



ILLINOIS EDUCATION AND CAREER  
**SUCCESS NETWORK**

# Success Network Policy Committee

*Q4 Meeting*

December 3, 2025



# Welcome & Introductions

*Please share in the chat:*

- Your name and organization
- One word to describe your 2025

# Agenda

*Today's meeting will be recorded and shared at [ILSuccessNetwork.org/Policy-Committee](https://ILSuccessNetwork.org/Policy-Committee)*

- Welcome & Introductions
- Reflecting Success Network Policy Committee exit poll findings
- Stand for Children Illinois: Chronic Absenteeism Focus Group findings
- Advance Illinois: *The State We're In 2025* report
- State and Federal Policy Updates
- Upcoming Events and Resources

# Reflecting Exit Survey Data from September's Policy Committee

*What would you like to explore in future Policy Committee meetings? (You may select more than one).*

## Top of Mind

- Changes to CTE Clusters
- IL Report Card Data
- Federal Policy Impact on College/Career Readiness
- Showcasing Local, Innovative Models in College/Career Readiness

## Other Relevant Topics

- Chronic Absenteeism
- High School Graduation Requirements
- Workforce Pell and High-Quality Credentials





**STAND**  
for children

| ILLINOIS

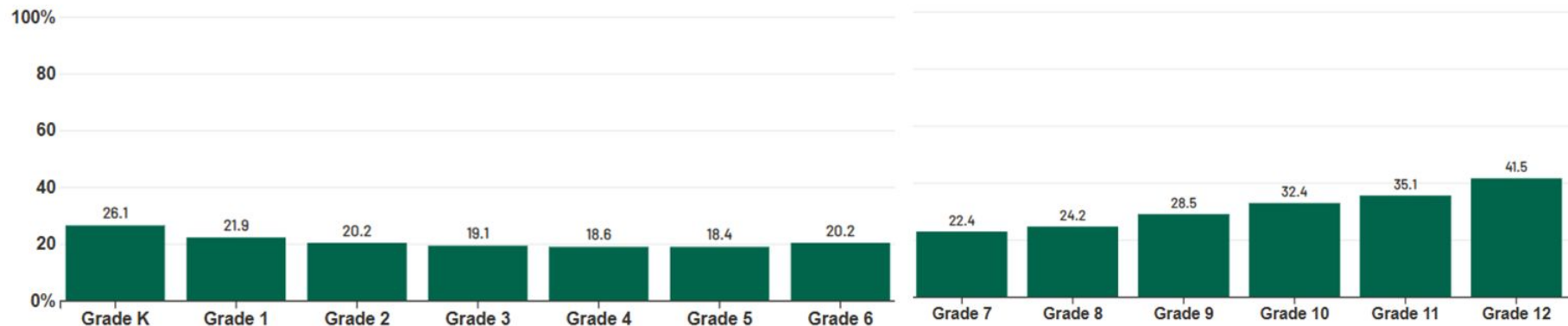
# CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

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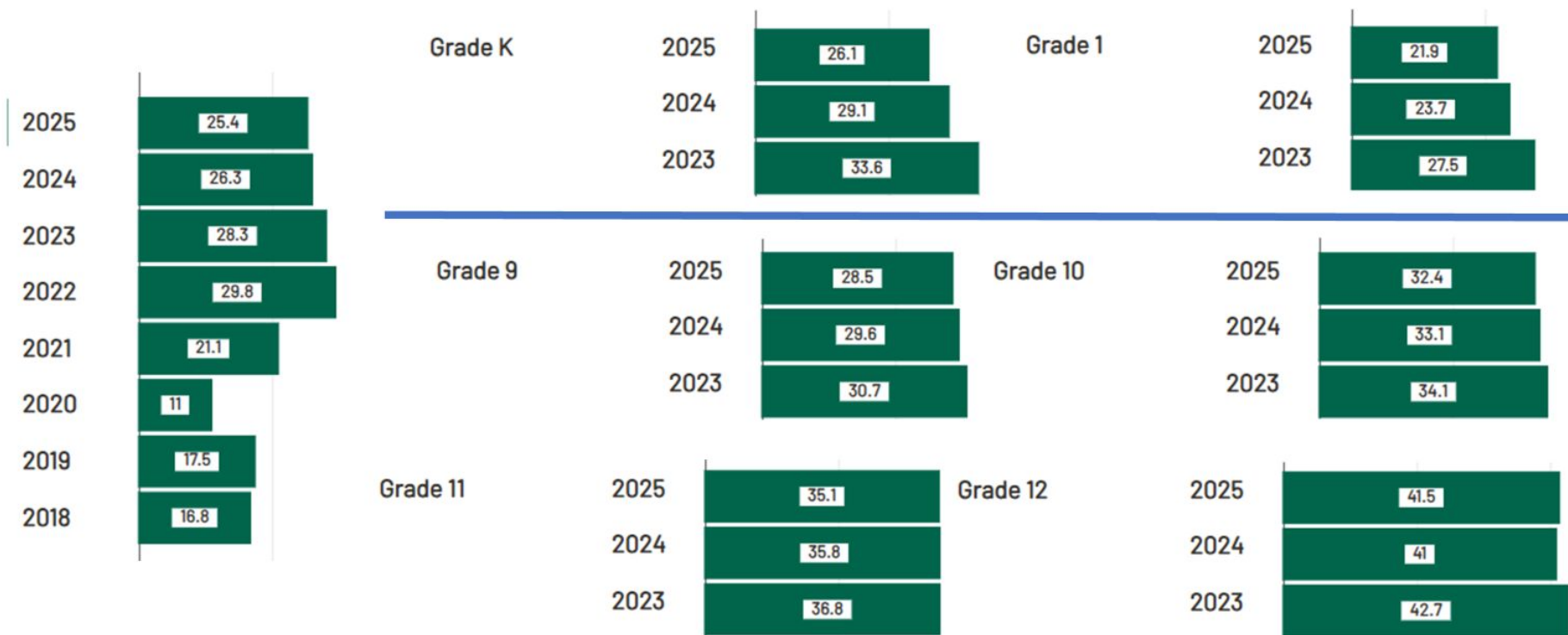
FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

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# 2025 IL CHRONIC ABSENSE RATE BY GRADE



# CHRONIC ABSENSE TRENDS



# OVERDECK/CCSR RESEARCH

- ▶ In August 2024, the Overdeck Foundation awarded funding to five pilot programs, including one Consortium for Chicago School Research study of [95,000 Chicago middle schoolers](#).
- ▶ Initial findings suggest that “post-pandemic absenteeism varies widely between schools with similar pre-pandemic attendance rates. What appear to be key predictors are student-reported measures of climate, such as safety, connectedness, and trust between teachers and parents. These are stronger predictors of attendance than neighborhood poverty or family education levels, suggesting that strong relationships are a critical factor driving students’ engagement in learning.”

# 50% CHALLENGE STATES

- ▶ In partnership with Attendance Works last year, sixteen states have signed onto the ["50% Challenge,"](#) a commitment to cutting their rates of chronic absenteeism over five years. Illinois is not among them. Those states are supported with an Attendance Works toolkit to systematically plan goals and interventions to conquer their attendance issues.

# CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM INDICATOR

- ▶ **Some advocacy to remove the indicator from State accountability system.**
- ▶ **Has been inverted (“consistent attendance”) in the current draft.**
- ▶ **We would like to see some kind of attendance growth, in addition to or instead of just attendance proficiency.**

# FOCUS GROUP METHODOLOGY

- ▶ 15 participants (4 groups) – high school parents/students who were chronically absent
  - ▶ Almost half of the participants were from Chicago, five from the suburbs, and three from downstate.
  - ▶ Participants received a \$50 gift card for their active participation in a 90-minute focus group.
- ▶ Limitations:
  - ▶ Not a representative sample or a scientifically validated survey. We have included our focus group script at the end of this document.
  - ▶ Our last focus group was held on September 11, so these conversations happened before the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations in the Chicago area ramped up dramatically soon thereafter.



# FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

- ▶ Parents mostly, but not entirely, felt supported by educators in their students' schools to help mitigate their teenagers' absenteeism. Most described individual educators or school counselors who they trusted.
- ▶ Even parents who eventually sent their high schoolers to alternative options were generally complimentary of the schools their children left.
- ▶ "Nobody's dropping the ball," said one parent. "All of those measures are in place, and it's up to the individual to take advantage of them."



# FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

- ▶ This positivity was not universal:
  - ▶ One mom shared stories of her son with autism facing bullying from students and adults at school.
  - ▶ Another said their student could not identify one adult in the building with whom they had a positive relationship.
  - ▶ One considered school safety a “huge barrier,” with concerns more about violence from school security guards than from other students, while another considered behavior of other students to be a safety concern.
  - ▶ Several were threatened with legal action for their children’s spotty attendance, which no one believed was helpful to a situation where they were already frustrated and striving to get their children motivated to go to class.

# COMPLEX RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Many recommendations were longer-term issues, extremely important and requiring a larger and sustained effort over time from systems outside of public education.



# REC. #1: ENSURE EVERY STUDENT HAS POSITIVE ADULT RELATIONSHIPS IN THE BUILDING

- ▶ One parent recommended many of the same activities in the [Attendance Works protocol](#):
  - ▶ Real-time calls home when students are absent, in-home visits, proactive conversations with families, and appointment of a parent advocate or point person with whom families can communicate for attendance issues. He also recommended local meetings with parents for feedback, particularly parents who had succeeded in turning around their children's attendance problems
- ▶ But for others, it was less about informing parents – who often knew and struggled daily with getting students to go – it was more about giving students intrinsic motivations to make it to school:
  - ▶ Feeling a sense of belonging in their school community and knowing there were caring adults who would miss them if they were gone and notice their absence.

## REC. #2: DON'T OVER-PENALIZE TARDINESS

- ▶ One recurring theme, which came up in nearly every group: showing up to school late was often punished more harshly than not coming at all.
  - ▶ Participants spoke of in-house detentions issued after some number of tardies and corralling students in a “tardy tank” if they were late then making them wait until the next period to go to class.
  - ▶ The most egregious examples we heard from two parents were schools that charge monetary fines for tardiness (a practice that is likely already against state law).

## REC. #3: MINIMIZE DRESS CODE BARRIERS

- ▶ Several participants mentioned issues related to dress code violations as a source of conflict/children sent home for incomplete uniforms.
  - ▶ A shared closet at the school could minimize absences for these sorts of infractions.
  - ▶ Allowing hats and scarves can minimize absences when some hairstyles may require many hours of work that sometimes remain unfinished at the start of a school day.



## REC. #4: LIMIT CELL PHONES

- ▶ Anxiety, bullying, and peer conflicts were a recurring theme.
  - ▶ This is critically important to address for reasons that stretch beyond absenteeism, and multiple projects are trying to tackle (the new mental health screening law, the Childhood Adversity Index, and the Whole Child Task Force.)
- ▶ One moderately resolvable subtheme: the relationship between social media and student anxiety. Much of this is outside schools, but schools can limit on campus cell phone use.

