

Snapshot of Illinois School Report Cards



December 2004

Dear Parents,

Greetings from the new State Board of Education. This guide will give you a snapshot of what is going on in Illinois education.

The State's commitment to improving education has never been stronger. Despite unprecedented budget deficits, Governor Blagojevich and the Illinois General Assembly have provided funding increases of almost \$800 million in new dollars to Illinois schools over the last two years. In many ways this last round of student testing shows that we are moving in the right direction in how we educate our children.

Good News

- We have more schools meeting tough No Child Left Behind requirements.
- Math scores in all grades have improved significantly over the past five years.

Room for Improvement

- We can do better in reading at all grade levels.
- High school juniors should be doing better on our state assessment.

Looking at trends over the last five years, these tests show persistent achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students. We have to address these gaps as we move forward.

Randy J. Dunn
State Superintendent of Education (Interim)



Illinois State Board of Education

Rod Blagojevich, Governor
Jesse Ruiz, Chairman
Randy Dunn, State Superintendent of Schools

Definitions

Because many of the terms used by the federal government are highly technical, these definitions will help you better understand what is meant when the following terms are used to describe your school and its results.

Achievement Gap

This term is used to define the difference in learning outcomes between minority and non-minority students being addressed through education reform efforts.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Under federal law, all schools are required to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) by meeting certain performance benchmarks. AYP in Illinois is based on:

- the percentage of a school's or district's reading and math scores that meet or exceed standards;
- 95% or above participation rate of students taking the state tests; and
- the attendance rates of students in elementary and middle schools, and the graduation rates of students in high schools.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

This is a program that is developed to meet the specific needs of students with disabilities.

Limited English Proficient (LEP)

This term refers to students who have been found to be eligible for bilingual education.

Subgroups

This refers to specific groups for which assessment data must be reported, including Native American/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, White, Limited English Proficiency, Economically Disadvantaged, and Students with Disabilities. Schools are required to meet certain performance standards for each subgroup.

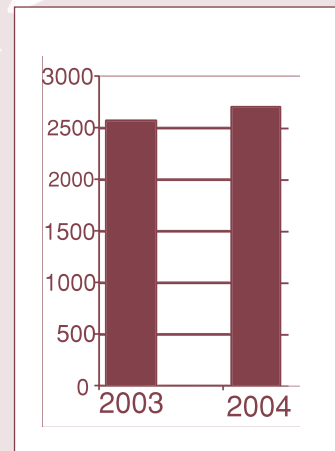
No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

The No Child Left Behind Act became federal law in 2002. It expanded the federal government's role in education, setting standards for student academic achievement and teacher performance that apply to every school and district in the United States. At its core, NCLB was designed to eventually close achievement gaps between various groups of students by setting high expectations for every child.

I. Schools Meeting No Child Left Behind Adequate Yearly Progress

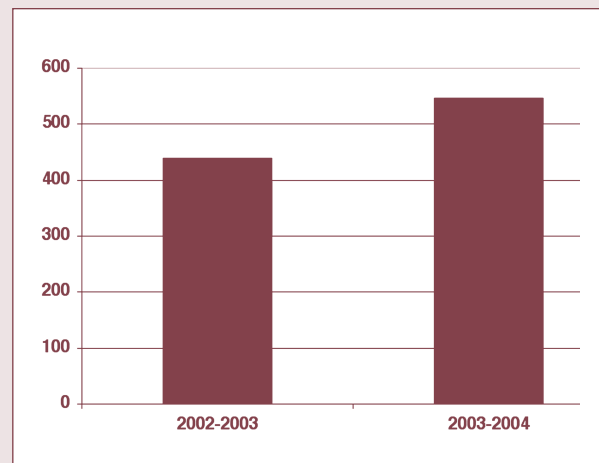
More *schools* in Illinois met tough No Child Left Behind standards in 2004 than in 2003. In 2004, 2,714 schools made the grade—132 more schools than one year ago.

363 schools that missed the mark on student testing last year were able to make the grade this year.



