



Vision 2030 Key Messages

A COMMON GOAL—Fulfilling the Promise of Public Education in Illinois

Ten years ago, education leaders from five statewide organizations came together through their professional organizations to advocate for initiatives that would advance K-12 public education, including evidence-based funding to ensure all schools have the resources needed for local educators to be able to provide a safe, rigorous and well-rounded learning environment. Vision 2020 also included enhancements to teacher recruitment policies, college and career readiness initiatives and the development of Illinois Balanced Accountability System, which establishes standards for K-12 student performance and school improvement in Illinois.

Now, we have come together again to set a vision for the next decade with a priority on future-focused learning—what our children need to know and be able to do so they can adapt and excel in a rapidly changing world. We are committed to policy, legislative and fiscal solutions that advance this goal and fulfill the promise of public education in Illinois.

We want to put systems and processes in place that support all school districts throughout the state in sharing what works for our kids and our communities, while also leveraging public resources and preserving local flexibility and leadership so that the best decisions are made closest to home.

ADVOCACY FRAMEWORK: Advancing Change Together

Vision 2030 provides a blueprint to enhance public education through future-focused learning with shared accountability and predictable funding.

Simply put, this includes: keeping students and schools safe, attracting and retaining high-quality educators, enhancing post-secondary success, and more effectively measuring what is working well in schools in a timely, usable manner.

Future-focused learning is about reshaping our schools and classrooms and redefining student success to reflect and prepare students for all the different ways that the world and economy continue to change. Here are some examples of what we mean:

- We have to acknowledge that students learn best, and educators teach most effectively, when they feel safe and connected to one another and to their communities.
 - This is the single most important thing we can do to support both academic achievement and individual well-being—and it is something that has to be considered in our instructional approach, curriculum, student support services and funding, so that local districts have the resources needed to ensure school buildings are safe.

- We want to engage students in thinking about their pathways to college and career sooner—as early as elementary school (grades K-5).
 - This means working with local businesses to cultivate awareness and engagement in opportunities that allow students to explore in-demand and emerging career fields—including the trades, agriculture, health care, AI, quantum computing, electric vehicles, advanced manufacturing and the green economy.
 - It also means expanding partnerships and collaborations with our community colleges and universities to allow our kids to experience success in college-level courses while still in high school through advanced placement and dual-enrollment courses. This can encourage more students to enroll in college and vocational training opportunities and lessen the burden of student loan debt upon graduation or program completion.
- We must encourage and preserve time and financial resources for local curriculum innovation and programming to best meet the needs of students in our communities.
 - This means we must look closely at the impact and cost of implementing additional curriculum and graduation requirements. We must maintain the flexibility needed for students to pursue meaningful college and career coursework through thoughtfully designed curriculum developed by local educators. In addition, we must carefully consider operational mandates to determine which ones are essential, or if we should be allowing local educators and school boards to make opt-in decisions based on the needs of their students and communities.
- Vision 2030 is aligned with much of ISBE’s strategic plan and is focused on providing support for local school districts to develop new approaches to attract and retain excellent educators who have both the subject-matter expertise, compassion, cultural competency and commitment to help all students at all levels achieve their full potential.
 - We know that there is still work to be done here, particularly in the areas of special education, math and science, and bilingual education.
 - We have to provide innovative and evidence-based opportunities for our educators to continue to learn and grow, especially considering the rate at which technology is changing the landscape of teaching and learning.
 - We are excited about and will advocate for pathways for school districts to create “grow your own” initiatives that encourage young people to consider careers in education and want to explore more flexible alternative licensure opportunities.

Shared accountability means thinking beyond annual standardized tests to more fairly and effectively measure student success by considering both growth and proficiency over time.

This requires some shifts in how we think about student assessments. For example:

- Just like children’s physical growth, academic progress does not always happen in a linear manner—both growth and proficiency should be measured over time within and across grade levels.
- We need to put individual, classroom and school assessment data into the hands of educators and school leaders in near real-time. Timely insights from benchmark assessments—even if drawn from unofficial data—can be a powerful tool to inform teaching strategies and academic interventions at both classroom and individual student levels.
- Assessments must be meaningful and relevant—this means identifying and considering all the things that matter to a student’s success in the elementary grades, as well as early

indicators of college and career readiness in middle school. We can then use this data to support positive interventions to keep students on-track toward high school graduation and a college/career pathway.

- School ratings should be established based on clear performance thresholds rather than rankings that can pit schools within the same district against one another. Rather than focusing on which schools make it into the top 10%, let's focus on publicly recognizing all schools that achieve high levels of student achievement at or above grade-level—that kind of positive reinforcement is powerful to improving educator morale, parent engagement and community support.

Providing excellent education resources and future-focused learning opportunities for student success requires long-term predictable and sustainable funding with additional investment to support updated instructional resources and technology, keep pace with economic pressures on salaries and equipment, and maintain aging infrastructure. School districts also need the flexibility to determine how to allocate public monies to best meet the needs of their students and communities. This means that:

- The State must consistently fulfill its promise of allocating a minimum of \$350 million in annual Evidence-Based Funding. Districts need to be able to rely on receiving this funding in order to support their long-term planning. Additionally, receiving state funding on-time helps fulfill their responsibilities to transparently report how these funds are allocated across each district.
- Critical investments in health and life safety projects should not be subject to limitation by property tax caps or require ISBE approval. We need to rethink the current levy structure to allow schools to prioritize student and staff safety, and address these urgent needs without impacting educational funding.
- Illinois school districts need State-funded annual School Maintenance Project Grants to support long-term facilities needs and expanded federal Title IV funding to support school safety.
- It is clear that the Illinois pension system for public school educators needs reform. We know that changes to the current pension model must occur to attract and retain high-quality staff to educate our students, but it is not effective or realistic to divert local school district resources away from schools and students to shoulder this responsibility.
- More than one-half (58 of 102) of Illinois school districts are located in counties that have successfully passed a School Facility Sales Tax. Currently, this option is available statewide EXCEPT for Cook County. All school districts deserve this option—and should have the flexibility to use these dollars not just for capital projects, but also to support school safety and mental health initiatives.

TAKE ACTION

We ask all Illinois school boards to review the Vision 2030 plan and adopt a resolution in support. Let's show the Governor and Illinois General Assembly that Illinois' almost 850 school districts support this vision for the future.

In the coming weeks, we will have additional opportunities for district and school leaders, educators and other partners to voice their support publicly and directly to policy-leaders and decision makers.