# REC. #5: PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL AND PROGRAM OPTIONS

- ▶ Two parent participants had students who struggled mightily with attendance at their home school and found alternative schools to be a better fit.
- ▶ Another spoke about the career pathway program their student began as a major motivation for her to turnaround her poor attendance.
- ▶ Similarly, several participants talked about the importance of extracurricular activities in motivating students to attend.

## REC. #6: IMPROVE BUSSING

- ▶ Another recurring theme was the apprehension some students feel walking along dangerous routes to school and the herculean task some parents face having to drive multiple children to multiple schools in different directions.
- ▶ Cuts in busing and bus driver shortages may be, in part, to blame for a perception that school transportation is less reliable and accessible than it once was.



## REC. #7: IMPROVE ACCESS TO MEDS

- ▶ One participant, a student with chronic pain from an autoimmune condition, shared that one deterrent was trying to deal with pain management during school. Even getting over-the-counter pain relievers in the middle of the day was difficult.
- ▶ Admittedly, we need to do more research to explore the regulatory environment for streamlining systems to support students with chronic health conditions to access medication.

# RECOMMENDATION OVERVIEW

- ▶ **Ensure positive adult relationships**
- ▶ **Don't over-penalize tardiness**
- ▶ **Minimize dress code barriers**
- ▶ **Limit cell phones**
- ▶ **Provide alternatives**
- ▶ **Improve Bussing**
- ▶ **Improve Medicine Access**



# THE STATE WE'RE IN 2025

A REPORT ON PUBLIC EDUCATION IN ILLINOIS



# The State We're In

Advance Illinois biennially produces *The State We're In*, a quantitative analysis of the state of education in Illinois. We use publicly-available data sets to look at inputs, outputs and outcomes in our B-20 education systems.



# The State We're In 2025 Advisory Group

**Bethany Patten**

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Department of Human Services

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Interim Director of Early Childhood Development,  
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# About *The State We're In Report 2025*

- Approximately 80 metrics grouped by education sector
- With a focus on current performance, longitudinal trends, and national context – paying close attention to how Illinois has recovered from the pandemic
- Equity gaps are of particular concern and are persistent throughout metrics
- In some instances, we specifically denote where data is not available to highlight that education stakeholders need this information to improve learning
- In some instances, we highlight datasets that have been delayed or are in danger of being discontinued by the federal government

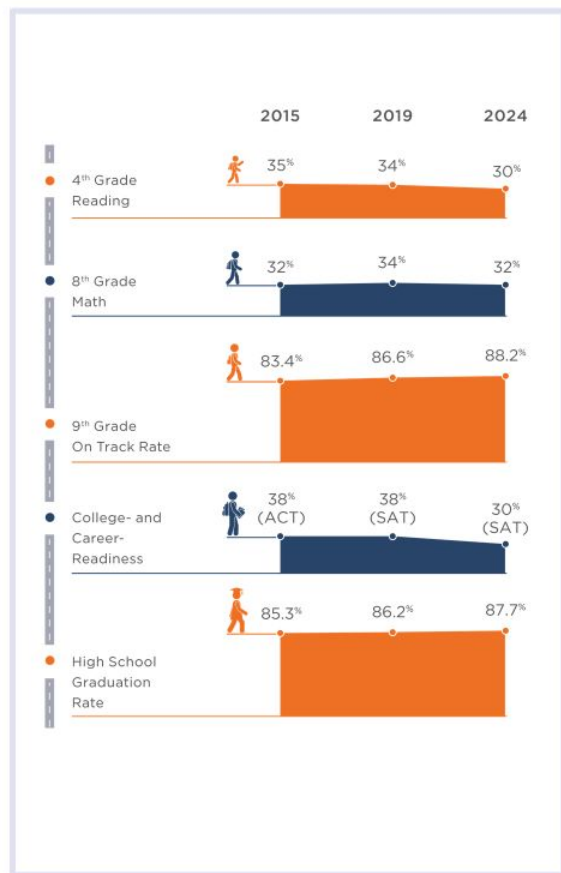
**Exploring Enrollment and Access,  
Learning Conditions, and Outcomes  
at every stop along the continuum of  
Illinois' systems of education and care**





# Progress Metrics

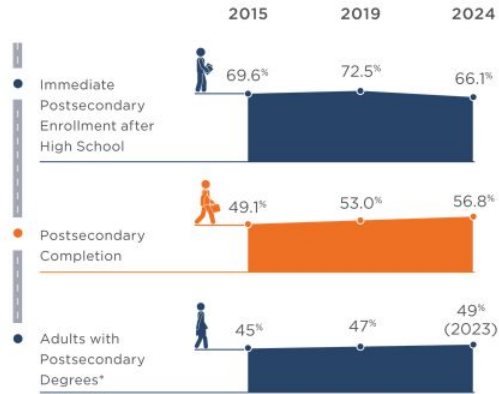
# K-12 Academic Progress and Persistence



- Illinois 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP proficiency held steadier than other states through the pandemic, but fewer than a third of students are proficient
- High school persistence and completion is strong and improving
  - High 9<sup>th</sup> Grade On Track
  - High Graduation Rates
- College- and Career-Readiness as measured by the ACT and SAT has been dropping since 2015



# Higher Education Enrollment and Attainment



See Footnotes for a full list of metric sources

- The percentage of students immediately enrolling in higher education fell during the pandemic and has not rebounded
- Completion rates are on the rise
- Overall attainment rates are increasing

## A Note on Projections and the Importance of ILDS

Looking at sector-specific data allows us to understand how each sector is doing, but we also need to know how these systems interact.

# State Rankings

## Metrics Ranked in the Top Half of States

2 out  
of 5

Early Childhood  
and Education

10 out  
of 16

K-12

20 out  
of 28

Higher Education

- Illinois has narrowed equity gaps in many places across the education continuum
- However, all but one metric had equity gaps for:
  - Students of color,
  - Students from low-income households, or
  - English Learners

## ILLINOIS' NATIONAL RANKINGS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE METRICS



**2 out of 5 Early Childhood Education Metrics were in the top half of states**

# Early Childhood Education and Care

## Enrollment and Access

- A record number of 3-year-olds are enrolled in state-funded preschool (3<sup>rd</sup>)
- Lower-ranking metrics:
  - Enrollment of 4-year-olds in state-funded preschools (20<sup>th</sup>)
  - Access to Head Start (29<sup>th</sup>)

## Learning Conditions

- State preschool funding is middle-of-the-pack (26<sup>th</sup>)

## Outcomes

- While we cannot compare Illinois to other states, kindergarten readiness has been improving, though gaps by income, race, language and learning style emerge early

## ILLINOIS' NATIONAL RANKINGS ON K-12 METRICS



**10 out of 16 K-12 Metrics were in the top half of states**

# K-12

## Enrollment and Access\*

## Learning Conditions

- Illinois performs well on some indicators
  - per-student funding (18<sup>th</sup>)
  - student-to-teacher ratios in elementary grades (4<sup>th</sup>)
  - students taking AP exams (7<sup>th</sup>)
- With troubling performance on others
  - Chronic absenteeism remains high (20<sup>th</sup>)
  - Mental health indicators are of concern (bottom half for 2 of 3 metrics)

## Outcomes

- Illinois 4<sup>th</sup> grade proficiency is in the bottom half of states
  - 4<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP reading and math proficiency (29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>)
- But growth and 8<sup>th</sup> grade proficiency are some of the highest in the nation
  - State exam growth from 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade (3<sup>rd</sup>)
  - 8<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP reading and math proficiency (8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>)

## ILLINOIS' NATIONAL RANKINGS ON HIGHER EDUCATION METRICS



**20 out of 28 Higher Education Metrics were in the top half of states**

# Higher Education

## Enrollment and Access

- State spending on higher education is nearly last in the country
- Tuition and fees are among the highest in the nation
- However, net tuition beat national averages (20th)
  - Rising costs are combatted by institutional scholarships and state financial aid

## Learning Conditions

- Illinois boasts strong retention
  - Community college retention is top 5 in the nation
  - Public 4-year university retention is middle-of-the-pack

## Outcomes

- Illinois consistently places in the top half of states for measures of completion and attainment

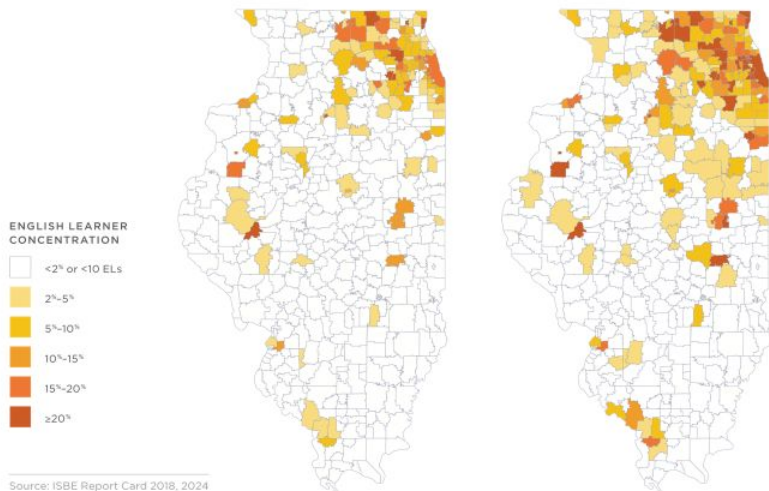


# ILLINOIS B-20 LANDSCAPE



# Population decreases impact the B-20 continuum

## MAP OF THE PERCENTAGE OF PREK-12 ENGLISH LEARNERS IN 2018 AND 2024



Since 2010...