II. Districts Meeting No Child Left Behind Adequate Yearly Progress

More *districts* met No Child Left Behind standards this year than did the year before; 546 districts made the grade in 2004, which is 100 more districts than the year before.



III. Why Some Schools and Districts Did Not Meet No Child Left Behind Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

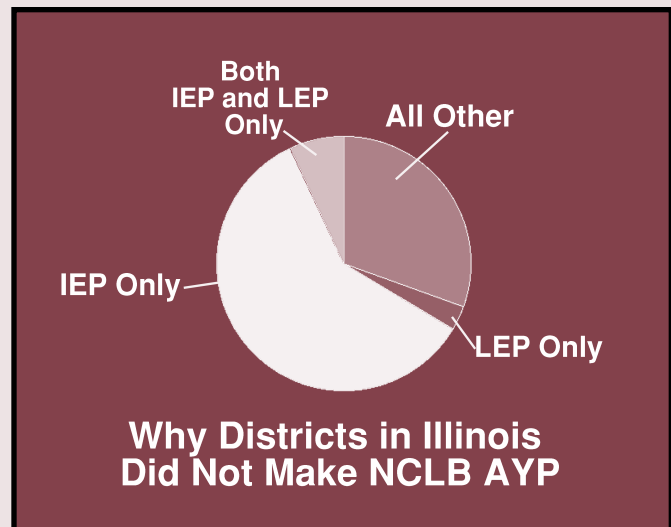
There are two main reasons that a school or district might not make AYP:

- 1) not enough students participated in the exam; or
- 2) students failed to meet certain performance standards.

Only a small number of schools and districts did not make AYP solely because not enough students participated in the exam—two districts and 18 schools. Districts and schools are required to have at least 95% participation in each subgroup. In Illinois, districts and schools are evaluated on the performance of a subgroup only if there are at least 40 students in that subgroup.

Among those that did fulfill the requirement of having all students participate in examinations, 338 districts and 1069 schools failed to make AYP.

The most common reason that districts failed to make AYP was the performance of special education students; 201 districts and 142 schools failed solely because of special education students. The State Board of Education believes that the current system for testing special education students does not appropriately measure the progress made by those students and that NCLB does not properly account for the unique needs of special education students.



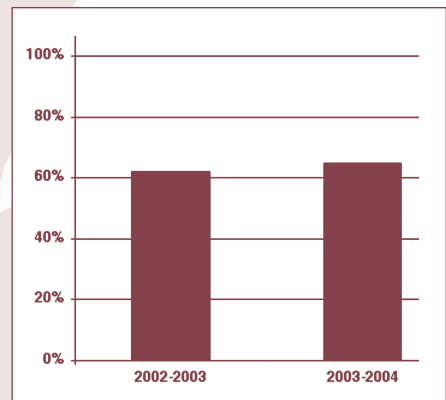
Another subgroup with unique characteristics is the LEP subgroup for bilingual students. LEP students are unique in that they leave their subgroup two years after they become proficient in English. In no other subgroup are the best students automatically moved out of the subgroup. Moreover, students entering into bilingual programs at the high school level have had widely varying educational experiences.

The statistics show that 69% of the districts that failed to make AYP in Illinois fell short because of one or both of these subgroups but no other. The State Board is committed to working with local school districts and the federal government to ensure that these students with unique needs are tested sensibly, and that their performance is measured adequately. Federal and state laws must demand that local districts stand strong in their commitment to these students with unique needs, but also must ensure that special education and bilingual students are not made scapegoats by testing and regulatory schemes that fail to properly measure their progress.

IV. Reading/Math Scores

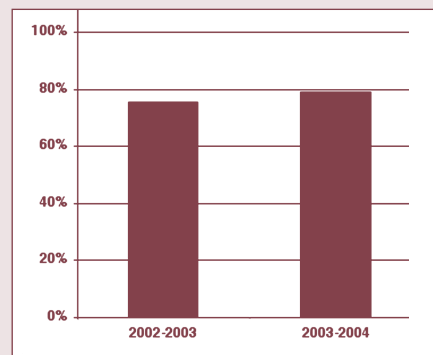
Third Grade Reading

Third grade reading scores increased this year. However, with only 65 percent of third graders meeting standards, there is significant room for improvement.



