




Illinois State Board of Education

Dr. Tony Sanders, State Superintendent of Education
Dr. Steven Isoye, Chair of the Board

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Tony McCombie, House Minority Leader
The Honorable Don Harmon, Senate President
The Honorable John Curran, Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable Emanuel “Chris” Welch, Speaker of the House
Steven Isoye, Chair, State Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Tony Sanders 
State Superintendent of Education

DATE: December 15, 2023

SUBJECT: State Education Equity Committee Progress Report

The Illinois State Board of Education respectfully submits this report on behalf of the State Education Equity Committee to the General Assembly, and State Board of Education in order to fulfill the requirements set forth in Public Act 102-0458, which states the following duty shall be exercised:

The Committee shall recognize that, while progress has been made, much remains to be done to address systemic inequities and ensure each and every child is equipped to reach the child's fullest potential and shall:

- (1) Guide its work through the principles of equity, equality, collaboration, and community;
- (2) Focus its work around the overarching goals of student learning, learning conditions, and elevating educators, all underpinned by equity;
- (3) Identify evidence-based practices or policies around these goals to build on this State's progress of ensuring educational equity for all its students in all aspects of birth through grade 12 education; and
- (4) Seek input and feedback on identified evidence-based practices or policies from stakeholders, including, but not limited to, parents, students, and educators that reflect the rich diversity of Illinois students.

The Committee shall submit its recommendations to the General Assembly and the State Board of Education no later than January 31, 2022. By no later than December 15, 2023 and each year thereafter, the Committee shall report to the General Assembly and the State Board of Education about the additional progress that has been made to achieve educational equity.

This progress report is transmitted on behalf of the state superintendent of education. For additional copies of this report or for more specific information, please contact Dana Stoerger, executive director of Legislative Affairs at (217) 782-6510 or dstoerge@isbe.net.

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

2023 State Education Equity Committee Report

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House Bill 1633(Public Act 103-0422)

On August 4, 2023, Governor JB Pritzker signed HB 1633 ([PA 103-0422](#)) into law, thereby making changes to the existing State Education Equity Committee (SEEC), which was originally created by HB 3114 ([PA 102-0458](#)).

This new act changed the composition of the committee by adding two members.

The Committee consists of the State Superintendent of Education or the State Superintendent's designee, who shall serve as chairperson, and one member from each of the following organizations appointed by the State Superintendent:

- (1) At least two educators who each represent a who represent a different statewide professional teachers' organization.
- (2) A professional teachers' organization located in a city having a population exceeding 500,000.
- (3) A statewide association representing school administrators.
- (4) A statewide association representing regional superintendents of schools.
- (5) A statewide association representing school board members.
- (6) A statewide association representing school principals.
- (7) A school district serving a community with a population of 500,000 or more.
- (8) A parent-led organization.
- (9) A student-led organization.
- (10) One community organization that works to foster safe and healthy environments through advocacy for immigrant families and to ensure equitable opportunities for educational advancement and economic development.
- (11) An organization that works for economic, educational, and social progress for African Americans and promotes strong sustainable communities through advocacy, collaboration, and innovation.
- (12) One statewide organization whose focus is to narrow or close the achievement gap between students of color and their peers.
- (13) An organization that advocates for healthier school environments in this state.
- (14) One statewide organization that advocates for partnerships among schools, families, and the community; provides access to support; and removes barriers to learning and development, using schools as hubs.
- (15) One organization that advocates for the health and safety of Illinois youth and families by providing capacity-building services.
- (16) An organization dedicated to advocating for public policies to prevent homelessness.
- (17) Other appropriate state agencies as determined by the State Superintendent.

(18) An organization that works for economic, educational, and social progress for Native Americans and promotes strong sustainable communities through advocacy, collaboration, and innovation.

(19) A Individual with a disability or a statewide organization representing or advocating on behalf of individuals with disabilities. As used in this paragraph, “disability” has the meaning given to that term in Section 10 of the Disabilities Services Act of 2003.

Additionally, as part of the report required under subsection (g), by no later than December 15, 2024, the Committee shall provide recommendations that may assist the State Board of Education in identifying diverse subject matter experts to help inform policy through tasks forces, committees, and commissions the State Board oversees.



