




MEMORANDUM

TO: 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
Darren Reisberg, Chair, State Board of Education

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

DATE: January 31, 2022

SUBJECT: State Education Equity Committee Report

The Illinois State Board of Education respectfully submits this report on behalf of the State Education Equity Committee to the General Assembly 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.

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 of Legislative Affairs at (217) 782-6510 or aelliott@isbe.net.

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



2021

State Education Equity
Committee Report

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Illinois
State Board of
Education

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State Education Equity Committee Executive Summary

In the wake of the global pandemic, equity has increasingly been on the hearts and minds of educators, policymakers, legislators, families, and students. Students of color, students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, students that have English as a second language, and/or have a learning disability have historically faced obstacles at school that their peers may not. Although programs and other supports are in place in most Illinois school districts, it is an ongoing challenge to reach students whose needs may not be met with standard practices, policies, and procedures.

Now more than ever, equity is important.

Equity is often referred to as “leveling the playing field.” It is achieved when each individual student gets what they need to be on equal footing with others in the same environment. In the classroom, that might mean extra time, different supports, or unique resources for some students to achieve their learning goals.

Education reformers equate equity with fairness and point to many ways it can lead to inequality. Inequities occur when biased or unfair policies, programs, practices, or situations contribute to a lack of equality in educational performance, results, and outcomes. This occurs when certain students or groups of students may attend school, graduate, or enroll in postsecondary education at lower rates, or they may perform comparatively lower on standardized tests due to a wide variety of factors, including inherent biases or flaws or lack of access to relevant and/or quality instruction.

Ensuring equity in education requires honesty about its landscape and being committed to individuals with unique needs that may face obstacles due by to systemic inequities.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on K-12 students has heightened or brought to light systemic inequities, which gives us an opportunity to combat the educational divide.

The State Education Equity Committee began its study of equity in education when it convened for the first time in October 2021. Meetings were also held in November, December, and January. State Superintendent Dr. Carmen I. Ayala served as the Committee chairperson. Three subcommittees were formed to align the Committee directives with the three overarching goals in the ISBE Strategic Plan: Student Learning, Learning Conditions, and Elevating Educators. The subcommittees were supported by ISBE staff to establish awareness of where ISBE is at in terms of planning and implementation of equity initiatives. The subcommittees reviewed the work ISBE is currently doing and offered feedback on specific initiatives as well as developed specific recommendations to further education equity in Illinois.

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 Learning Conditions Subcommittee recommends:

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 pro-active, 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.

The Elevating Educators Subcommittee recommends:

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.

Additionally, the subcommittees identified future considerations, which will be explored and further developed in 2022-23. The Committee recognizes educational equity as a journey and the destination will not be reached overnight. It will take time and collaboration. The Committee will continue to push this work forward and hopes the General Assembly will assist in this endeavor.

House Bill 3114 (Public Act 102-0458)

On August 20, 2021, Governor JB Pritzker signed HB 3114 (PA 102-0458) into law, thereby creating the State Education Equity Committee.

The State Education Equity Committee was created within the Illinois State Board of Education to strive toward ensuring equity in education for all children from birth through Grade 12.

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.

Members appointed to the Committee must reflect, as much as possible, the racial, ethnic, and geographic diversity of this state.

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 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.



State Education Equity Committee Membership

October 2021

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education

Liam Bird
Equity Policy Strategist, Chicago Public Schools 299

Lisa Bouillion Diaz
Director and Assistant Dean, University of Illinois Extension 4-H Youth Development Program

Jessica Cañas
Assistant Director of Education, Enlace Chicago/Little Village Education Collaborative

Dr. Nakia Hall
Illinois Association of School Boards

Susan Hudson
Special Education Teacher, District 205 Thornwood High School

Jennifer Jaeger
Community Services Director, City of Rockford, Illinois

Dr. Michael Karner
Lake County Regional Superintendent of Schools

Nashwa Mekky
Principal, Beach Park School District 3

Nacole Milbrook
Chief Program Officer, Youth Guidance

Amber Phillips-Graham
Elementary Teacher, Cahokia School District 187

Rosa Ramirez Richter
Director of Chicago Program and Policy, Healthy Schools Campaign

Silvia Rogel
Director of Strategic Partnerships and External Affairs, Illinois Resource Center

Dr. Brad Skertich
Superintendent, Collinsville CUSD 10

Leonor Torres
Spanish Teacher, Chicago Public Schools 299

Eric L. Veal, Jr.
ISBE Student Advisory Council Member

Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro
Director of Education Policy and Research, Latino Policy Forum

R. Turner Winston
Urbana High School PTSA President, Urbana School District 116

Equity Journey Continuum Overview

Background

On November 19, 2020, the State Board of Education took decisive action and adopted the [2020-23 Strategic Plan](#). The plan is built around three goals, which focus on Student Learning, Learning Conditions, and Elevating Educators. These goals are held together by four principles that guide our work at the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) – equity, quality, collaboration, and community – and our responsibility to tirelessly pursue educational equity for all of our students in all of our classrooms, schools, and districts. The lens of equity is specifically defined as having high expectations for every learner and providing supports and resources so each learner can meet those expectations.

An integral piece of the Strategic Plan is the following Equity Statement:

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.

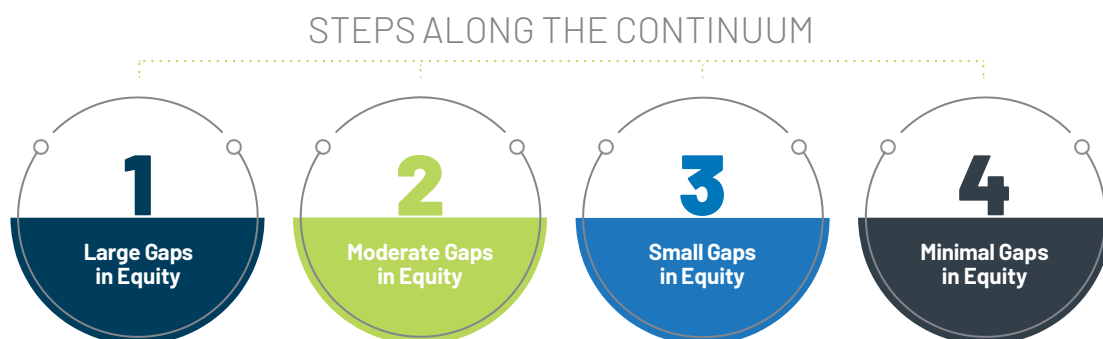
In order to embed equity throughout the State of Illinois, an external goal was set to create an [Equity Journey Continuum](#) that will be used to publicly indicate where each Illinois school district is on its equity journey. An Equity Journey Continuum tool will be researched, developed, and incorporated into each district’s public Report Card by the 2022 reporting year.

In the spring of 2021, a mini pilot was conducted with several districts throughout Illinois to gather initial feedback regarding the Equity Journey Continuum. Stakeholder meetings with ISBE staff were held virtually and feedback was collected to aid in refining the continuum.

Description

The Equity Journey Continuum is an informational tool to help districts view their data through the lens of equity. It identifies gaps in student achievement, opportunities, and supports by analyzing data that districts already collect and report to ISBE. The tool makes the data more useful for districts to improve outcomes for students. ISBE developed the tool using national research and examples from other states.

Each district’s data will place it along an equity continuum — 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.