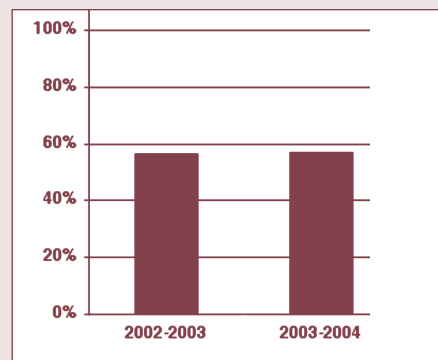
Third Grade Math

Math scores have steadily risen in grade three over the last five years. When state tests were first administered, only 68 percent of our third graders were making the grade. This past year that number rose to nearly 80 percent.



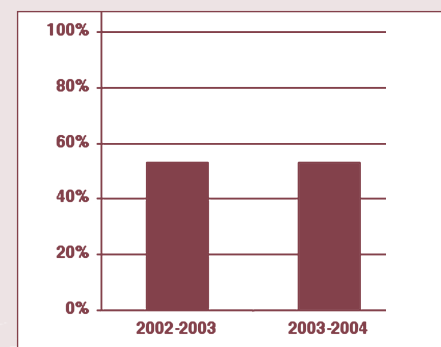
11th Grade Reading

Reading scores for 11th graders have remained relatively level over the last four years. With only about 57 percent of our 11th graders reading at grade level in 2004, we need to improve in this subject area.



11th Grade Math

The math scores for 11th grade students have been steady over the last four years, but with only 53 percent of our 11th graders meeting standards in math, we can do much better.



Prairie State Achievement Exam

The average ACT score Illinois students receive is competitive with the averages of other states. That's even though in most states, only college-bound students take the ACT; Colorado is the only other state that currently requires all students to take a college entrance exam.

	<u>Illinois</u>	<u>Nation</u>	<u>Colorado</u>
2002	20.1	20.8	20.1
2003	20.2	20.8	20.1
2004	20.3	20.9	20.3

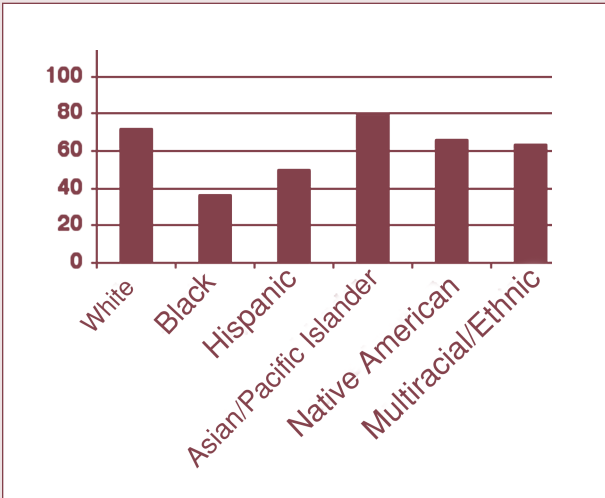
VI. Achievement Gaps

One disturbing trend that cannot be overlooked is the continuation of large gaps in performance between non-minority and minority students.

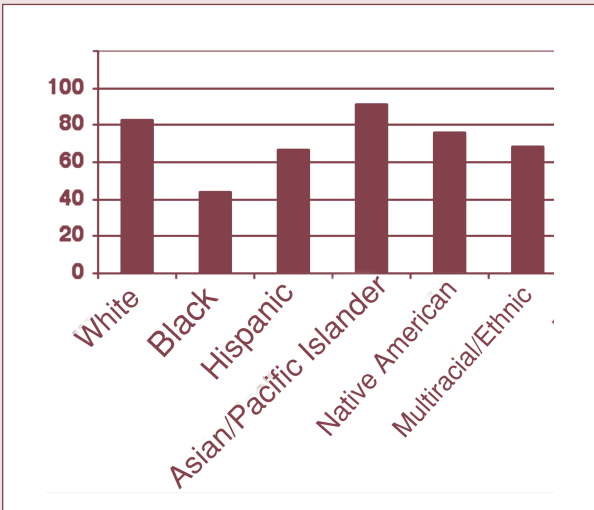
Results show that 65 percent of white students meet standards in reading, while that number is just under 32 percent for black students. In math, 62 percent of white students met standards, while that number is only 31 percent for Hispanic students.