State Education Equity Committee Membership

November 2023

Lisa Bouillion Diaz

*Director and Assistant Dean, University of Illinois
Extension 4-H Youth Development Program*

Evangelina Covarrubias

*Executive Director of Office of Equity
Chicago Public Schools*

Dr. Nakia Hall

*Associate Executive Director of Field & Equity
Services, Illinois Association of School Boards*

Susan Hudson

*Special Education Teacher
Thornton Township HSD 205*

Jennifer Jaeger

*Community Services Director
City of Rockford*

Jenna Jiang

*Student Adviser
ISBE Student Advisory Council*

Dr. Michael Karner

*Regional Superintendent
Lake County ROE*

Dr. Nashwa Mekky

*Chief People, Equity, and Culture Officer
Illinois Math and Science Academy*

Dr. Nacole Milbrook

*Chief Program Officer
Youth Guidance*

Megan Mutti

*Director
Family Matters Parent Training & Information
Center*

Dr. Kimako Patterson

*Chief of Staff
Illinois State Board of Education*

Alyssa Phillips

*Education Attorney
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless*

Amber Phillips-Graham

*Elementary Teacher
Cahokia SD 187*

Silvia Rogel

*Director of Strategic Partnerships and External
Affairs, Illinois Resource Center*

Dr. Brad Skertich

*Superintendent
Collinsville CUSD 10*

Leonor Torres

*Spanish Teacher
City of Chicago SD 299*

Kenneth Varner

*Community Engagement Manager
Healthy Schools Campaign*

Dr. Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro

*Director of Education Policy and Research
Latino Policy Forum*

Dr. Dorene Wiese

*Founding President
American Indian Association of Illinois*

R. Turner Winston

*Urbana High School PTSA President
Urbana SD 116*

SEEC Learning Conditions Subcommittee

The Learning Conditions Subcommittee had three recommendations related to the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. They were:

1. Change the “top 20 percent metric” to districts that are 20 percent above the statewide benchmark and districts that may not be in the identified 20 percent but are experiencing challenges with a particular identified group. Remove the exemption that requires a minimum of 50 students in a category. Allow for ISBE to promulgate Administrative Rules to establish an exclusionary discipline benchmark and accountability for data submission noncompliance.
2. Allocate and reallocate Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) to the top 20 percent, or districts that are 20 percent above the statewide benchmark, as well as higher-poverty districts to help districts be proactive, co-active, and reactive to discipline issues. Target EBF for training to address discipline and implicit bias issues.
3. Create a task force/committee to look deeper into the issue of student discipline from the state level to the district level to identify lingering and districtwide issues that require support to achieve improvement in exclusionary discipline. Identify best practices and evidence-based strategies.

ISBE has created resources to share evidence-based best practices regarding student discipline, equal opportunity, and social-emotional learning. ISBE has formed a partnership with the University of Illinois-Springfield and Loyola University Chicago to create the Illinois Partnership for Disciplinary Equity with the aim of providing school districts with help and support necessary to make enduring changes to discipline and create more equitable, restorative, and empathetic schools. Some resources include professional development learning programs and certificates focused on empathetic instruction and school discipline reform.

The ISBE [Student Care](#) Department is hosting a four-part webinar series titled “Discipline Dialogues.” This series will address best practices, resources, and the implementation of school discipline plans. The first webinar was hosted on November 9, 2023. The others will occur in December 2023, March 2024, and May 2024. The webinars will include presentations from ISBE partners and staff as well as district administrators. Districts have an opportunity to gain insight into the journey other districts have taken to be removed from ISBE's Exclusionary Discipline Top 20% list and policies and practices they put in place to improve their school's discipline and culture.

ISBE releases an Exclusionary Discipline Top 20% list to bring awareness to districts of their practices and how some may need to improve policies and strategies to create a more inclusive school environment. Schools that remain on this list for three years in a row then have to submit remediation plans to ISBE on how they plan to improve their disciplinary practices.

The Student Care department also provides families and districts with technical assistance support and guidance pertaining to [school discipline](#). It provides parents with resources that help them advocate for their children when it comes to disciplinary actions of their local school district. The ISBE school discipline staff also provides support to districts pertaining to best practices, improvement planning and coding, and data relating to school discipline.

Another initiative was to release a survey to districts. This survey gathered data and insight on the support district leaders feel they need to help improve their school as it relates to discipline. This was an effort to inform the work ISBE provides to districts.

The State Board of Education has been working to provide resources for districts that have higher rates of expulsions, suspensions, and racial disproportionality. Information on best practices and strategies is shared via webinars and partnerships to create a safe and inclusive environment for each student across Illinois. Students are more engaged and included in the classroom when there is less reliance on exclusionary discipline techniques. Focusing on the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students enables the creation of supportive environments.