All districts will begin to preview their Equity Journey Continuum data in February 2022 and the Equity Journey Continuum will be published on the Illinois Report Card in October 2022 for public viewing. The district's Report Card will display its step level on each of the three broad categories of the continuum. Only school districts will have full access to their full data behind the continuum.

The 2022 Equity Journey Continuum protects students' privacy by omitting data of student groups with fewer than 10 members and uses school year 2018-19 data (school year 2020-21 data for site-based expenditures) due to the impact of the pandemic on school years 2019-20 and 2020-21.

How to Use the Equity Journey Continuum

Ultimately, the purpose of this tool is to help districts identify gaps in students' access to opportunities, resources, and supports and to connect them to resources that will help inform a process of system- and culture-level change for all students.

SAMPLE DISTRICT SCENARIOS

SCHOOL DISTRICT A	SCHOOL DISTRICT B
 Student Learning Step 2 (moderate gaps in equity)  Learning Conditions Step 3 (small gaps in equity)  Elevating Educators Step 4 (minimal gaps in equity)	 Student Learning Step 3 (small gaps in equity)  Learning Conditions Step 2 (moderate gaps in equity)  Elevating Educators Step 3 (small gaps in equity)
<p>Within the Student Learning data area, School District A is currently in Step 2, showing moderate gaps in equity. When the district takes a closer look, the tool shows large gaps in Access to Advanced Academic Programs, which is one of seven data metrics that comprise Student Learning. A district may choose to create an action plan.</p> <p>Possible actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for ISBE's AP Course Implementation Grant to provide additional training for teachers and administrators and expand Advanced Placement (AP) course offerings. Partner with the nonprofit organization Equal Opportunity Schools to identify and eliminate barriers to enrolling more students from underrepresented groups in AP and supporting their success. 	<p>Within the Learning Conditions data area, School District B is currently between Steps 2 and 3, showing moderate to small gaps in equity. When the district takes a closer look, the tool shows large gaps in Expulsion Rates, which is one of 13 data metrics that comprise Learning Conditions. A district may choose to create an action plan.</p> <p>Possible actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in ISBE's Illinois Partnership for Disciplinary Equity to provide training for teachers and administrators in Empathic Instruction, which includes a professional learning simulation, to better understand the long-term impacts of exclusionary discipline. Create a three-year plan to reduce exclusionary discipline overall and disproportionality.

Every district will have the opportunity to include a narrative of its journey on the Report Card that may include equity actions, policies, and practices that may not be apparent in the rubric.

Next Steps

The Equity Journey Continuum will be released to all districts in February 2022 for internal viewing only. All questions and any feedback districts may have can be sent to equity@isbe.net, and ISBE staff will provide assistance. ISBE staff are also working on developing resources, such as webinars and professional development, to aid the field in addressing equity gaps.

The public school system in Illinois shows persistent and significant gaps in achievement between student groups. The Equity Journey Continuum will serve as a beacon to illuminate areas where a district may need to alter systems, increase access, add resources, or seek supports to ensure students from all backgrounds can achieve the same high standards.

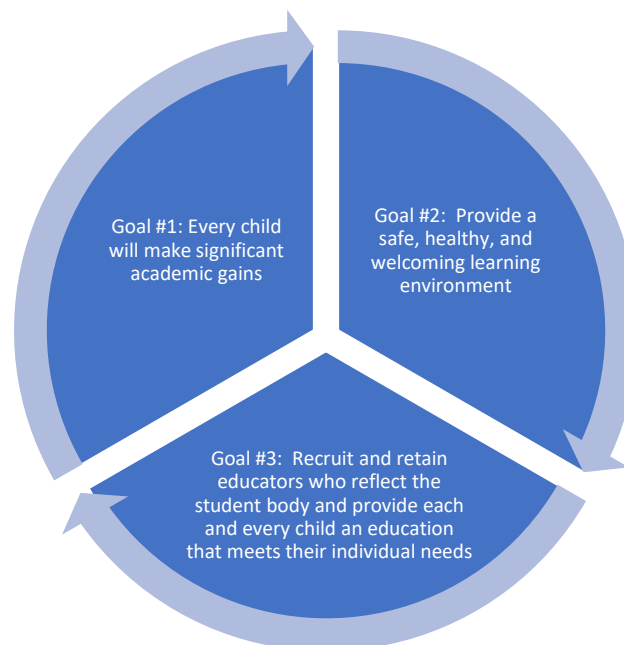
ISBE Strategic Plan

ISBE developed a roadmap for all schools called the [2020-23 Strategic Plan](#), built around four principles that guide work at ISBE - equity, quality, collaboration, and community. The Strategic Plan offers this concise definition of equity: “Equity means having high expectations for every learner and providing supports and resources so each learner can meet those expectations.”

The Strategic Plan recognizes that, to accomplish equity, we will need both internal and external tools. Therefore, ISBE has created an equity impact analysis tool for agency staff to use to guide all decisions and communications, as well as the previously described data-driven Equity Journey Continuum that each Illinois school district will use to support its equity journey.

The Strategic Plan is grounded in three equity-explicit goals:

1. Every child will make significant academic gains each year, increasing their knowledge, skills, and opportunities so they graduate equipped to pursue a successful future, with the state paying special attention to addressing historic inequities.
2. All districts and schools will receive the resources necessary to create safe, healthy, and welcoming learning environments, and will be equipped to meet the unique academic and social and emotional needs of each and every child.
3. Illinois’ diverse student population will have educators who reflect the student body and are prepared



through multiple pathways and are supported in and celebrated for their efforts to provide each and every child an education that meets their needs.

The State Education Equity Committee formed three subcommittees to focus on the following identified, strategic goals inherently tied to equity:

Student Learning Subcommittee Strategic Goals

- A. Intense focus on equity and inclusion by supporting student learning and decreasing educational achievement disparity.
- B. Embed the history and accomplishments of the historically underrepresented groups (e.g., Latino/a, African American, LGBTQ) in the Illinois Social Science Learning Standards.

Learning Conditions Subcommittee Strategic Goals

- A. Reduction of exclusionary discipline for students of color by end of school year 2023.
- B. Support implicit bias training through professional development in schools and classrooms.

Elevating Educators Subcommittee Strategic Goal

- A. Improve incentives, trainings, and offerings to recruit a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce.

Each of these subcommittees was given the charge to identify evidence-based practices or policies pertaining to 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. They were to 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.

Student Learning Subcommittee

Introduction

Members of the Student Learning Subcommittee met numerous times over the past few months to discuss the professional development necessary for teachers to implement the revised [Social Science Learning Standards](#) that are inclusive and reflective of all individuals in our country. The subcommittee's recommendations reflect teachers throughout our state who have a very different set of experiences related to cultural backgrounds, racism, poverty, etc. Additionally, teachers from around the state implement vastly different instructional methods in their classrooms to cover curriculum, current events, and historical matters. The subcommittee's recommendations include improving teachers' instructional methods, increasing their personal knowledge, developing implicit bias training, and emphasizing the importance of relationships.

First and foremost, the views of the teachers on our subcommittee were the driving force behind our vision for effective professional development. Training must be embedded and occur over at least a 12-month span to allow teachers to grow their knowledge, implement changes, manage successes and failures, discuss with colleagues, and have the opportunity to make adjustments when at first a lesson doesn't go as planned. Varied training will allow teachers to learn, implement, and seek assistance to deal with the highs and lows that go with change.