The statewide population has fallen

State population	1% decrease
Birthrates	11% decrease
Children under 5	13.7% decrease
School-age children	11.6% decrease
Young adults (15–19)	10.4% decrease

Enrollment has also decreased

Public K-12	10.3% decrease (proportional)
Higher Education	28% decrease (outsized)

Enrollment in state-funded preschool has increased alongside declining Head Start enrollment

Diversity has risen in schools and colleges, with notable increases in Latinx students and English Learners

## Despite efforts to increase funding across the continuum, spending is still inadequate and sometimes inequitable

ILLINOIS STATE FUNDING PER PUPIL (IN 2023 DOLLARS)



### State-funded preschool

- Funding grew 21% from 2008 to 2024
- Remains middle of the pack nationally
- Gap to adequacy: \$8.9 billion\*

### Public university and community college

- Trails the nation
- Higher education appropriations dropped by 33%
  - After inflation-adjustment
- Gaps to adequacy:
  - Public Universities: \$1.4 billion\*
  - Community Colleges: over \$700m

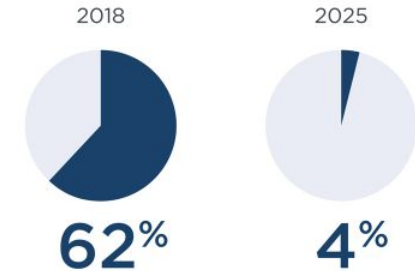


## However, K-12 investment has increased Illinois' national ranking



### K-12

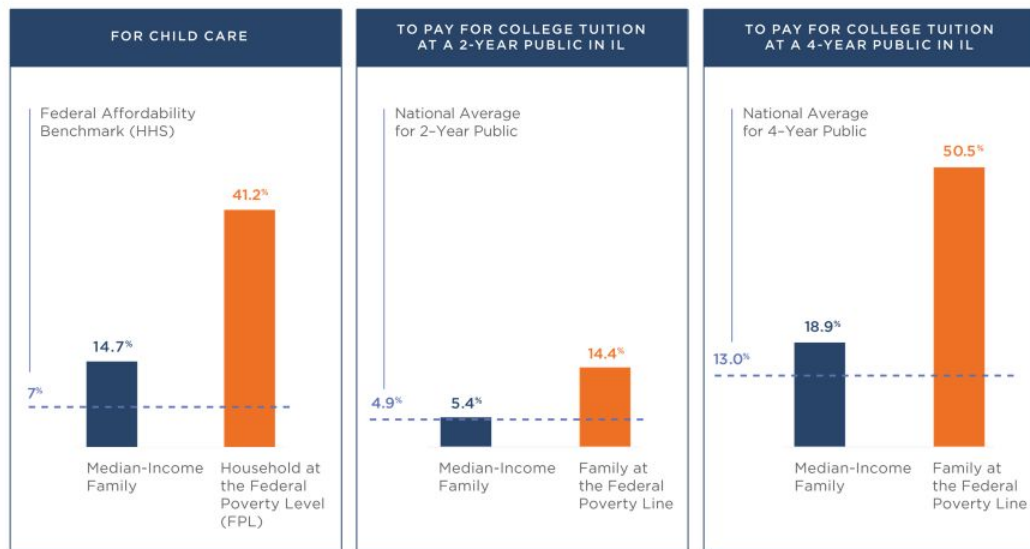
- Funding grew 75% from 2008 to 2024
- The percent of students in districts with <70% adequate funding has dropped



- Gap to adequacy in FY25: \$2.7 billion
  - Plus \$511M for mandated categoricals

# Despite recent increases in funding, decades of disinvestment have resulted in overly high costs for students and families

## PERCENT OF INCOME NEEDED:



- The cost of toddler care has increased from 2018 to 2022
  - Center-based: \$10.6k → \$11.4k
  - Home-based: \$6.6k → \$10.6k
- At 18.9%, the percent of the median family's income to pay for college tuition at a 4-year public institution is down from 23% in 2016
  - However, this still rests high above the national average

# Already dire, student wellness in Illinois is worsening

## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) framework

- 77% of Illinois youth have experienced an ACE
- Illinois youth experience 3+ ACEs at a rate lower than the national average
- Black students are over twice as likely to have reported 3+ ACEs than the statewide average

## K-12 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System

- More students feel sad or hopeless
- More students consider suicide
- Increases are especially felt among female students

## Mental Health in Higher Education

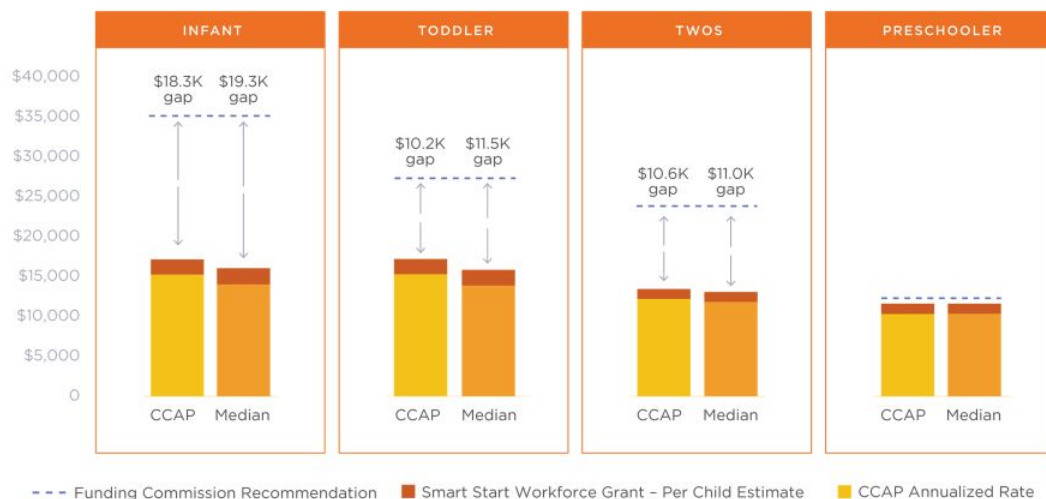
- Twice as many students felt that their mental health affected their academics compared to 2007
- Rates are higher among
  - Latinx students,
  - students with disabilities,
  - students with higher financial stress,
  - trans students,
  - students who identify as LGBTQ+



# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

## Access to early childhood education and care is shifting and adapting, but costs remain prohibitive for both caregivers and parents

COMPARING CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CCAP), PRIVATE PAY, AND THE TRUE COST OF CARE (IN 2024 DOLLARS).



- There is still work to do in ensuring that all eligible children have accessible and affordable options
  - only 21% of birth to 2-year-olds are being served
- Enrollment changes from 2019 to 2024
  - Preschool for All Expansion increased by 68%
  - Head Start decreased 41%
- Disinvestment has resulted in large gaps to adequacy for most age groups – pushing costs to families



#### EARNINGS BY EDUCATION LEVEL



## Learning Conditions

### Early childhood professionals are not well-compensated

- 69% of early childhood professionals hold an associate's degree or higher, but they earn less than the average Illinoisan at that education level
- Wage increases across all positions in licensed childcare centers have outpaced inflation but aren't rising fast enough

### Vacancies are increasingly common and difficult to fill

- Turnover rates have been on the rise since 2021
- Administrators cite an average of 4 weeks to fill a vacant position

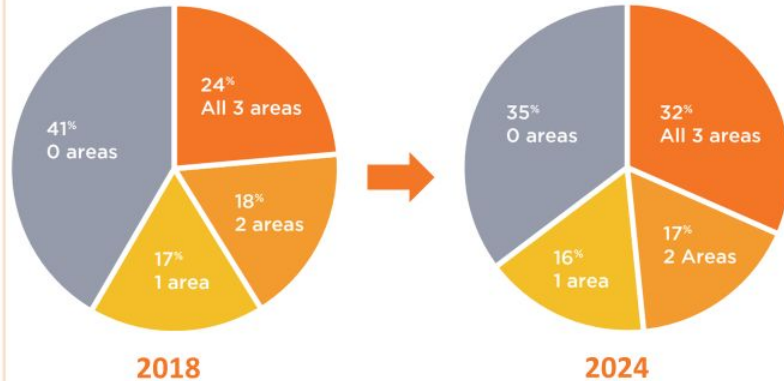
### Fewer early childhood centers are participating in an accreditation process

- The number of children being served in a center with a Circle of Quality rating has decreased from nearly 80,000 in 2016 to 50,000 in 2023



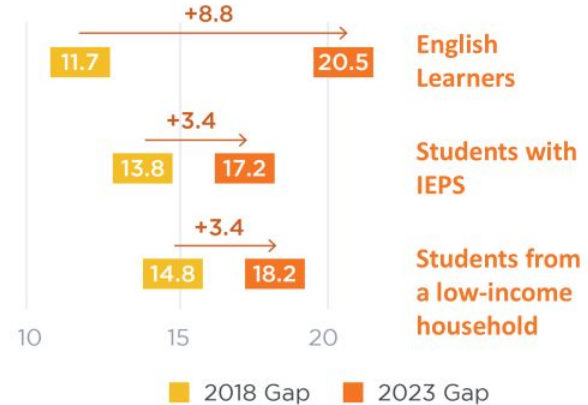
## Early childhood outcomes are improving, but equity gaps are increasing

### Overall Preparedness in Developmental Areas



Kindergarten Readiness, is an important predictor of later success, and it is improving

### Percentage Point Gaps on Kindergarten Readiness in All 3 Areas



Gaps by race, income, language and learning style emerge early, and have widened



# K-12 EDUCATION

## The state is losing students in the K-12 system

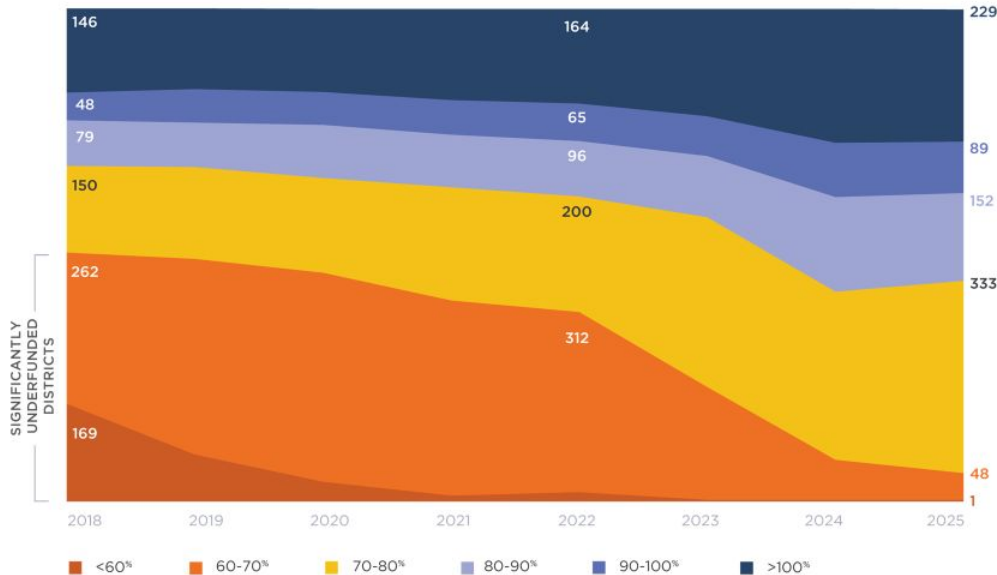
- From 2010 to 2023...
  - the number of school-aged children decreased by 11.6%
  - enrollment in public K-12 schools decreased by 10.3%
- A growing number of students are neither enrolled in public schools nor a registered private school
  - That number hovers around 3-6% of students, up from 1% historically – trends that mirror national averages





# There are fewer severely underfunded districts each year since the inception of EBF

NUMBER OF DISTRICTS BY ADEQUACY PERCENTAGE



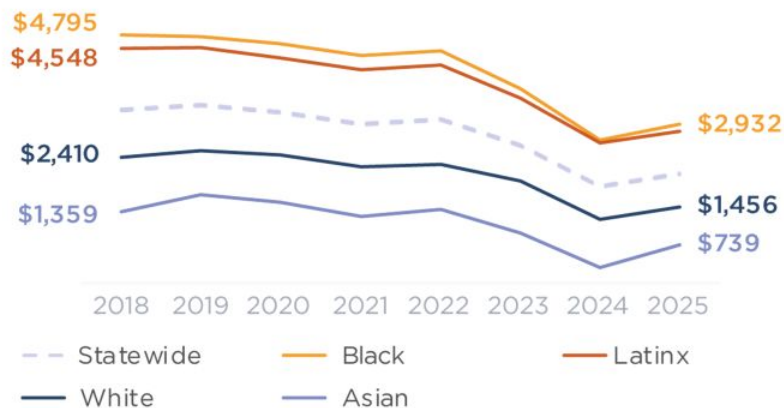
- The state has invested **roughly \$2.4 billion** in the Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula
- The number of districts at less than 70% of adequacy has dropped from 431 to 49
- The percent of students in districts below 70% of adequacy has declined nearly to zero across all student groups