SEEC Student Learning Subcommittee

The Student Learning Subcommittee had two recommendations related to the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. They were:

The Student Learning Subcommittee recommends:

1. Funding a line item that includes implicit bias training, cultural knowledge and understanding, historical events, teacher-student relationships, student-centered classrooms, and embedded professional development.
2. ROEs/ISCs will monitor inclusive instruction pertaining to the revised Social Science Standards.

The State Board of Education has made progress with both recommendations. For example, there has been funding added for the [Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards](#). These standards will help move current and future educators towards self-reflection of their practices to improve outcomes for all students, specifically for those who have been historically disenfranchised. The standards will also help bridge cultural understandings between teachers, staff, and administrators and the students, families, and communities they work with. This professional development for K-12 district leaders and classroom leaders will help to embed equity at the core of everyday practices.

The Standards and Instruction Department, along with the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign will work on the professional development series. Their work includes forming a steering committee to oversee, develop, and facilitate the sessions within the Regional Offices of Education (ROE) network. The sessions would involve monthly synchronous and asynchronous work lasting four to six months with a “professional learning communities” approach with membership, including a mixture of administrators and classroom teachers, from each participating district. The steering committee will convene at the end of 2023 until the summer of 2024 to develop and pilot the professional learning series. The full professional learning series, as amended based on feedback during the pilot phase, will launch in fall of 2024, pending funding appropriation.

There has also been continued funding for professional development for K-12 social studies teachers and curriculum leads in 2023-24. This series, [I3: Inclusive, Inquiry-Based Social Studies for Illinois](#), is a six-part professional learning series that annually guides 250 participants through an exploration of inquiry-based learning and the inclusive history standards for Illinois. The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is a partner in this five-year project that was launched in 2022. This professional development is a five-month long series with a hybrid modality of synchronous and asynchronous sessions with monthly Zoom meetings and online modules. This learning series will continue in school year 2024-25, pending funding appropriation. Initial data was collected and is highlighted below:

- A total of **464** individuals have participated in the I3 professional learning series since October 2023.
- There was a **75 percent** completion rate for online modules for the 2022-23 learning series.
- **Ninety-three percent** of 2022-23 participants agree that they feel better prepared to implement inclusive American History Mandates as a result of participating in this professional learning series.

- **Ninety-five percent** of 2022-23 participants agree that they feel better prepared to facilitate student-driven, inquiry-based learning as a result of their participation in this professional learning series.

The results of the 13 professional development series highlight the success of the program as teachers gained skills and confidence to implement the new Social Science Standards. As this program continues, more teachers will receive this training and gain insights on how they can improve their teaching practice with the aim of creating culturally affirming and inclusive classrooms and schools. Continuing to appropriate funds for this annual professional learning series, along with positive feedback and results, will allow for a wider reach. Funding of \$100,000 annually for the next five years will support the integrity and capacity of the learning series. The speed of implementation is another factor to consider as this professional learning series benefits the children in classrooms today.

The [Standards and Instruction](#) Department partnered with the Asian American Foundation (TAAF) to support implementation efforts for the Teaching Equitable Asian American Communities History (TEAACH) Act. Joint funding provided by ISBE and TAAF enabled the department to hire two short-term EdPioneers Fellows during 2022 and 2023. The “TEAACH Act Fellows” hosted webinars related to the revised Social Science Standards and the TEAACH Act. A webinar for the revised Social Science Standards broke down the components of the new learning standards, introduced the domains of competency, and offered professional development opportunities. The department also developed a five-part webinar series about the TEAACH Act to explain resources, provide guidance for implementation, and discuss inclusive instructional practices.

Progress in equity has been achieved because line items in professional development focused on the new Social Science Standards and Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards have been funded. Equity is enhanced by creating more inclusive classrooms through professional development intentionally and explicitly designed to focus on cultural knowledge and understanding, historical events, and teacher-student relationships. All students feel included in the curriculum they are learning through expanded curricula designed to include a wide array of historical perspectives, as opposed to those designed with a more myopic view of events. As professional development is offered to teachers and school leaders, their knowledge is enhanced on pedagogy and practices for more inclusive classrooms.

SEEC Elevating Educators Subcommittee

The Elevating Educators Subcommittee had two recommendations related to the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. They were:

1. ISBE should lead a comprehensive, data-informed, stakeholder-engaged process to organize, coordinate, and align strategies and resources across public and private organizations aiming to diversify, grow, and strengthen the educator workforce in Illinois.
2. ISBE should embark on a multiyear plan to dedicate time and staff to improve data definitions, collection, coordination, and quality with regard to all educator pipeline data systems (e.g., the Educator Licensure Information System, Annual Program Reporting, Employment Information System). This plan is necessary to better understand the issues pertaining to teacher diversity recruitment and retention. This work should inform the above recommendation by understanding what initiatives work and can be scaled.