Second, teachers must participate in training to learn and increase their knowledge of Black, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, multi-racial, etc. cultural values, key historical events, struggles, and contributions to our society. Additional training will revolve around implicit bias training as a majority of teachers in Illinois are white and have little experience or knowledge of minority cultures and may have preconceived beliefs, the result of minimal interaction with varied cultures.

Third, training must detail the importance of children seeing themselves in the curriculum and being able to discuss past, present, and current events in class – not only to gain knowledge of historical events, but also to have discussions about those events in school. The subcommittee felt the training should revolve heavily on flipping the classroom and encouraging student-led conversations to effectively implement the revised Social Science Standards. Not all teachers have experience or knowledge and, in these instances, students learning from their peers is important. The training must focus heavily on ensuring teachers understand that they should never be expected to know all the answers; therefore, these conversations may become uncomfortable. The key to their success is building strong relationships with their students and a trusting environment in the classroom.

Lastly, the training must include real-life examples of lessons or activities that may be implemented in the classroom. The reality is that change will not be easy. Ready-made lessons will assist teachers in the implementation of the revised Social Science Standards.

Equity Initiatives in Action at the Illinois State Board of Education

Revisions to the Illinois Social Science Standards will be implemented in the 2022-23 school year. The last time the standards were revised was in 2016. There have been significant changes over last five years in understanding the impact of students seeing themselves in the curriculum. ISBE has taken the

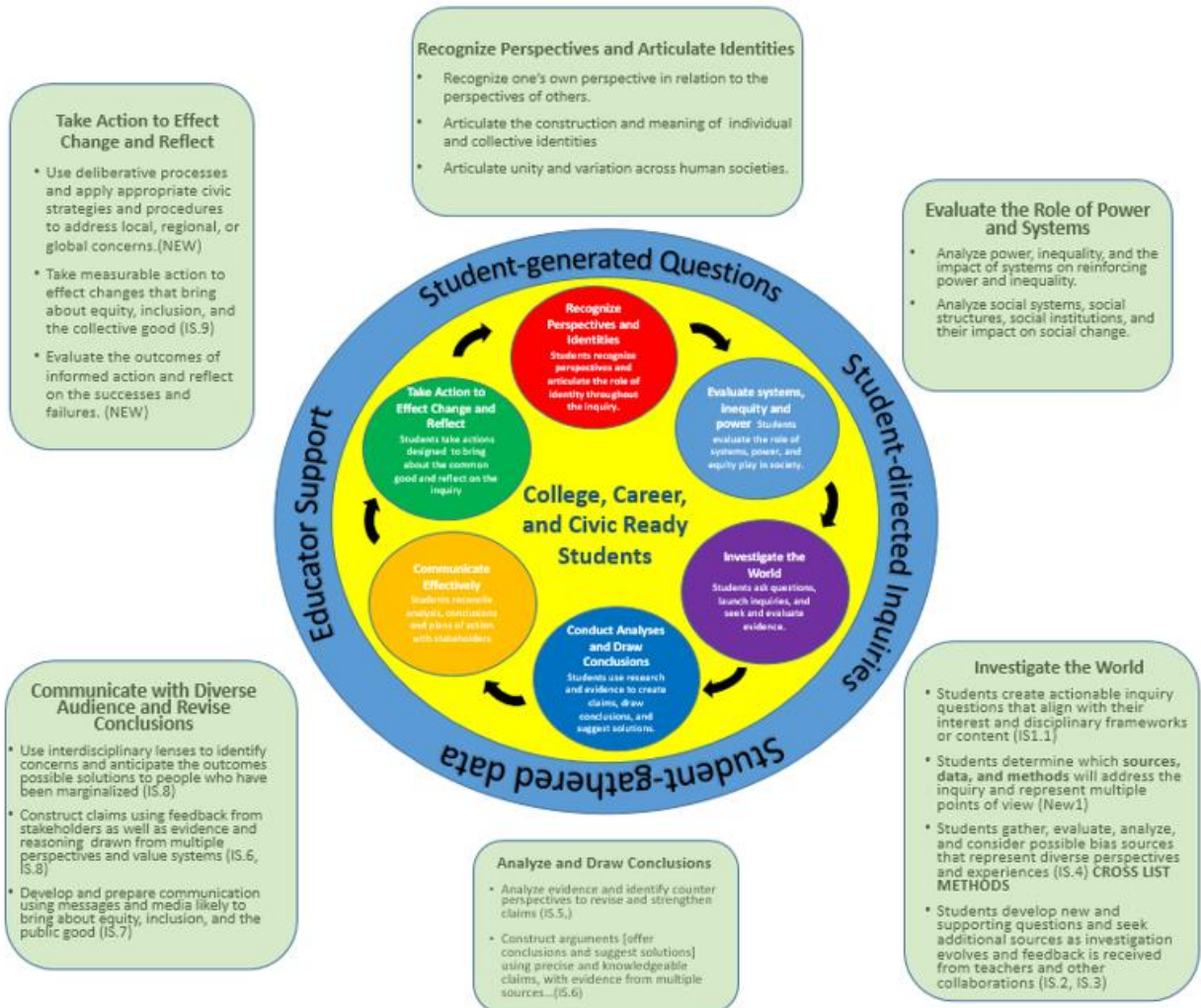
initiative to revise the Administrative Rules to account for research-supported changes to the Social Science Standards. There has also been legislation to support the inclusion of all students in Illinois. Additions to include contributions of ethnic groups and labor unions and the forceful removal and illegal deportation of Mexican American U.S. citizens have been mandated to be part of eighth-grade U.S. history graduation requirements. Legislation supporting the inclusion of women in history, LGBTQ community history, Americans of different faith practices, American patriotism and government, Black history, holocaust and genocide education, the history of people with disabilities, and the disabilities rights movement. Asian American history will be required in the 2022-23 school year.

ISBE supports the professional learning for educators to encompass all these mandates and changes in the Social Science Standards. Some examples include capacity-building for curriculum leaders and regional support staff, guidance documents related to the mandates and standards, curricular resources for classroom teachers, and specific supports for English Learners. ISBE looks to further develop resources for teachers as they navigate the mandates and standards through a collaboration with Regional Offices of Education (ROEs) and Intermediate Service Centers (ISCs) to develop a professional learning series focused on the implementation of the revised standards. The series will be piloted with at least 100 Illinois social science educators. This will be integral in the support of educators throughout the state in the 2022-23 school year.

ISBE understands there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to effectively implementing the revised standards. There may need to be a change in teacher practice. For the revised standards to be effective, teachers need to be able to receive and give feedback on the implementation of the standards. The practice of most teachers is beneath the surface and includes the personal experiences of the teacher, prior events in the classroom, teacher relationships with students, and understanding the connections between concepts and curriculum. Professional learning opportunities that best support educators must have a clear purpose for specific audiences, be embedded in practice (taking action vs. listening), be sustained through a series (not a single workshop), and be collaborative by establishing and expanding communities of practice and peer observation. This implementation with fidelity is essential to effectively execute the enactment of the revised standards.

Implementation of the revised Social Science Standards includes a student-centered approach. See flow of learning chart:

Domains of Competency in the Social Studies



Recommendations for General Assembly

Specific Recommendations:

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.

Rationale:

There must be funding to effectively implement the revised Social Science Standards. Such funding will support the continuation of implicit bias training, cultural knowledge and understanding, historical events, teacher-student relationships, student-centered classrooms, and embedded professional

development. Investing in the continual development of Illinois' educators is paramount in the development of the state's students. We ask for consideration of a specific line item in the Illinois state budget to address much-needed funding to achieve this goal.