# Equity gaps in funding are closing, but they persist

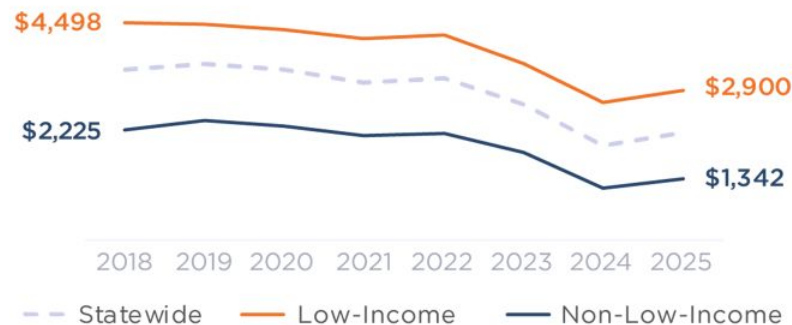
The largest gaps exist for Black and Latinx students, students from low-income households, and urban students

## PER-PUPIL ADEQUACY GAP TO FULL FUNDING BY STUDENT GROUP AND LOCALE

### BY RACE/ETHNICITY



### BY INCOME STATUS

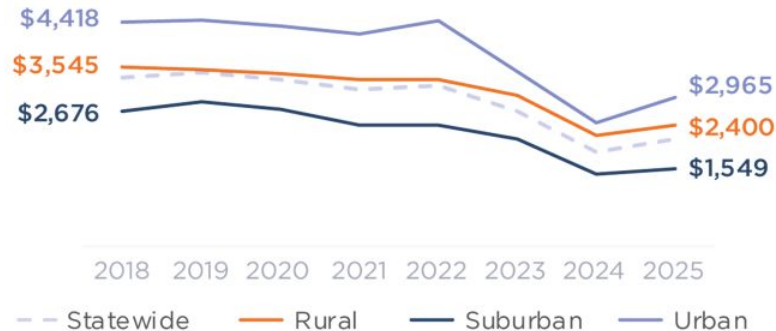


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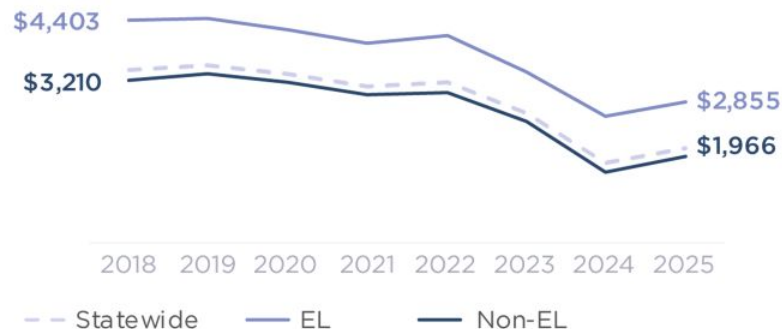
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## PER-PUPIL ADEQUACY GAP TO FULL FUNDING BY STUDENT GROUP AND LOCALE

### BY LOCALE

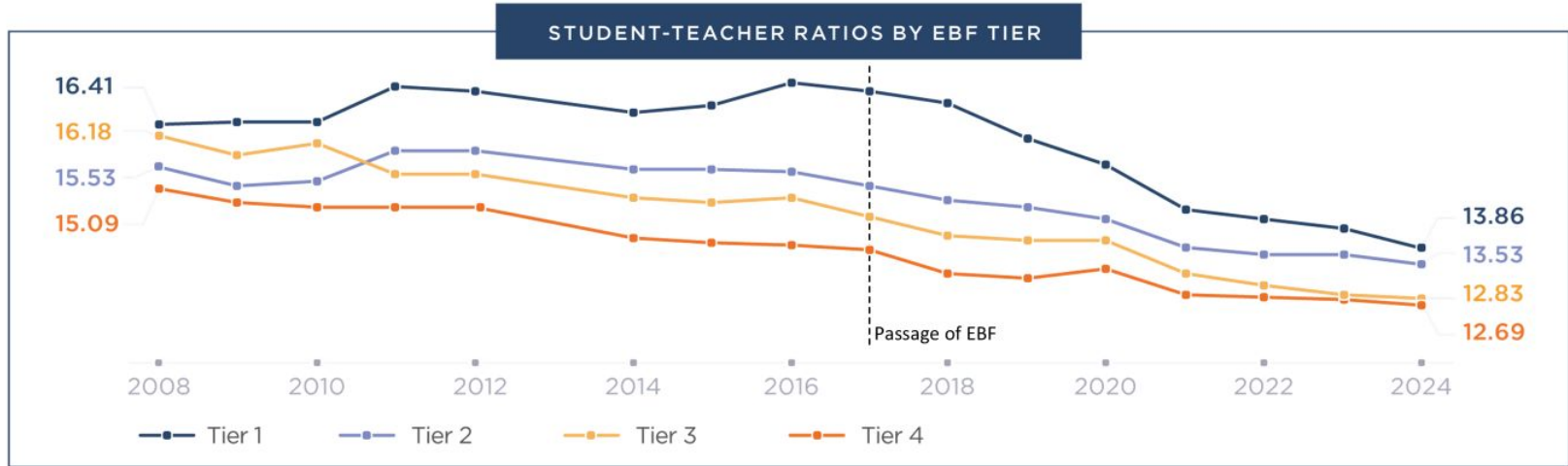


### BY ENGLISH LEARNER STATUS

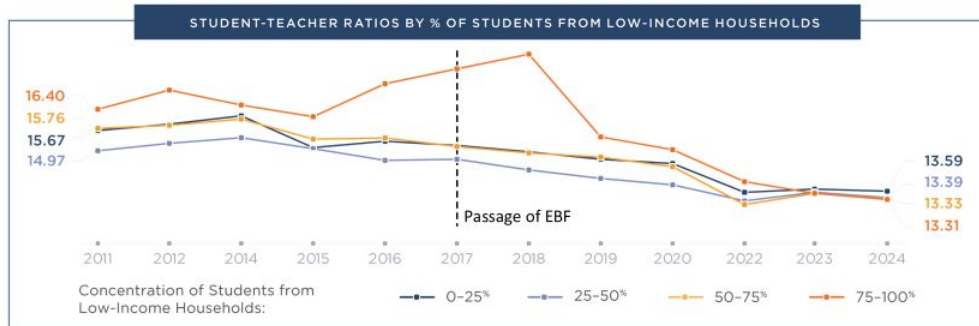
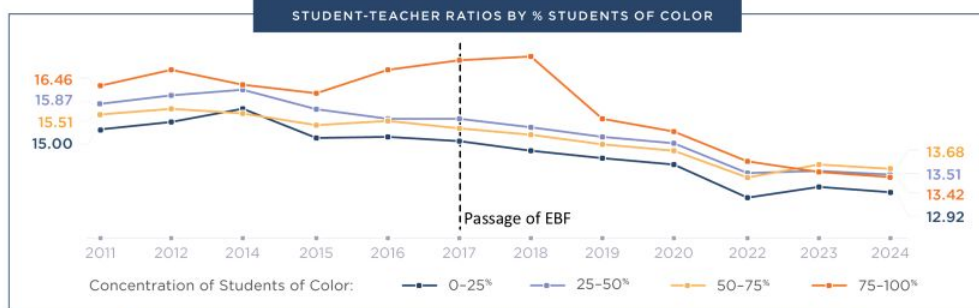




# EBF has made a real difference in student-to-teacher ratios



# Equity gaps in student-to-teacher ratios have closed significantly



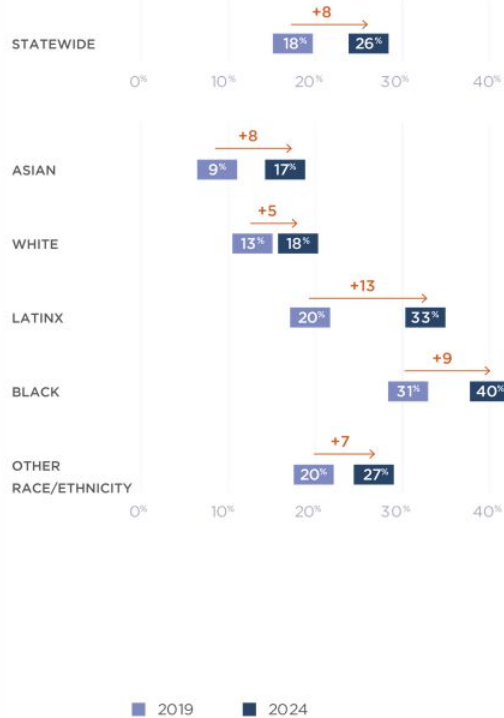
Improvements are a result of increased investment in teachers and statewide declines in enrollment

- Teacher FTE has increased by 6% since 2016
- Student enrollment has dropped by 9.3% since 2016

Despite increased diversity in teacher pipelines, educator diversity remains stubbornly low

- Educators of color make up only 18% of the workforce
- While students of color make up 54.7% of K-12 students

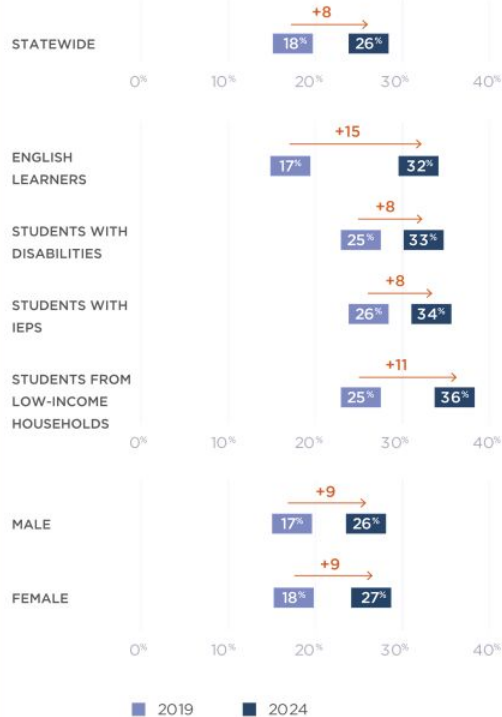
#### CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM RATES BY STUDENT GROUP



Student wellness trends, including chronic absenteeism, are at historic and worrisome levels

- Chronic absenteeism is a powerful predictor of future success
- Chronic absenteeism has increased across all student groups

### CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM RATES BY STUDENT GROUP



## Student wellness trends, including chronic absenteeism, are at historic and worrisome levels

- Chronic absenteeism is a powerful predictor of future success
- Chronic absenteeism has increased across all student groups

### High-School mental health trends are worrisome

- 26% of students reported that their mental health was most of the time or always not good
- The percentage of Illinois students feeling sad or hopeless increased from 27.8% in 2009 to 38.2% in 2023
  - Female students report feeling hopeless at a rate 28.1 percentage points higher than male students
- The percentage of students who seriously considered attempting suicide increased from 14.5% in 2009 to 19.2% in 2023.

