
Clerk of the House  
Legislative Research Unit  
State Government Report Center

# Competency-Based Education Pilot Program Evaluation and Recommendation

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Pursuant to 110 ILCS 148/

August  
2022

[isbe.net](http://isbe.net)



**Illinois**  
State Board of  
Education

## ISBE Competency-Based Education Pilot Summary of External Evaluation and Recommendations

In accordance with the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) Act,<sup>1</sup> ISBE conducted an evaluation<sup>2</sup> during the 2021-22 school year using external evaluators who analyzed data collected from school districts participating in the program.<sup>3</sup>

- Broadly, there were three primary implementation approaches: course-specific (e.g., Algebra I only, all English language arts courses), grade-level cohort(s), and school- or districtwide.
- No statistically significant differences were found in four- and five-year graduation rates and enrollment in postsecondary education at 12- and 16- months post-graduation between schools with students enrolled in competency-based education (CBE) courses and those not enrolling students in such courses.
- Student enrollment in CBE courses by school year is provided below:

School Year	Total number of Illinois K-12 Students Participating in CBE
2016-17	14,554
2017-18	16,528
2018-19	18,767
2019-20	21,691
2020-21	21,117

### Recommendation:

The PWR Act provides three general options for the required recommendation from the state superintendent: elimination, modification, or expansion of the pilot program.

Staff recommends **modification**. This is the most prudent course of action when factoring in disruptions to schooling and the implementation of the CBE pilot. Even so, findings suggest the following modifications:

- ISBE should extend the pilot for a minimum of three years to allow current participants to continue collecting data on student outcomes.
- ISBE will review current program participants to ensure that each site has submitted a complete implementation plan. Those that have not can be notified and could have 60 days to complete and submit.
- To qualify to continue in the program, a school must submit an implementation plan to ISBE that meets all requirements set forth in Illinois Administrative Code 1.423.
  - ISBE will set a reasonable due date. Sites submitting a satisfactory plan that meets all requirements set forth in ISBE Rule will be granted an extension.
  - Sites that do not submit a satisfactory plan by the due date could no longer be considered a participating site in the pilot program.
- ISBE staff will tighten up data collection in the Student Information System (SIS) on student participation and outcome measures for district reporting.

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<sup>1</sup> The Competency-based Education High School Graduation Requirements pilot program was legislated by the [PWR Act](#) of 2016.

<sup>2</sup> *During the 2021-22 school year, the state superintendent of education or designee shall evaluate the school districts participating in the program.*

<sup>3</sup> ISBE adopted rules to guide the application, approval, and implementation of the pilot program in [Part 1.423 Competency-Based High School Graduation Requirements Pilot Program](#).

- It is recommended that an evaluation be conducted again in three years.
  - Include four-year cohort completers and longitudinal trends.
  - Standardize reporting procedures and identify data to be reviewed annually by districts following implementation.
- ISBE will review current data reporting systems to identify and implement improvements in the tracking of students participating in CBE.
- As part of this effort, ISBE will develop guidance and training for the field to ensure appropriate understanding for more consistent reporting of data in SIS.
- ISBE will collaborate with sites to improve local data monitoring and identification of learning measures for the tracking of outcomes related to CBE that are meaningful to students, schools, and families.
- ISBE will continue to work with the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Board of Higher Education to support closer collaboration with postsecondary institutions to address transcript issues.
  - The formal awarding and transfer of academic credits on high school transcripts for students participating in CBE can be problematic. There are concerns related to credit transfers and the awarding of scholarships.