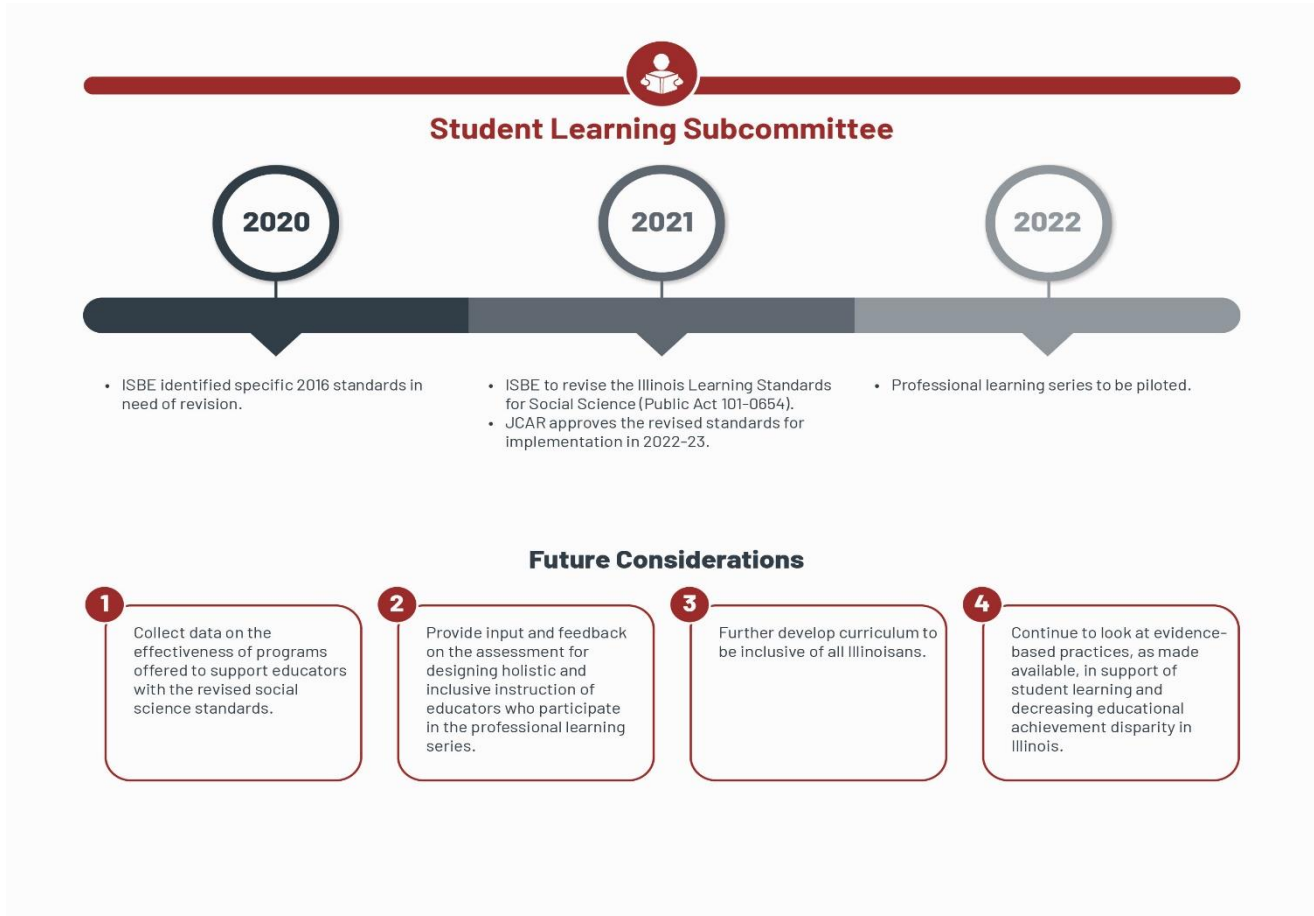
There is need for accountability regarding the implementation of the revised Social Science Standards. ROEs and ISCs monitor compliance for the districts that fall under their purview. We ask them to include the implementation of the revised Social Science Standards among their responsibilities. In addition, we ask for ISBE to promulgate Administrative Rules for noncompliance.

Future Considerations of the ISBE State Education Equity Committee

1. Collect data on the effectiveness of programs that are offered to support educators with the revised Social Science Standards.
2. Provide input and feedback on the assessment for designing holistic and inclusive instruction of educators who participate in the professional learning series.
3. Further develop curriculum to be inclusive of all Illinoisans.
4. Continue to look at evidence-based practices, as made available, to support student learning and decrease educational achievement disparity in Illinois.

Timeline/Flowchart of Action Steps

This graphic shows the programs and strategies ISBE has implemented and will implement in 2022. Future considerations detail what the subcommittee will be taking a closer look at to increase educational equity for students in Illinois.



Learning Conditions Subcommittee

Introduction

ISBE is firmly committed to promoting policies that create a safe and inclusive environment for each and every student across Illinois. This commitment is best evidenced by the theme and content of our [Every Student Succeeds Act State Plan](#). ISBE intends to provide school districts with information regarding evidence-based best practices and sample policies regarding student discipline, equal opportunity, social-emotional learning, and other key facets of the work that must be accomplished to create the safe and inclusive school environment our students deserve.

Schools should be safe and supportive environments conducive to teaching and learning for educators and students. On the path to creating this culture, schools should rely less on exclusionary discipline techniques (e.g., suspensions and expulsions) and instead utilize methods that focus on the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all students. Children who are suspended or expelled are much more likely to fall behind on schoolwork, be suspended again, be required to repeat a grade, or drop out of school altogether. But perhaps most troubling is the association between school discipline and incidence of incarceration, a link that is commonly called a “school-to-prison pipeline.” Students who are consistently punished in school, especially students of color, have a much higher risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system and the criminal justice system as adults.

The consensus seems to be to take a more positive approach to school discipline. Programs to improve the school climate, such as those that seek to reduce harassment, intimidation, and bullying, have been shown to significantly reduce the number of discipline referrals. In fact, schools that have implemented these programs have seen as much as a 60 percent drop in the number of disciplinary actions taken over the course of an academic year.

Illinois legislators have taken an active role in passing reforms to address the disproportionate impact of exclusionary discipline on students of color. [Public Act 99-0456](#) amended several provisions of the Illinois School Code in an effort to reduce exclusionary discipline practices by school districts. This legislation, which was sponsored by Senator Kimberly A. Lightford, was the culmination of the statewide efforts of student groups, parents, educators, administrators, community organizations, legislators, and other stakeholders. PA 99-0456 took effect on September 16, 2016.

All students in the State of Illinois deserve equitable learning experiences in which they feel supported and encouraged to reach their highest potential. In the creation of such learning environments, there is a need for various levels of accountability, training, and resources/support. Illinois’ approach to the creation and maintenance of an equitable school environment requires the existence of sound, research-based, and holistic approaches to education that will not only assist in the academic growth of all students, but also the social and emotional support that is required for them to be successful. Student discipline is a lingering issue that exists and must be addressed, giving students the opportunity to participate in daily, effective instruction in an environment that is inclusive and promising for all.