These recommendations have enabled ISBE to make progress in strengthening the educator workforce in Illinois. Currently, an equity-centered components approach is utilized when addressing educator shortages. ISBE undertook a data-driven, stakeholder-engaged analysis to pinpoint distinct components of teacher shortages that utilized disaggregation by race, gender, program, setting, and school performance to help ensure that the components reflected many dimensions of diversity and equity. The components and their root causes were co-created with multiple stakeholders via teacher interviews, student focus groups, and engagement with association and advocacy organizations.

Developing a perspective of shortage “components” allowed the creation of targeted plans for each one, encompassing a combination of new and adjusted strategies for the agency. Each strategy is assessed individually against its respective teacher shortage component, ensuring a more effective, equitable solution to the problem. The components themselves call out disproportionalities across the teacher pipeline, subject areas, and schools -- the solutions aim to reverse these inequities. The components currently driving the Illinois work shortage are:

- Illinois experiences disproportionately low enrollment of students of color in educator preparation programs.
- Schools in rural Illinois experience the highest rate of unfilled teaching positions.
- There are fewer or no preparation options in some remote areas of the State.
- Vacancies in STEM, special education, elementary education, and bilingual education account for more than half of the unfilled teaching positions in Illinois.
- A disproportionate number of newly licensed teachers of color are not becoming first-year teachers in public schools.
- Attrition rates are greatest in low-income and low-performing schools and among teachers of color.

ISBE has attempted to mitigate the shortage with targeted programs, such as The Teacher Vacancy, CTE Education Pathway, Bilingual Licensure, and Special Education Retention grants; support for Strategic Pathway Programs; expansion of short-term approvals; innovative preparation pilots; affinity groups for teachers of color; and new teacher and leader coaching and mentoring.

Strategy Highlight: Strategic Pathways Support

Strategic Pathways are rooted in communities, so they can attract and support candidates who represent the demographic identities of the student bodies in each community and who are more likely to persist in their communities and therefore the profession. The Illinois Strategic Pathways Strategy focuses on creating a role for ISBE in assisting programs in understanding and aligning to school needs; planning for sustainability and scaling up these programs in accordance with state needs; and facilitating a collaboration and coordination effort at the state level. Strategic Pathways Working Group participants include Grow Your Own Illinois, Golden Apple (Scholars and Accelerators), City Colleges of Chicago (Teach Chicago Tomorrow), Illinois State University (Paraprofessionals Unlocking Licensure in Special Education [PULSE] and ECE Workforce programs), Southern Illinois University (Saluki Teacher Residency Partnership), Western Illinois University (Seymour Center for Rural Education Alternative Residency Program for LBS1), University of Illinois Chicago (Call Me Mister), and Educators Rising.

ISBE is also working on two projects to improve data definitions, collection, and coordination in response to the second recommendation -- the [Illinois Longitudinal Data System \(ILDS\)](#) Educator Workforce Dataset and the Talent Hub.

When fully developed, the ILDS Educator Workforce Dataset will provide data to help track the outcomes of Illinois students as they progress from Pre-K through postsecondary education, and as they enter the educator workforce. The charter for the project is nearing finalization. As proposed, the dataset will utilize data from ISBE, Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Department of Human Services, and Illinois Student Assistance Commission. This data system will support a comprehensive view of students' progress and can provide insight on the education profession by answering questions such as:

- (1) Do graduates from postsecondary programs enter the education profession? If not, which professions do they enter and what are the characteristics of their alternative careers?
- (2) When early childhood and K-12 educators leave the profession what professions do they enter? What characteristics (location, salary, type) do these professions have?

The Talent Hub project is in the research and proposal stage. This hub concept aims to optimize talent data reporting processes to enhance the availability and practicality of educator shortages data for state, district, and educator preparation programs policy, and to develop a job board for teaching candidates across the state. There are three goals of the Talent Hub:

- (1) Create a comprehensive plan to enhance talent data systems and generate actionable educator shortages data.
- (2) Facilitate the accessibility of talent data for all relevant stakeholders.
- (3) Develop a job board that streamlines the job application process for public education jobs in Illinois.

Progress has been made, but sustainability on the efforts to gather data is still an important piece to consider. Including other options for disaggregated data, such as age, allows for better understanding of variables for leaving and staying in the workforce. Detailing responsibilities of school districts and other educator pipeline data systems on collecting data points may be helpful in ensuring that data inputs are accurate. Data is collected from different agencies, so a coordinated effort needs to be fully developed.