# Thanks to growing EBF funds, districts are hiring more student support personnel

- Illinois ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in the nation on rates of counseling and treatment of youth
- The ratio of SSPs to students have improved since 2018 across all roles
  - Nurses
  - School psychologists
  - School counselors
  - Social workers
  - Speech and language pathologists
- However, only school psychologists meet the student to SSP ratios recommended by EBF benchmarks and relevant experts
- Only 13% of students throughout the state attend districts with sufficient counselors
- Racial gaps in access to social workers and counselors have grown since 2019



## 5 Essentials from 2018 to 2024

### Effective Leaders

26.7% to 22.8%

### Collaborative Teachers

33.7% to 19.2%

### Involved Families

38.4% to 30.9%

### Supportive Environment

35.4% to 30.8%

### Ambitious Instruction

63.5% to 35.8%

## Culture and Climate

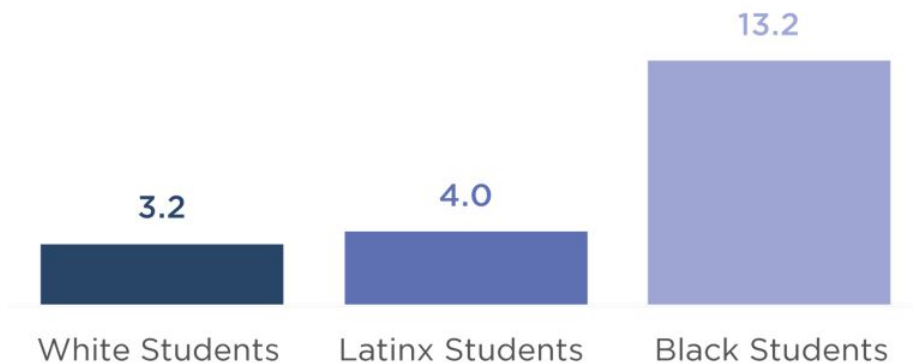
Since 2018...

- The percent of schools with strong or strongest implementation decreased across each of the essentials
- The percent of Illinois' schools strong in at least three essentials dropped from 29.4% to 20.2%.



# Student Discipline

## SUSPENSIONS ISSUED PER 100 STUDENTS ENROLLED



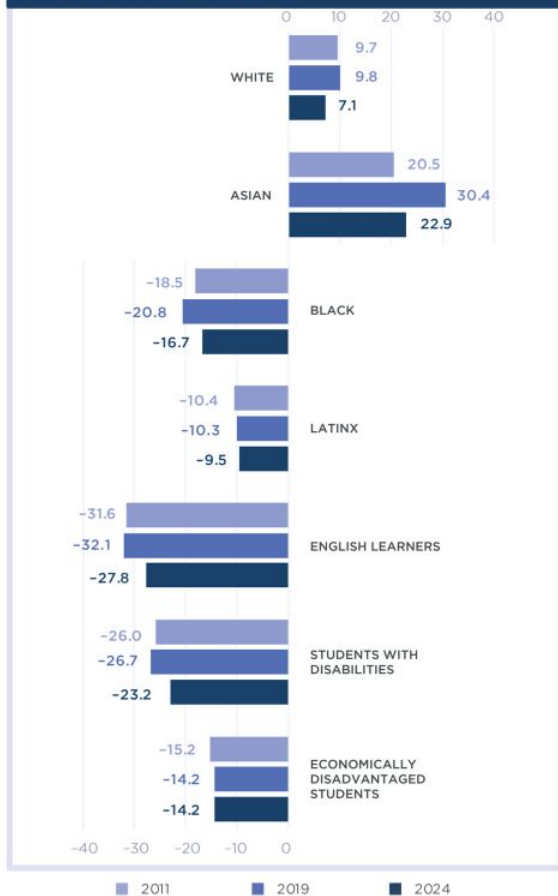
- Suspensions and expulsions have decreased significantly since 2014
- Sadly, equity gaps persist, especially for Black students

## Roughly a third of students are demonstrating proficiency in reading and math



- Illinois' proficiency and national ranking have remained remarkably stable – but rates are concerning low
- Illinois students weathered the pandemic better than most states

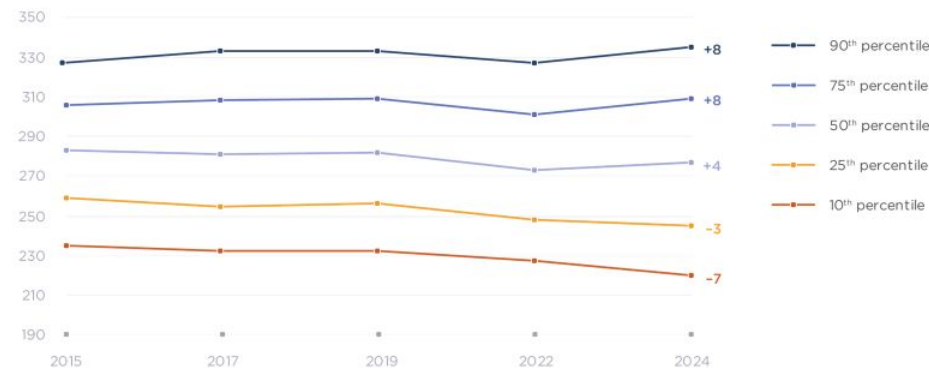
## GAP TO STATEWIDE PROFICIENCY RATE IN 8TH GRADE READING



# Inequitable learning outcomes persist in Illinois

- Longstanding equity gaps in both proficiency and measures of growth have begun to close across all student groups
- Gaps are not closing quickly enough
- Struggling students have not rebounded from the pandemic at the same rate as higher-scoring students

AVERAGE 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE MATH NAEP SCORES BY PERCENTILES OVER TIME



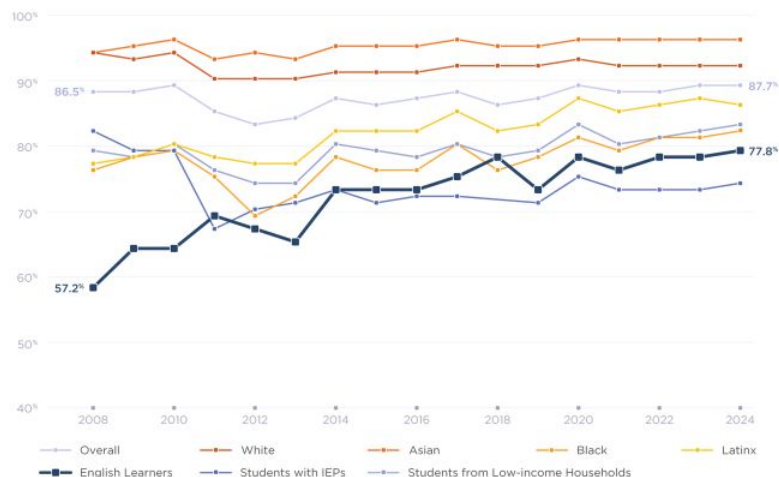
## Illinois continues to outperform other states in student growth, but our own growth is still recovering from the pandemic.



- Illinois ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation for reading and math growth
  - 2023 also had top 5 rankings for both subjects
- Still, only half of Illinois districts showed more improvement than the median national district
  - Historic highs for this metric had 60–70% districts outperforming the median
- Recent 8<sup>th</sup> grade cohorts have not achieved 5 years of growth

# Other key indicators of success have shown positive progress in recent years

STATEWIDE ILLINOIS 4-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE BY STUDENT GROUP



Source: ISBE Report Card, 2008-2024

- **Equity gaps are closing for 9<sup>th</sup> Grade on Track and graduation rates**

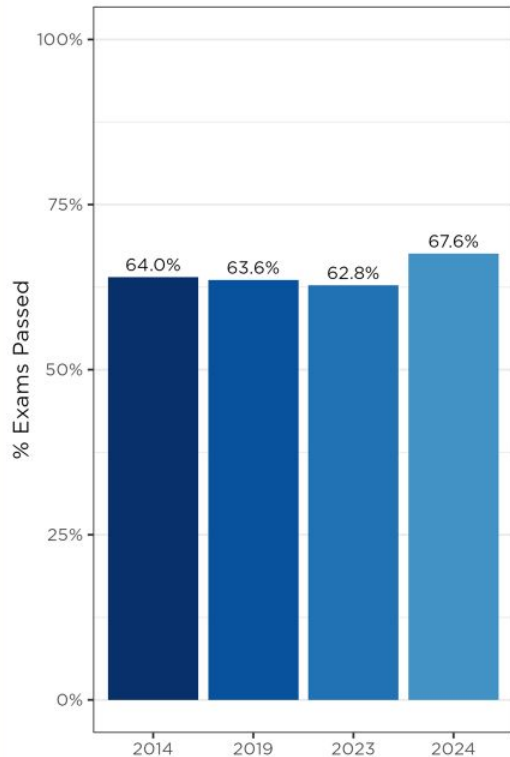
## 9<sup>th</sup> Grade on Track

- **While Black students, students from low-income households, and English Learners all trail the statewide average by over 6 percentage points, these gaps have been steadily closing**

## Graduation Rates

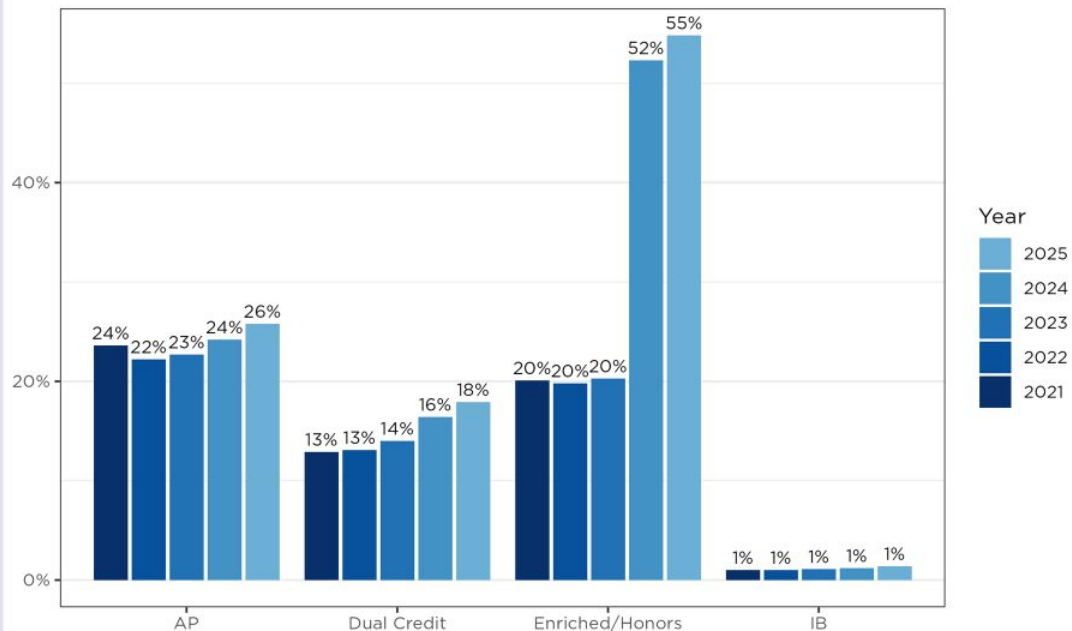
- **Black, Latinx, and students from low-income households have had significant growth in graduation rates**
- **English Learners have had exceptional growth in graduation rates**