The Learning Conditions Subcommittee was charged with reviewing the current ISBE strategies and programs being implemented in relation to student discipline and implicit bias, while also assessing opportunities for growth and narrowing of existing gaps. The review and analysis of what ISBE is currently implementing made clear that our state has valuable legislation, practices, and procedures in place, yet some of those are in need of enhancement and/or expansion. It is also evident that there remains an opportunity to address the student discipline issue.



Equity Initiatives in Action at the Illinois State Board of Education

The Illinois State Board of Education has implemented various approaches and strategies to address the issue of student discipline as mandated by the General Assembly and as created under the direction of the State Board and State Superintendent. Many of these methods are beneficial and have helped to further the progression toward the elimination of student discipline disproportionality, yet some are in need of further development and enhancement. There is currently required training in areas related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), yet these requirements either exclude relevant stakeholders or are limited in required content. Additionally, some approaches appear to be mostly reactive. The

subcommittee felt it necessary to recommend strategies that are proactive, co-active, and reactive, as well as inclusive of various educational entities on the local, regional, and state level. This would cause the state to have an all-encompassing approach to eliminating discipline gaps and barriers. Lastly, some requirements that are in place lack thoroughness, specificity, and concrete accountability. In reviewing the state's current approaches, the subcommittee makes the following recommendations that will help to improve accountability measures and increase opportunities for growth, training, resources, and support:

ISBE created the [Student Care Department](#) at the end of 2020 to provide support to districts in addressing exclusionary discipline and racial disproportionality. The Learning Conditions Subcommittee finds the work ISBE is doing to be exceptional and suggests additional positions be considered to continue the extensive support needed to meet this challenge. The department developed a form that districts can utilize to formulate a plan. ISBE is continuing to develop this form, which includes a section for specific goals pertaining to the reduction of exclusionary discipline and racial disproportionality, to support districts in the drafting of their plan. The plan must be posted on the district's website with a progress report that describes the implementation of the plan and the results that are achieved. ISBE is further developing its website to highlight successes of districts that reduce the use of exclusionary discipline. The idea is that if a district is able to get off the top 20 percent exclusionary discipline list, it should be publicly documented that the district has made such an improvement.

The ISBE [Wellness Department](#) offers support to districts on social-emotional learning, including DEI curriculum that is being added to support students. This is part of the overall objective to further develop recommended trainings regarding implicit and unconscious bias, empathic education, adverse childhood experiences, trauma-informed practices, and best practices in student discipline. The partnership between the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) and ISBE includes equity as an element of focus. IASB developing a strategic planning and goal-setting workshop. It is important for school board members to be trained in these areas as they make decisions regarding policy, exclusionary discipline, and alternative school placement.

ISBE is actively incorporating its [Student Advisory Council](#) in multiple aspects of discipline work. It is vital that student voices are heard, and students are able to participate in discussions that directly impact them.

Recommendations for General Assembly

Specific Recommendations:

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 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 pro-active, 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.

Rationale:

Illinois statute currently requires districts to report student disciplinary data to the ISBE. This data is used to determine the top 20 percent of districts that are experiencing the largest disproportionality gaps in student discipline as defined by [105 ILCS 5/2-3.162](#). Though it is clear that there is a need to have a local approach to accountability regarding student discipline, there remains an issue with a blanket approach to identifying districts that are experiencing challenges in this area. Using a percentage-only method means that regardless of progression in closing gaps, there will still remain a punitive “20 percent.” Additionally, as the state has moved from a punitive approach to closing gaps in academic proficiency to a growth model, the same should be done when considering the closing of student discipline gaps. The goal should be for districts to address the issues that lead to exclusionary discipline and highlight the positive impact it has on students when the underlining issues are addressed. Research has shown that student discipline issues are often connected with student barriers (e.g., income status, lack of access to school and community resources, quality of teaching, lack of school research-based programs, discriminatory practices, etc.). Understanding these barriers at the local level is paramount in providing the appropriate resources to districts. Tracking the progress of growth toward removing exclusionary discipline and addressing student barriers when districts implement evidence-based practices is crucial. Illinois should celebrate successes in removing student barriers that lead to a reduction in exclusionary discipline and racial disproportionality.

Currently, there is an exemption for districts with fewer than 50 students of color and fewer than 50 white students to be included in the top 20 percent. The subcommittee recommends the removal of this exemption. Districts that are currently exempt may fall in the top 20 percent if they were included. Districts where there are fewer than 50 students of color are at higher risk of exclusion, discrimination, and racial bias. It is essential that all districts are provided support to address unequitable suspensions, expulsions, and racial disproportionality.

It is imperative that all discipline data be collected to establish a benchmark so that the barriers for all students in Illinois can be better understood. ISBE should promulgate Administrative Rules to establish an exclusionary discipline benchmark and accountability for data submission noncompliance.

Funding is needed to support districts with discipline and implicit bias issues. The subcommittee recommends the allocation and reallocation of EBF to address these concerns. A more targeted approach to support districts to be pro-active and co-active is essential.

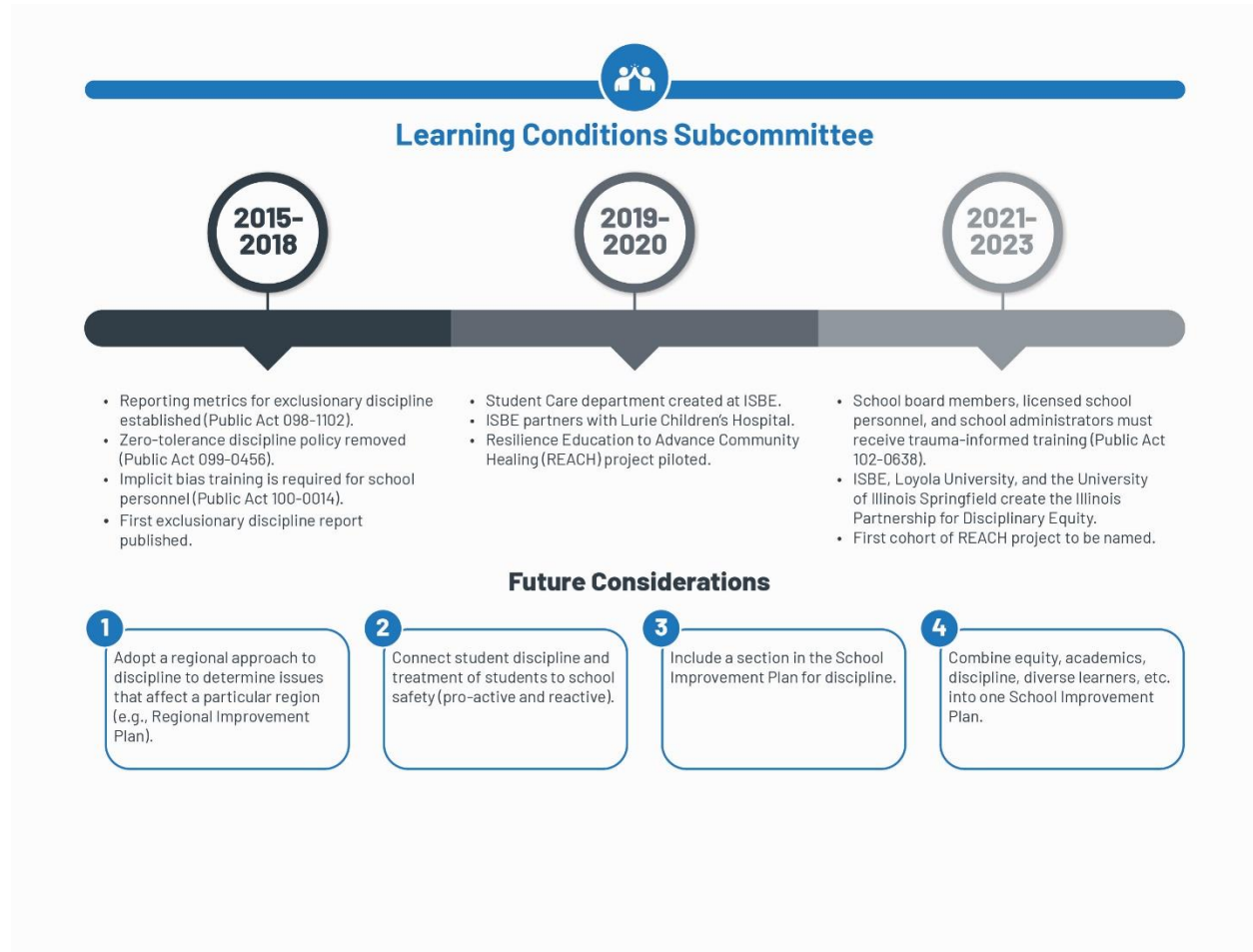
Lastly, the lingering student discipline issue in our state suggests there is a need to more deeply assess the issue of student discipline at the local, regional, and state levels, so that educators can best understand the core of the issue. This will lead to the implementation of best practices in the approach to student discipline. The subcommittee recommends a task force or committee be created to look exclusively at student discipline in Illinois.