Growing, strengthening, and diversifying the educator pipeline strengthens equity as this helps ensure that all students have access to qualified teachers who can support their individual learning. Targeting specific components within the educator workforce can allow more resources to be provided to the

areas that need it. Improving data collection and coordination helps with retention and recruitment as more information is gathered to improve practices and policies. Retention and recruitment of qualified educators is a critical part to students' learning as all students benefit from a diverse and strong educator workforce.

Equity Journey Continuum and Statewide Equity Symposium Overview

The Illinois State Board of Education has implemented many equity initiatives throughout the year that align to the equity statement that “Illinois has an urgent and collective responsibility to achieve educational equity by ensuring that all policies, programs, and practices affirm the strengths that each and every child brings within their diverse backgrounds and life experiences, and by delivering the comprehensive supports, programs, and educational opportunities they need to succeed.” Many of ISBE’s equity initiatives have been managed by the newly created position of “equity lead.”

Equity Journey Continuum

The [Equity Journey Continuum \(EJC\)](#) is an informational tool for districts to track progress toward closing gaps in student achievement, opportunities, and supports. The tool analyzes district-level data points that are already collected and reported to ISBE, making this data useful for improving outcomes for all students. The data points illustrate a district’s current progress in its equity journey – from Step 1 (large gaps) to Step 4 (minimal gaps) -- in the three areas of ISBE’s Strategic Plan: student learning, learning conditions, and elevating educators.

The EJC was publicly displayed for the first time on the 2022 Illinois Report Card. The 2022 EJC used 25 district-specific data metrics from the 2018-19 school year as there were disruptions in data due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The EJC was published again for the second time in the 2023 Illinois Report Card, using data from the 2021-22 school year. The goal of the EJC is to empower school communities to make informed decisions about their district’s equity strengths, speak effectively about where to invest their equity efforts and resources, and develop creative strategies for moving forward in their unique equity journey. Districts also have the opportunity to include a narrative of their equity journey, detailing the policies and practices that have worked for their classrooms.

ISBE partnered with Loyola University Chicago Institute for Racial Justice to develop [five professional development sessions](#) to help school district administrators and educators understand and use the EJC to improve outcomes for all students as well as craft their narratives.

In the Statewide Snapshot of the 2022 Illinois Report Card, the state was placed in Step 2 in Student Learning, Step 2 in Learning Conditions, and Step 4 in Elevating Educators. In the Statewide Snapshot of the 2023 Illinois Report Card, the state was placed in Step 1 in Student Learning, Step 2 in Learning Conditions, and Step 3 in Elevating Educators.

Statewide Equity Symposium

ISBE also hosted for the first-time a [Statewide Equity Symposium](#) from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. on October 4, 2023. This was held virtually and fostered peer-to-peer collaboration on strategies pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. District leaders and subject matter experts led sessions to share their knowledge and expertise in a diverse array of subject matters including diversifying the educator pipeline and overcoming barriers to equity through a System of Supports.

State Education Equity Committee Executive Summary and Conclusion

Equity has grown to be a common topic of conversation in the education sector. As conversations have spread, challenges remain to ensure that every student has access to resources they need to succeed in school and life beyond the classroom. The State Education Equity Committee first convened in October 2021. The committee met in June, July, October, and December of 2023. ISBE Chief of Staff Dr. Kimako Patterson serves as the committee chairperson. She was designated by State Superintendent Dr. Tony Sanders in August. The three subcommittees -- Student Learning, Learning Conditions, and Elevating Educators -- continued to meet throughout the year to review previous recommendations and discuss ISBE equity initiatives. This report will serve as a progress update on the practices and actions the State Board of Education has engaged in to achieve educational equity.

ISBE has been making strides in educational equity, but there is much more work to be done. There has been progress in the areas of learning conditions, student learning, and elevating educators. To improve equity in learning conditions, resources have been developed to help districts that have high rates of suspensions and expulsions as well as high disproportionality disciplinary rates. Within student learning, professional development learning series were created pertaining to the new Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Standards and inclusive history. Work in elevating educators includes aligning strategies to diversify, grow, and strengthen the educator workforce. Data definitions, collection, and coordination are being improved in this area as well.

State Superintendent Dr. Sanders has been working on and developing a new Strategic Plan since he started his term in February 2023. When this is finalized and released in the upcoming year, the committee has the opportunity to engage in new equity goals. As the year progresses and the work for equity continues, the committee will continue to engage with the new Strategic Plan and focus on equity practices and initiatives to embark and prepare for the 2024-25 school year.