## PERCENTAGE OF 10<sup>TH</sup> – 12<sup>TH</sup> GRADE AP EXAMS PASSED



More students are taking college-level courses in high school and passing rates are higher

## PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS TAKING ADVANCED COURSES



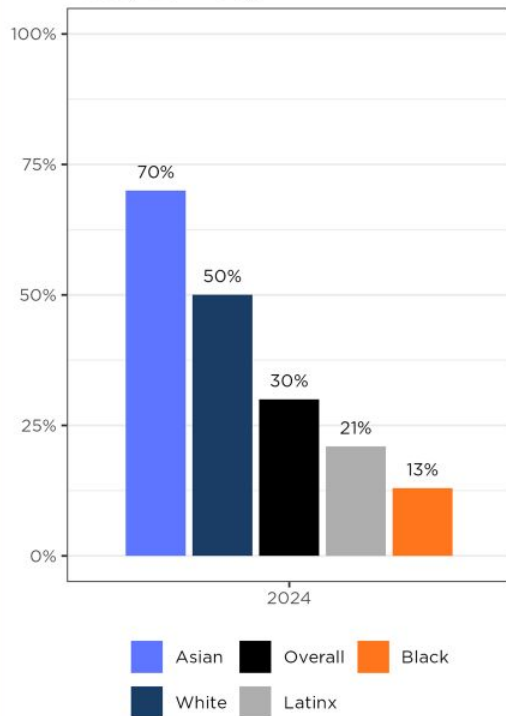


## Similarly, access to the College and Career Pathway Endorsement (CCPE) has expanded

	2022	2023	2024
Districts	30	39	94
Students	596	1,072	2,422

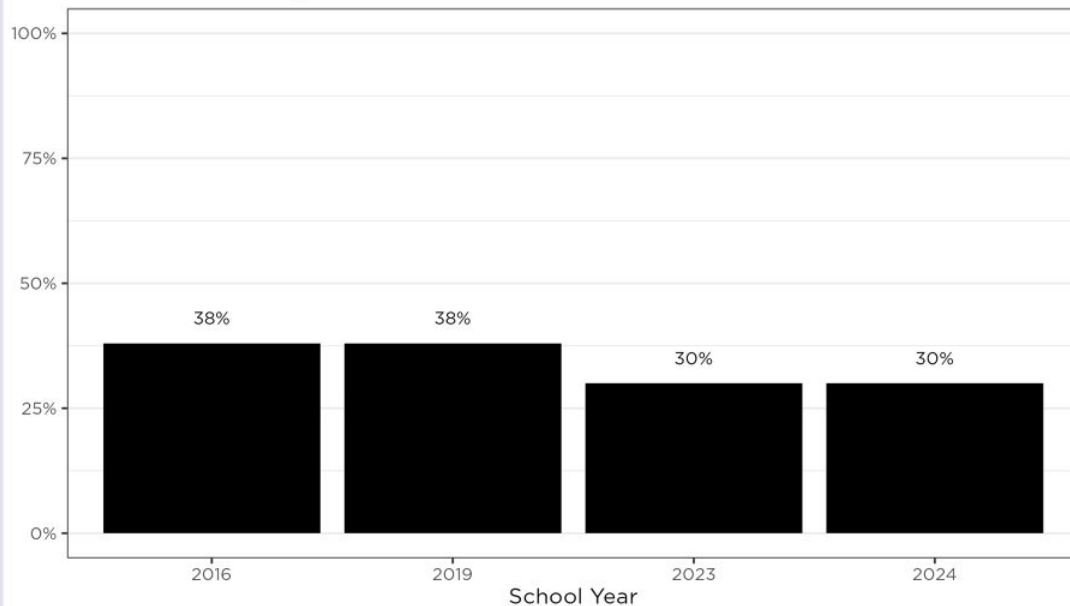
- Both the number of districts offering college and career pathway endorsements and the number of students earning endorsements have more than doubled in the past year

2024 SAT College and Career Readiness Rate by Race/Ethnicity

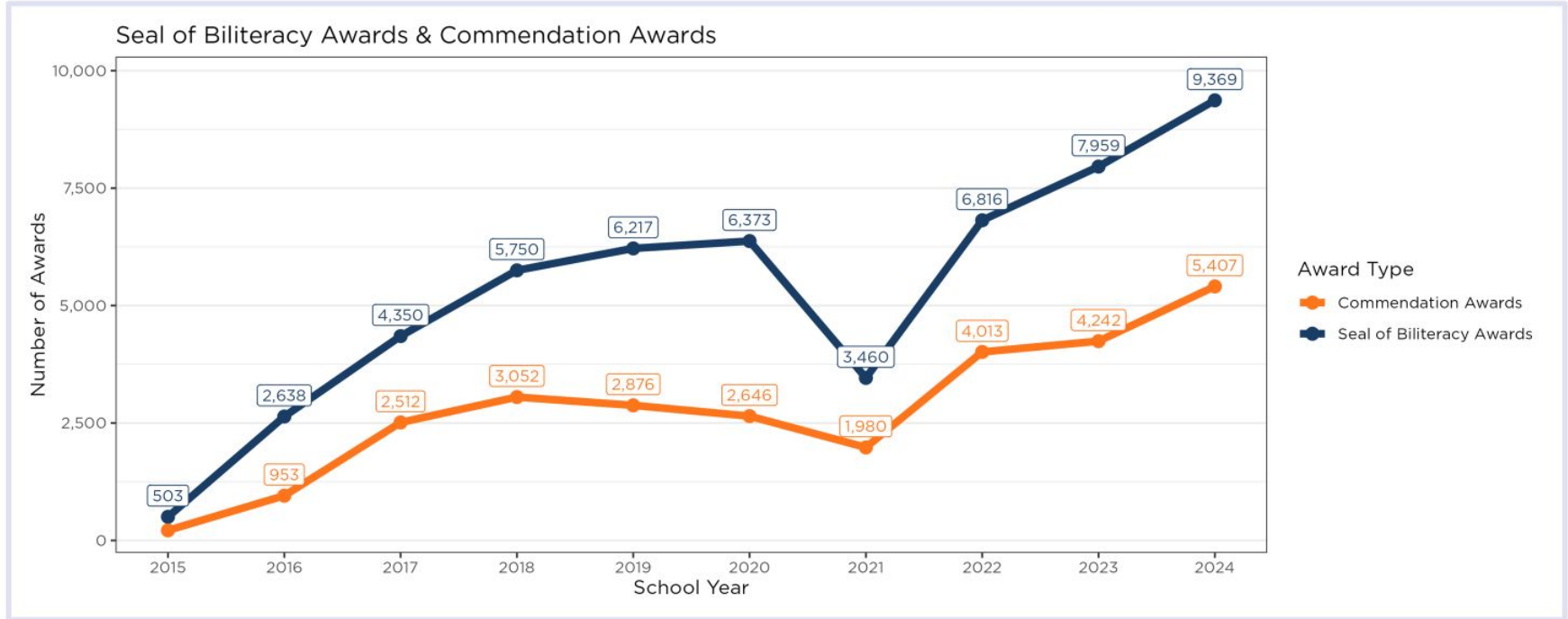


However, fewer students are meeting SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks

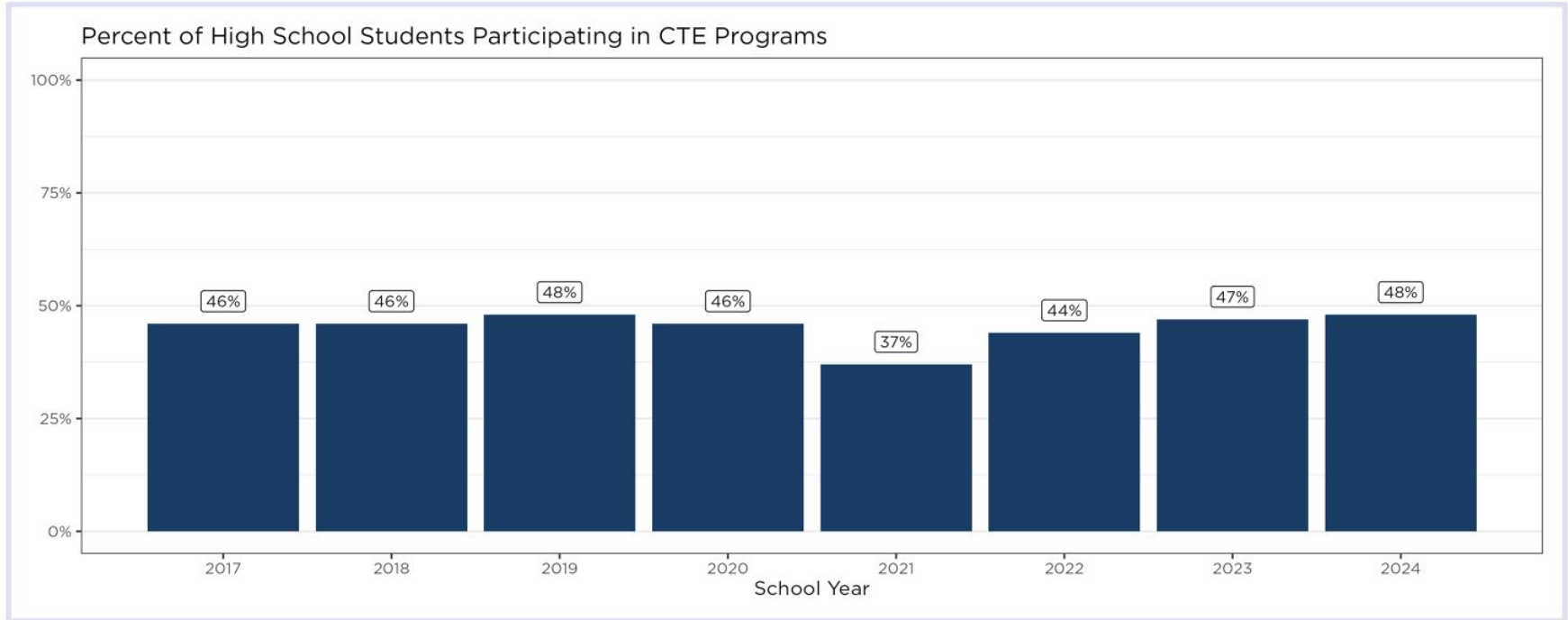
Overall SAT College and Career Readiness Rate