Future Considerations of the ISBE State Education Equity Committee

1. Adopt a regional approach to discipline to determine issues that affect a particular region (e.g., Regional Improvement Plan).
2. Connect student discipline and treatment of students to school safety (pro-active and reactive).
3. Combine equity, academics, discipline, diverse learners, etc. into one School Improvement Plan.
4. Add mandated district discipline committee to ROE compliance checklist.
5. Create a catalog or central database for sharing resources and best practices. Highlight and communicate this availability to increase awareness and accessibility for teachers/administrators throughout the state. (Create a campaign.)
6. Integrate trainings related to the Equity Journey Continuum, where there are already requirements and high connectivity (e.g., mandated school board training; ESSA Conference, IASB Conference, Illinois Association of School Administrators Conference).
7. Partner with statewide/local organizations for overall support and to help implement mandated trainings.
8. Provide a sample budget/budget ideas for districts regarding how to allocate funding for programming that leads to the reduction of student discipline.
9. Create a ISBE liaison position that serves as a DEI coordinator at the ROE level.
10. Create regional advisory groups that include students and parents to address the specific needs of the region.
11. Provide a guide pertaining to best practices and/or a sample discipline and DEI plan for districts to reference.
12. Create clear instructions, incentives, and ongoing support for districts to improve discipline and, ultimately, be removed from the top 20 percent list.
13. Collaborate/partner with other State Education Agencies regarding initiatives.

Timeline/Flowchart of Action Steps

This graphic shows the programs and strategies ISBE has implemented and will implement in 2022. Future considerations detail what the subcommittee will be taking a closer look at to increase educational equity for students in Illinois.

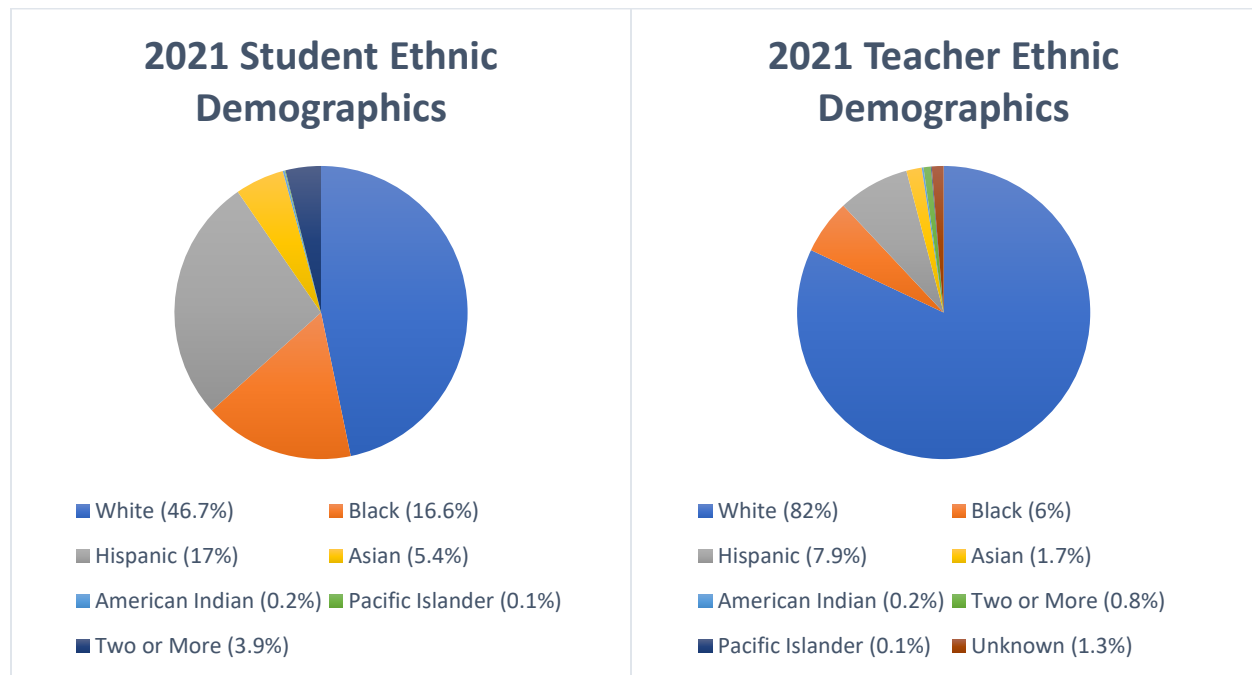


Elevating Educators Subcommittee

Introduction

The Elevating Educators Subcommittee met four times between October and December. As a derivative of the State Education Equity Committee, the panel addressed specific and general charges. The specific charge for the Elevating Educators Subcommittee is to improve incentives, trainings, and offerings to recruit a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce. The general charge consists of two items -- identify evidence-based practices or policies around these goals to build on this state's progress to ensure educational equity for all its students in all aspects of birth-through-Grade 12 education and 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 subcommittee found there is a significant disparity between student and teacher ethnic demographics. The [Illinois Report Card](#) shows of the 132,354 K-12 teachers in Illinois, 82 percent are white, 6 percent are Black, 7.9 percent are Hispanic, 1.7 percent are Asian, and 1.1 percent are American Indian, multiracial, and Pacific Islander; 1.3 percent of teachers in Illinois are listed as unknown. Student demographics from the [Illinois Report Card](#) show 46.7 percent of K-12 students in Illinois are white, 16.6 percent are Black, 27 percent are Hispanic, 5.4 percent are Asian, 0.2 percent are American Indian, 0.1 percent are Pacific Islander, and 3.9 percent are multiracial. It is also important to note that 15 percent of K-12 students have an Individualized Educational Program and 12.9 percent of students are English Learners.