These results require that we do more to reach out to minority students.

Reading



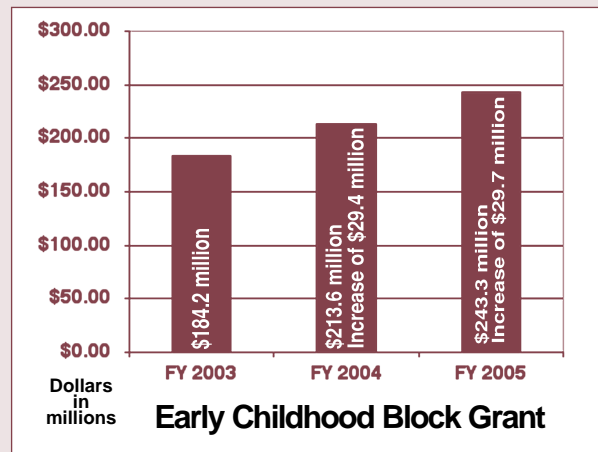
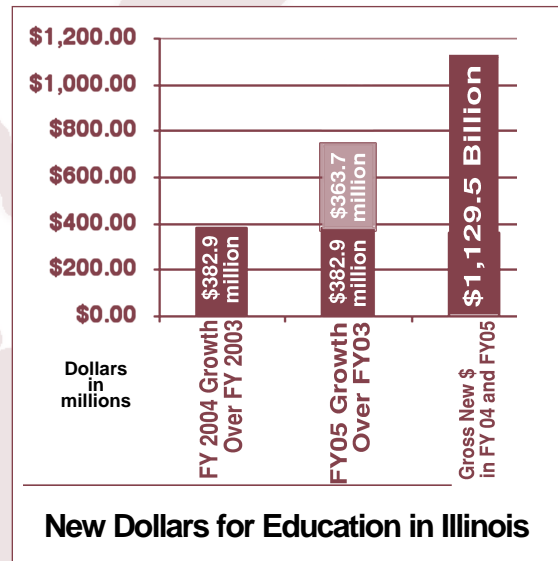
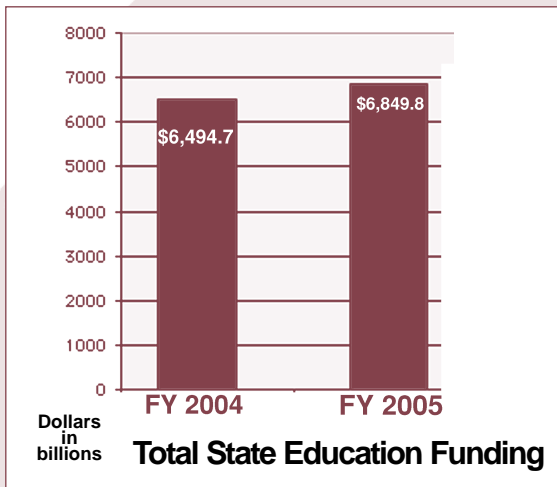
Math



VII. Conditions of Illinois Schools

Funding

New investments to education over the last two years have expanded access to high-quality preschool for at-risk three and four year olds, and increased the K-12 per student foundation level by \$404. This progress lays the groundwork for addressing the achievement gap.



Class Size

The average class size for elementary schools in 2004 was 19 students per teacher. Class sizes in secondary schools were also close to 19 students per teacher.

Teaching Experience and Training

The average level of teaching experience consistently increased between 1995 and 1999, but has started to decline between 1999 and 2004. Last year our teachers averaged 13.8 years of teaching experience. In Illinois, 48.6 percent of teachers have a master's degree or higher.



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