# More students are attaining biliteracy awards



# CTE Participation has returned to pre-pandemic levels

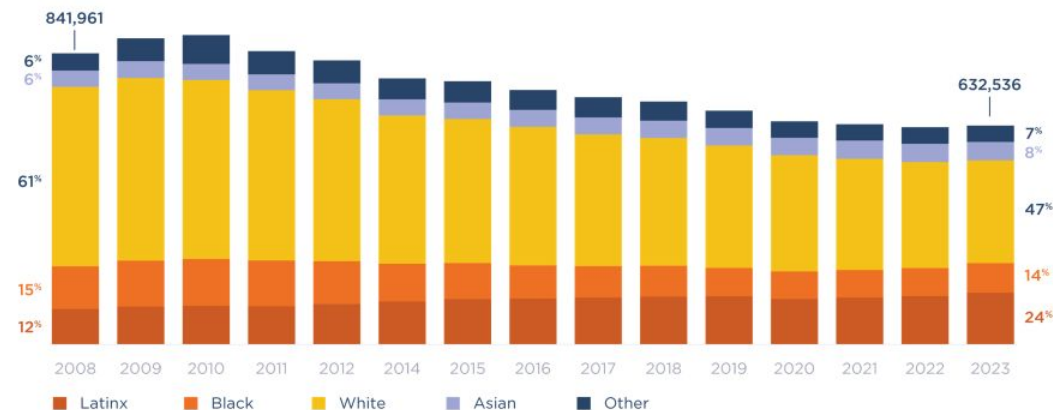




HIGHER EDUCATION

Both enrollment in postsecondary institutions in Illinois and rates of college-going high school graduates have decreased. Meanwhile, the student body has become more diverse.

POSTSECONDARY STUDENT ENROLLMENT AT ILLINOIS INSTITUTIONS BY RACE

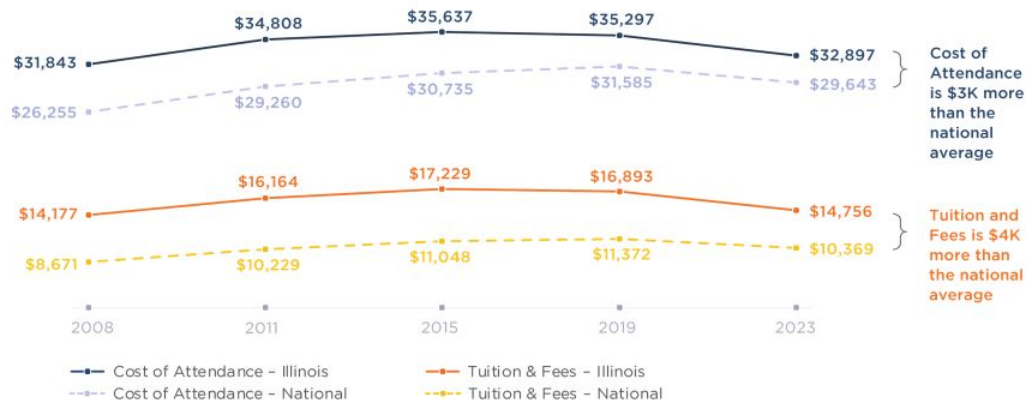


- Illinois postsecondary enrollment has dropped by 28% over the past 15 years
- Postsecondary institutions have become more socioeconomically diverse
- Pandemic disruptions had real impacts on student enrollment



# Low state investment in higher education has created an affordability crisis

AVERAGE COST OF ATTENDANCE AND TUITION & FEES AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN ILLINOIS AND NATIONWIDE (IN 2023 DOLLARS)



- Illinois ranks 48<sup>th</sup> in per-student spending on higher education
- Low state-spending causes high tuition and fees for public universities, where Illinois ranks 46<sup>th</sup>
- Tuition and fees for community colleges are more affordable where Illinois ranks 18<sup>th</sup>, closely mirroring the national average
- The median amount of postsecondary debt has risen for Illinois residents across all institution types
  - \$4,865 (2010) → \$7,628 (2021)

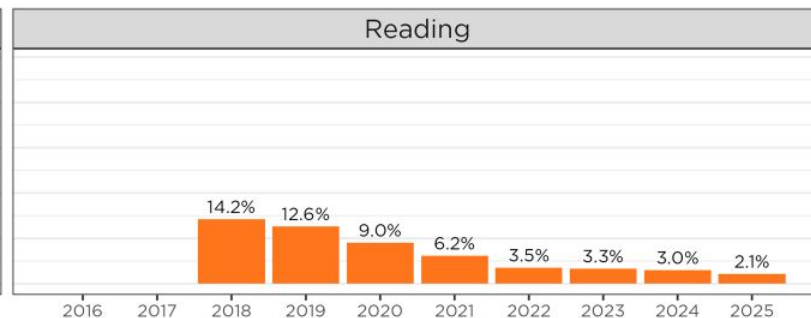
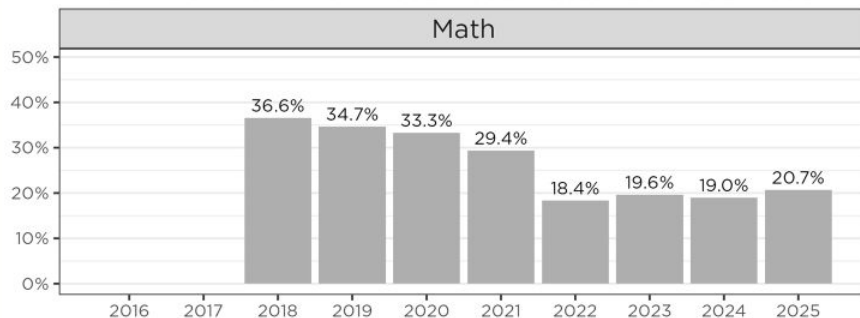
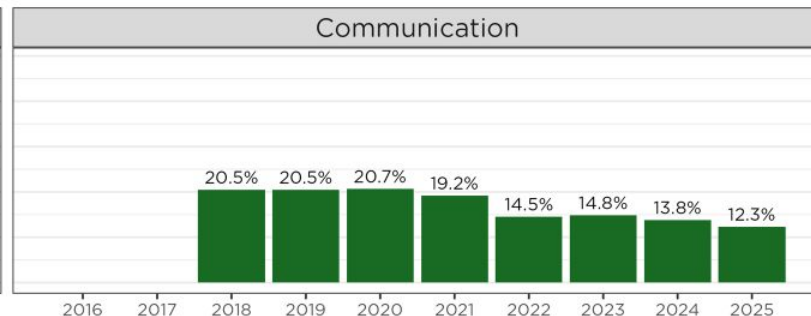
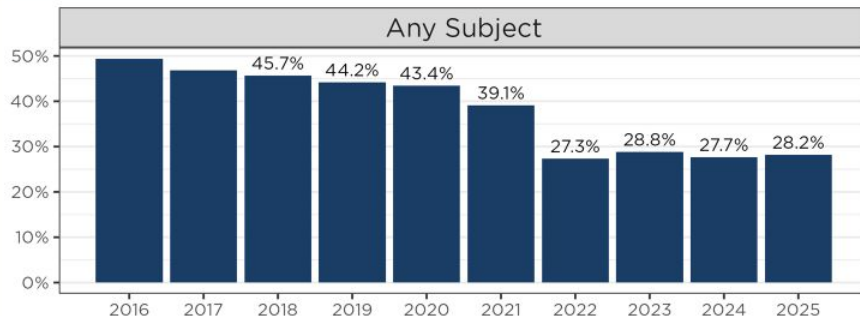
## Net prices are significantly lower than tuition and fees, but significant inequities exist

COST OF 4-YEAR PUBLIC UNIVERSITY AS A PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN 2023



- High tuition and fees take up too much of household income
- Black and Latinx families shoulder a greater burden
- State financial aid and institutional scholarships help bring down the net price
  - Illinois increased investments in the Monetary Award Program (MAP) by 77% from 2019 to 2025.
  - The average award for public university MAP students has increased since 2010 from \$3,636 to \$5,764 in 2023

After significant decreases, the percentage of students taking remedial courses since 2022 has increased for math, but decreased for reading and communication



# Increased supports and increased retention

## Illinois institutions are spending more on academic and student supports

- **Services include:**
  - Academic tutoring
  - Student wellness supports
  - Wraparound services that assist students to and through their education
- This is true despite the leveling-off of per-pupil state appropriations since 2011

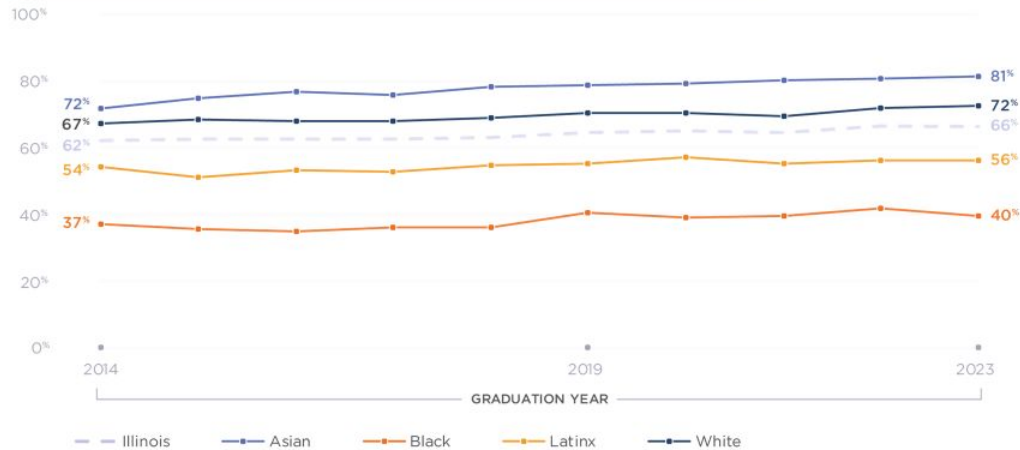


## Retention rates have improved from 2010 to 2023

- Full-time students' retention has increased from 71% to 76%
- Part-time students' retention has also improved from 42% to 48%, but remains stubbornly low
- At public universities, Black and Latinx students are less likely to be retained than the statewide average
  - Statewide average: 80.3%
  - Black student retention: 59.2%
  - Latinx student retention: 75.3%