The subcommittee members acknowledged the disproportionality of students to teachers by ethnicity, so it was imperative that they consider factors impacting the recruitment and retention pipeline that have caused this current reality. ISBE staff provided information as to why student ethnic demographics do not reflect teacher ethnic demographics. Illinois experiences disproportionately low enrollment of students of color in educator preparation programs. A comparison of the enrollment of students of color

in the college of education and educator preparation programs with the overall enrollment at an institution of higher education (IHE) reveals a significant difference. People of color who are enrolled at colleges or universities are choosing other majors at higher rates than the rate at which they are choosing education. In addition, a disproportionate number of newly certified or licensed individuals of color are not becoming first-year public school teachers in Illinois. This suggests a number of individuals of color are going through the whole process of getting certified and licensed, but they still are not beginning their careers in public schools in front of students. Furthermore, Illinois experienced higher attrition rates for teachers of color than white teachers throughout their first four years of teaching, with Black teachers leaving the educator workforce at the highest rate -- Black (57 percent), Latinx (43 percent), and white (39 percent). The attrition rates inspired further discussion regarding why this is happening. Some of the comments from teachers on the subcommittee included that school and district leaders are not embracing equity and diversity to create an inclusive environment for all people, teachers of color are experiencing an uncomfortable feeling of isolation in schools without diverse teachers, and there are issues of equity and bias in the evaluation system.

There are pipeline issues generally, but the impact of the challenges is not distributed equally across position types, schools, and geographic areas in Illinois. In 2019, schools in rural Illinois experienced the highest rate of unfilled teaching positions compared to urban and suburban schools. Illinois experienced 1,858 [unfilled teaching positions](#) in 2019, with special education, STEM, elementary education, and bilingual education accounting for 72 percent of the total unfilled teaching positions. Special education had the most unfilled positions. Illinois experiences a lack of local educator preparation program options for students in the northwestern and southeastern regions of the state. Illinois experiences decreasing retention rates for teachers in their first four years (first year -- 86.6 percent; second year - 76.8 percent; third year -- 68.4 percent; fourth year -- 61.1 percent). Illinois experiences low school-level teacher retention rates in low-income schools (50 percent) and low-performing schools (42 percent).

Members of the Elevating Educators Subcommittee recognize there are significant issues with the recruitment and retention of teachers in Illinois, especially related to teachers of color.

Equity Initiative in Action at the Illinois State Board of Education

The subcommittee has worked since October 2021 with Dr. Jennifer Kirmes, who is ISBE executive director of Teaching and Learning, to review the current programs and strategies ISBE has in place to further diversify the teacher workforce. There are numerous programs and strategies ISBE has implemented -- and it will look to implement more in 2022. Becoming more aware of these programs and strategies helped members of the subcommittee to further understand ISBE's support of a diverse teacher workforce. Subcommittee members were able to provide feedback and offer considerations relating to these programs and strategies. Understanding where ISBE is at in terms of recruitment and retention of teachers of color is paramount in developing recommendations to further improve incentives, trainings, and offerings to recruit a diverse and learner-ready teacher workforce.

ISBE is currently overseeing a [diverse educator recruitment and retention](#) pilot. It consists of 24 IHEs that are formulating specific recruitment and retention plans specifically related to candidates of color. Pilot participants will draft their plans, receive feedback from a peer review committee composed primarily of Diverse and Learner Ready Teacher Network members, and meet to exchange ideas and collaborate. Pilot participants will finalize their plans by May 31 and reconvene to talk about what strategies show promise. This type of intentional planning to increase enrollment diversity will be required for all institutions with education preparation programs in the 2022-23 school year.

In fiscal year 2021, ISBE awarded Career and Technical Education (CTE) [Education Career Pathways Grants](#) totaling \$1,548,872 to 10 regional entities to recruit and support future educators at 38 high schools and vocational centers across the state. Students in CTE Education Career Pathways received a head start on teacher preparation through opportunities for hands-on learning, dual credit, credentials, and mentorship. In total, ISBE has awarded two rounds of grants (FY 2020 and FY 2021) worth more than \$3.5 million in state funding to the initiative, supporting more than 1,000 high school students toward becoming teachers. This program has helped increase the diversity of the teaching profession in Illinois and increase access to CTE among students of color. Fifty-three percent of the student population of Education Career Pathways Grant recipients identify as people of color, compared to 18 percent of Illinois teachers and 42 percent of students currently enrolled in CTE programs statewide. Pathways grantees submitted an implementation plan outlining how they will recruit underrepresented students into education careers to help meet the high demand for teachers of color across Illinois. The grant also requires a partnership between grantees and institutions of higher education, so students can earn dual credit or credentials and certifications prior to high school graduation.

The [Teacher Residency Planning Grant](#) provides funding for IHEs with approved teacher preparation programs and their Local Education Agency (LEA) partner(s) to develop the partnership's capacity to design, prepare for, and implement innovative approaches to fieldwork in the form of a teacher residency. Offering a year-long teacher residency program requires careful collaborative planning and partnership between an IHE and an LEA. In turn, this will provide residents rich and extended opportunities to work with, learn from, and hone their craft alongside practicing teachers. Research shows that residency programs are more successful than traditional programs in recruiting diverse candidates and in retaining teachers once in the profession. The program is in its second cohort. It has awarded three educator preparation provider partners and LEA partner(s) each of the last two years with funds to develop residency programs to prepare teacher candidates. Each grant recipient receives a \$50,000 planning grant in Year 1 and a \$200,000 implementation grant in Year 2. The program was adjusted to make it more accessible to rural/small/low-resourced districts. A consortium was developed to make cohort size requirements less restrictive; this change allowed for universities to apply and a district to be listed as a partner.

Pearson is the vendor for licensure tests in Illinois. ISBE reviews the pass rates by race. The agency requested that Pearson conduct a Differential Item Functioning (DIF) analysis on exams that had significant disparities in pass rates among test takers of different races. The DIF analysis resulted in a set of items that will be adjusted or removed entirely to remedy evidence of bias that was found. A Content Advisory Committee is established for each test at the beginning of each phase of the program to recommend design, content, wording, and specifications for the examination to the state. In addition, a Bias Review Committee composed of Illinois educators is convened to advise the state on issues pertaining to bias, equity, and cultural diversity, and to ensure that the tests guard against bias while reflecting the diversity of the Illinois population.

ISBE was able to secure funding to support bilingual teacher licensure. A grant from American Rescue Plan funding is being developed in support of teachers getting their Professional Educator License to continue to work as a bilingual teacher in their district. The development of this program is still in progress and it is set to launch early 2022, impacting FY 2023.

The [New Principal Mentoring Program](#) was created to support inclusive leadership best practices and provide new principals with access to individualized mentoring that builds leadership capacity,

particularly among diverse leaders, and reduces principal turnover in schools serving diverse students. The State of Illinois will provide funding to support delivery of principal mentoring to all new principals during their first year. The New Principal Mentoring Program will match new principals in their first year of employment in Illinois with veteran principals who have demonstrated success as instructional leaders. The New Principal Mentoring Program seeks mentors who are well-trained, supported, and available to provide consistent support/mentorship to principals utilizing technologies to connect new principals with mentors across diverse geographies (e.g., connecting urban and rural principals) and to create peer learning opportunities for mentors and mentees. This program was included by the Elevating Educators Subcommittee with the understanding that diverse principals lead to diverse educator recruitment and retention.

