

# Vision 20/20: What's Been Accomplished



In June 2013, education stakeholders from across Illinois formed the public-policy platform Vision 20/20 in an effort to change the narrative from school districts being known for what they oppose, rather than what they stand for.

Those stakeholders include the Illinois Association of School Administrators, Illinois Association of School Boards, Illinois Principal's Association, Illinois Association of School Business Officials, Illinois Association of Regional School Superintendents and Superintendents Commission for the Study of Demographics and Diversity.

The effort identified four pillars, all focused on the overarching goal of providing a more equitable and adequate education for Illinois' 2 million school children. Those pillars are: highly effective educators, 21st century learning, shared accountability and equitable and adequate funding.

Much has been accomplished with each pillar in the past five years, but there is still more work to be done 2020. Here is a closer look at key achievements of Vision 20/20:



## EQUITABLE AND ADEQUATE SCHOOL FUNDING

Far and away the biggest success of Vision 20/20 came in August 2017, when the Illinois General Assembly passed the historic education funding reform bill, SB

1947, into law, creating the first roadmap for equitable and adequate funding for schools in Illinois.

The legislation is intended to put new money for education into the state's poorest and neediest districts—and to try to ease the state's reliance on local property taxes to pay for schools.

Here are a few of the highlights of the legislation:

- For the first time, school funding in Illinois is tied to evidence-based best practices proven by research to enhance student achievement in the classroom.
- Each school district is treated individually, with an adequacy target based on the needs of its student body. The greater the student need, the higher the adequacy target.

- New dollars will be distributed to the neediest districts first, or those furthest from their adequacy target.
- Treats students in Chicago with parity to every other school district in the state by getting rid of block grants and reconciling pension payments.

Illinois State Board of Education is releasing new tier funding for FY18 that will total approximately \$395 million statewide, including \$29 million specifically for English learners in the highest need districts.

This is a substantial investment in K–12 public education, but there is still a long way to go for each school district to reach its adequacy target, as identified in the new evidence-based model.

The goal of IASA and Vision 20/20 public policy platform is for each school district to reach 90 percent of their adequacy target in 10 years—an investment that will require at least \$5 billion.



## HIGHLY EFFECTIVE EDUCATORS

The efforts of Vision 20/20 have yielded two significant pieces of legislation that improved teacher reciprocity for Illinois and began to address the ongoing teacher shortage.

In July 2015, HB 2657 became law and streamlined educator licensure reciprocity agreements with other states. Here are highlights of HB 2657:

- In emergency situations, school districts can employ for up to 120 days substitute teachers who hold a professional educator license or license with stipulations that is endorsed for the grade level of instruction.
- Teachers that have completed an evidence-based assessment of teacher effectiveness or a test of basic skills in another state do not have to complete additional Illinois assessments upon initial licensure.

- Out-of-state teachers seeking licensure that have completed the same required coursework as in-state candidates need only verify program completion to receive a professional educator license.
- Endorsements for out-of-state applicants for a principal endorsement or superintendent endorsement are available to individuals who have completed an out-of-state approved education program to become a principal or superintendent, met state exam requirements and received a certificate or license endorsed in a teaching field.
- Endorsements for out-of-state applicants for a chief school business official endorsement are available to those individuals with a master's degree in school business

*continued...*



management, finance, or accounting; completed an internship in school business management or have two years of experience as a school business administrator; met all state exam requirements; and have completed modules in reading methods, special education and English learners.

In January 2017, SB 2912, which aimed to address the teacher shortage by making it easier for educators trained outside Illinois to work here became the law. Here are highlights of SB 2912:

- Reduced the license fee for substitute teachers from \$100 to \$50.
- Created a one-year grace period for retired teachers with lapsed licenses to bring their license into good standing without fines or coursework, allowing them to substitute.
- Prevented educators who retired mid-cycle from having their licenses lapse, allowing them to substitute.

- Allowed educators licensed in other states to obtain an Illinois license through a more streamlined process, enabling Illinois State Board of Education to grant licenses based on comparable out-of-state licenses instead of comparing preparatory programs from other states.
- Applied content area tests from other states for out-of-state licensees seeking an Illinois license.
- Created a provisional in-state endorsement on a provisional educator license with stipulations to allow candidates who have met all other requirements except passage of edTPA. This would allow candidates one additional year to pass the assessment while teaching.



## 21ST CENTURY LEARNING

In December 2017, Illinois State Board of Education released a notice of funding opportunity/request for proposals for pending state funds to expand internet connectivity in schools.

The funds would reimburse school districts for the cost of upgrading their broadband infrastructure to fiber optic technology.

The effort is part of The Illinois Classroom Connectivity Initiative, which works with school districts across the state to accelerate bandwidth upgrades through a partnership with state agencies and Education Super Highway. So far, it has helped 756 Illinois school districts, which educate more than 1.2 million students, meet the 100 kbps per student minimum connectivity goal, according to the state education board.



## SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

In August, 2015, the second piece of legislation sponsored by Vision 20/20, HB 2683, was signed and created the Illinois Balanced Accountability Model.

The new accountability model for schools stated that, in addition to using standardized test scores, schools should have flexibility to use an evidence-based framework to demonstrate student improvement and growth.

The legislation preceded Illinois' Every Student Succeeds Act plan. Some of the framework in HB 2683 was adopted in Illinois' ESSA plan, although the federal plan places more emphasis on standardized assessments.

Another focus of the Shared Accountability pillar included unfunded mandate relief. The passage of the evidence-based funding model

provided some help in this area, including:

- School boards can determine the frequency of physical education as long as it is a minimum of three days per five-day week (the state previously required daily PE). Also, allows districts to exempt on a case-by-case basis 7th through 12th graders who participate in sports.
- School districts can contract with third party drivers education vendors without requesting a waiver from the General Assembly.
- Schools now have a more streamlined process to request waivers from the General Assembly from other state mandates.

## What's Next?

In the short term, everyone needs to continue to advocate and engage legislators for new funding for the evidence-based model.

Vision 20/20 will also continue to seek both short-term and long-term solutions to the teacher-shortage crisis in Illinois.

Plans are under way to conduct a revisioning meeting in early August in Springfield. The purpose of this meeting will be threefold: First, the successes of Vision 20/20 to date will be highlighted and celebrated. Second, participants will review the four pillars of Vision 20/20 and the original concepts that were adopted for further action. Additional issues within each of the four pillars will be identified for possible legislative

action. Third, participants will identify those issues that should be moved forward for additional consideration.

For updates, please follow Vision 20/20 on Twitter @ILVision2020 and be sure to visit the Vision 20/20 webpage at <https://illinoisvision2020.org>.

The continued success of the Vision 20/20 initiative will depend on increased advocacy for public education in the state of Illinois.

Sincerely,

Ralph Grimm, Vision 20/20 Director