The Affinity Groups Program will bring together teachers of color to identify and address local issues to improve retention so that students have access to teachers who are diverse, experienced, supported, and respected as leaders and professionals as they help students recover from the pandemic. The planning phase has started and will continue until June 30, 2022. The implementation phase will start July 1, 2022, and continue through June 30, 2024. During the implementation phase, affinity groups will be charged with discussing and prioritizing causes of attrition relevant to their local context; developing and presenting proposed policy solutions to their district leadership; and working with district leadership to plan, implement, monitor, and sustain policy solutions. Funds will be dedicated to developing materials (e.g., session outlines, facilitation guides, research briefs) to support affinity groups, leadership and facilitation coaching and support for local group teacher leaders, stipends for participants, and funds to support implementation of identified solutions.

Recommendations for General Assembly

Specific Recommendations:

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.

Rationale:

The educator workforce has not kept pace as the Illinois student body has grown increasingly diverse. Research underscores the academic, social, and emotional benefits for students who have teachers from various cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Illinois is currently facing a teacher shortage that has been exacerbated by the stresses of the current pandemic. While there has been a slight increase in candidates very recently, over the last 10 years there has been a precipitous decline in candidates entering preparation programs and the profession, along with an increase in teacher turnover. The shortage is especially acute for teachers of color and teachers of English Learners and special education students. Teachers of color make up 18 percent of the total teacher workforce in Illinois while students of color make up 53.3 percent of the student population. Currently, there are various stakeholders in Illinois dedicated to addressing the shortage -- policymakers, agency leaders, philanthropic groups, teacher and managerial organizations, and education advocates. ISBE's leadership of a comprehensive

study to determine action steps would allow policies and programs aimed at addressing the shortage to be data-informed and coordinated. *ISBE would be the coordinating body to devise a framework, but various public and private stakeholders would be responsible for carrying out a statewide call to action to transform diverse teacher preparation, recruitment, induction, and retention strategies.*

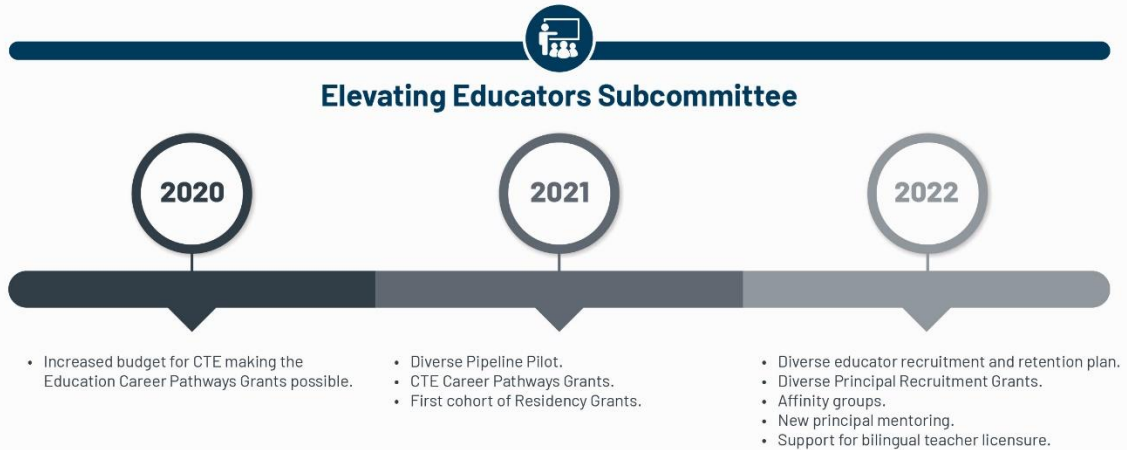
This plan is necessary to better understand the issues pertaining to teacher diversity recruitment and retention. The intent is to improve the collective understanding of who is serving Illinois children and what is the supply and demand on the horizon, with particular attention to the acute need for educators in particular shortage areas (e.g., bilingual, special education, early childhood, STEM, and others that may emerge). The plan should support the agency to provide data in a way that is useful for districts, schools, and an array of other stakeholders who work to strengthen diverse teacher recruitment and retention policies as well as provide additional supports to teachers who need further education/training. It will also help universities identify the need for a strategic plan to address ways to train diverse candidates, identify successes, and address opportunities for improvement. In addition, this work should inform the above recommendation by understanding what initiatives work and can be scaled.

Future Considerations of the ISBE State Education Equity Committee

1. ISBE should conduct a systemic review for bias in the Early Childhood Education content exam and then consider a legislative change to expand the menu of options for early childhood teacher candidates to demonstrate content knowledge. If successful, consider expanding this option to other content areas.
2. ISBE should conduct a statewide campaign to encourage diverse candidates to enter the field of education.
3. Hold sessions to publicize how to enter the field that include information on what is required, types of support available, financial incentives/scholarships, and other supportive programming.
4. Partner with media in diverse languages (e.g., Spanish, Polish, Arabic) to get the word out to immigrant communities. This strategy also might include a career-changer option for those who taught in their home country.
5. ISBE should conduct a systemic upgrade to its current grants management and reporting systems and combine them into one coherent system. The new system should include clear processes and procedures for grantees to report data so that data that is collected can be disaggregated and analyzed to inform policies and programs that can help to diversify the educator pipeline.
6. ISBE should require districts to conduct and report data from a common exit survey created by ISBE in consultation with stakeholders to examine why teachers of color are leaving the workforce. The agency should then analyze and publish this data.
7. ISBE should provide a side-by-side comparison of student/teacher race and ethnicity demographic data in the Illinois Report Card. This visualization could be a component of the Equity Journey Continuum.
8. ISBE should ensure districts are including provisionally licensed bilingual teachers in new teacher instructional coaching and mentoring programs.
9. ISBE should consider supports and policies to improve alignment between two- and four-year universities to benefit students of color.

Timeline/Flowchart of Action Steps

This graphic shows the programs and strategies ISBE has implemented and will implement in 2022. Future considerations detail what the subcommittee will be taking a closer look at to increase educational equity for students in Illinois.



Future Considerations



Conclusion

The State Education Equity Committee recognizes ISBE has made progress toward a more equitable educational experience for students in Illinois, but the work is not done. This Committee has developed recommendations to further education equity, and we ask for consideration in accepting these recommendations. We need a united front among students, parents, advocates, teachers, administrators, ISBE staff, the ISBE Board, legislators, and all other entities involved in the education process to work toward the same goal -- providing equitable education opportunities for all students in Illinois.

The Committee finds that inclusive Social Science Standards are paramount for all students to see themselves in the curriculum. It commends ISBE for seeing the need to revise these and continue to develop resources and supports for teachers and school staff.

Additionally, the Committee finds exclusionary discipline and implicit bias are roadblocks for student engagement and success that must be addressed. The Committee supports ISBE's efforts to further develop accountability, training, and resources to ensure that exclusionary discipline and implicit bias do not further hinder education equity.

Furthermore, the Committee recognizes that there is a teacher shortage in Illinois, especially related to teachers of color. It commends ISBE for the programs and strategies that are being developed to recruit and retain teachers of color in Illinois.

However, the work is not done.

The Committee will continue to work on future considerations and provide additional recommendations in the next report, which is due at the end of 2023. The Committee intends to keep abreast of the strategies ISBE is implementing and planning and will offer support and feedback, as warranted. The state is in its infancy regarding education equity, and the journey will be uncomfortable. Only by working together for the students of Illinois will we be able to realize a state that fully and truly offers the best educational opportunities for all students.