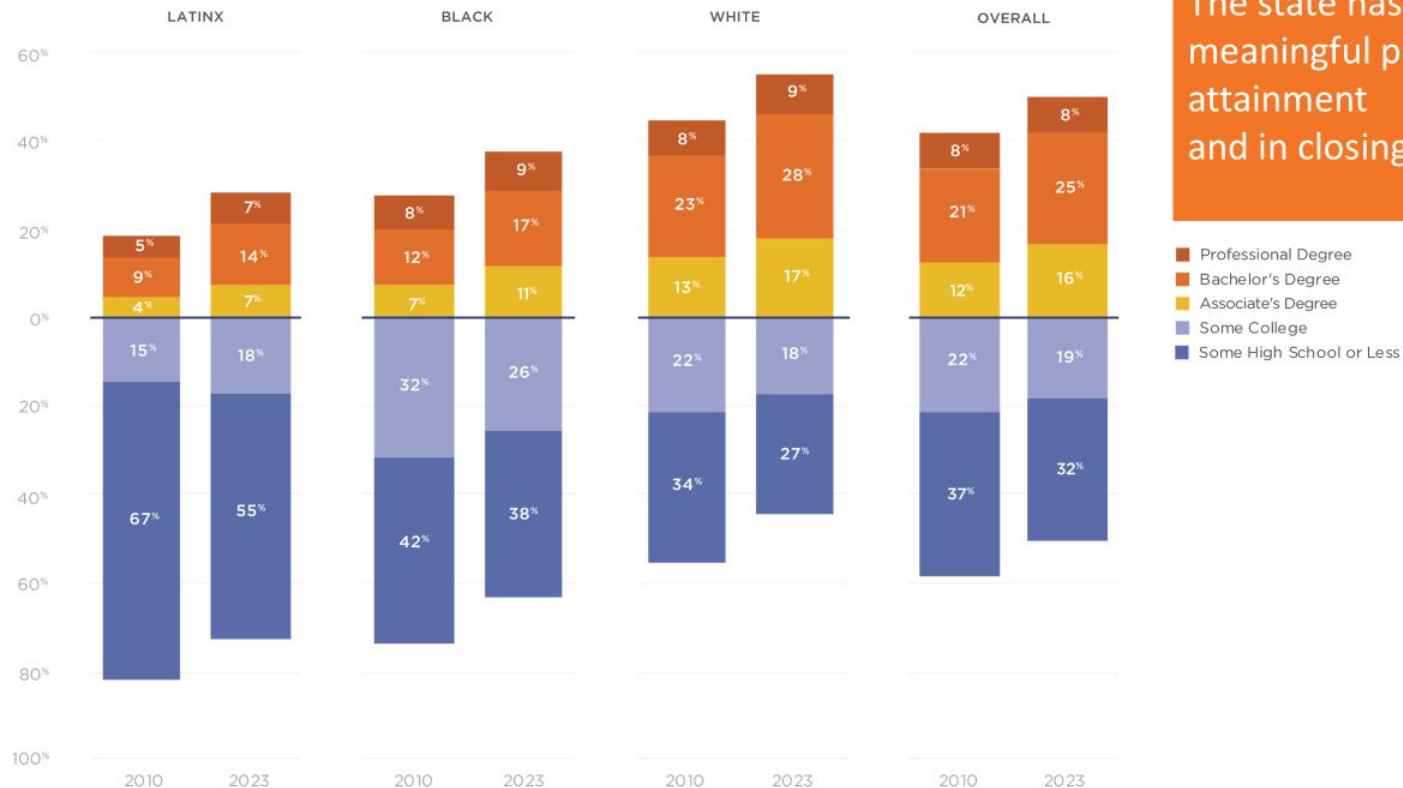
## Graduation rates continue to improve

BACHELOR'S GRADUATION RATE AT 150% OF NORMAL TIME BY RACE/ETHNICITY



- Graduation rates inched up for bachelor's and associate's degrees across all student groups
  - Worrisome gaps still exist for Black and Latinx college completion
- Illinois students that transfer from community colleges complete their bachelor's degrees at the highest rates across the country
  - However, the number of students transferring has dropped 32% in the last decade

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY RACE/ETHNICITY



The state has made meaningful progress in overall attainment and in closing equity gaps





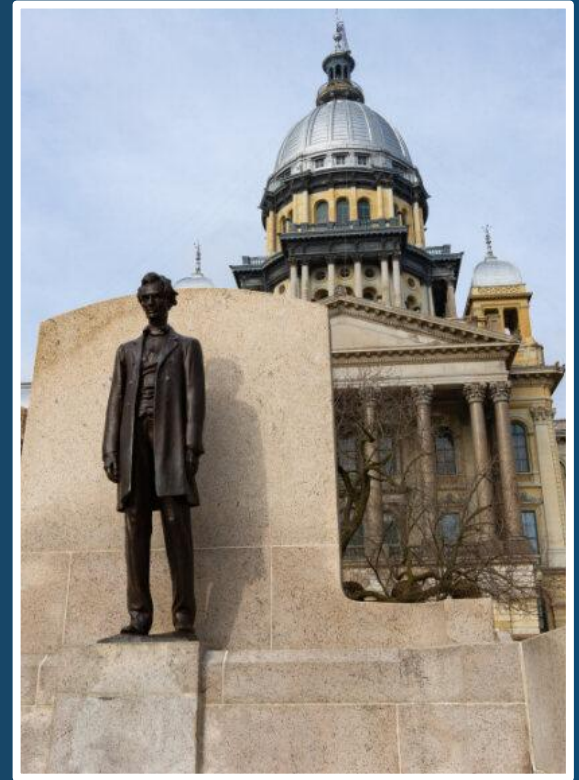
CONCLUSION

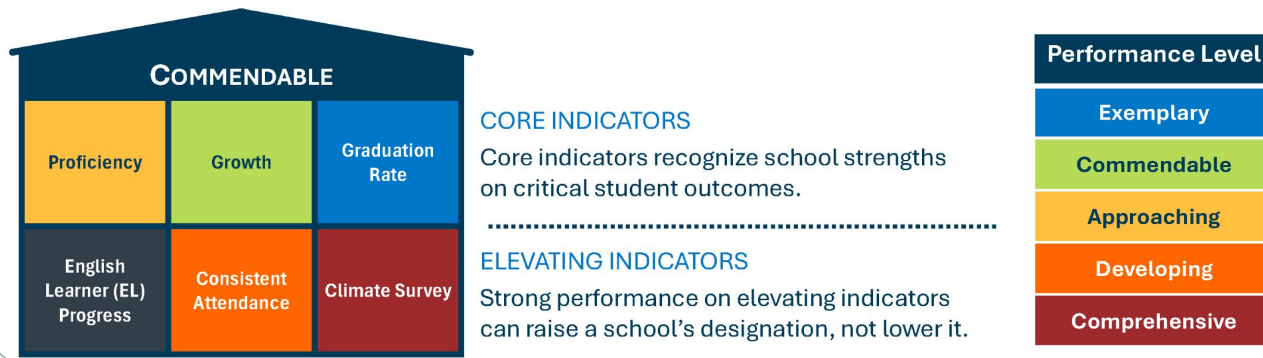
THANK YOU!



ACCESS DIGITAL REPORT  
AND MORE

# State and Federal Policy Updates





# ISBE: Proposed New Accountability System

## *Notable changes:*

- Removes compound measures (Freshmen On-Track, College & Career Readiness Indicator, Arts Indicator)
- Shifts to criteria-based scoring
- More nuanced summative labels
- Shift to attendance vs. chronic absenteeism
- Emphasis on subgroup performance
- Emphasis on growth

# New Accountability System: What's Next?

- Public Comment: extended to January 7, 2026
  - Complete [survey](#) or email written comments/questions to [essa@isbe.net](mailto:essa@isbe.net)
- December: ISBE will publish statewide modeling dataset 12/5
- January – March: Draft ESSA plan, virtual feedback, and public comment
- April: Board approval and submission to USEd
- Summer: Approval from USEd
- October: Inclusion in Report Card

# Dual Credit Quality Amendment

- [Public Act 104-0012](#)
- Ongoing Inter-Agency Collaboration
- Dual Credit Committee formed & has met twice
- ICCB website forthcoming
- Rules expected January 2026 for review and public comment

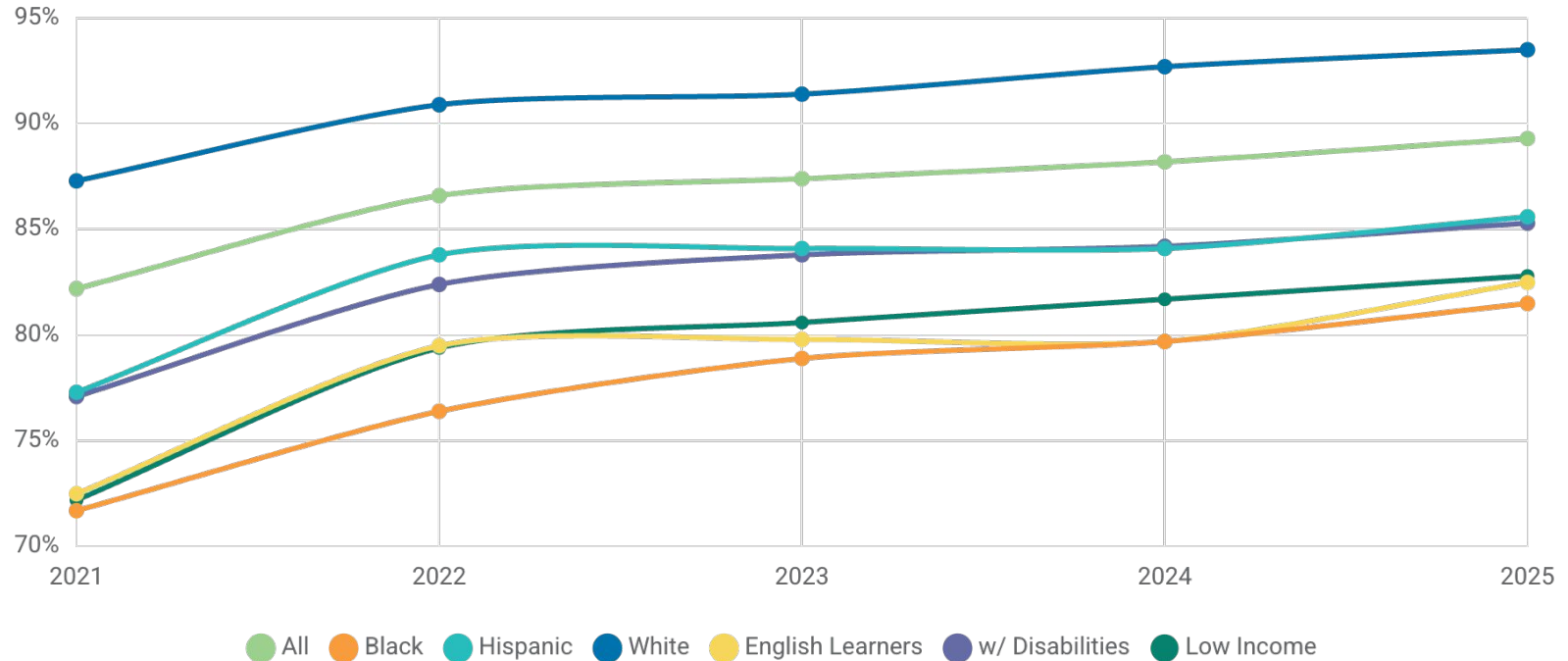


# Illinois Report Card: SY2025 Quick Takes

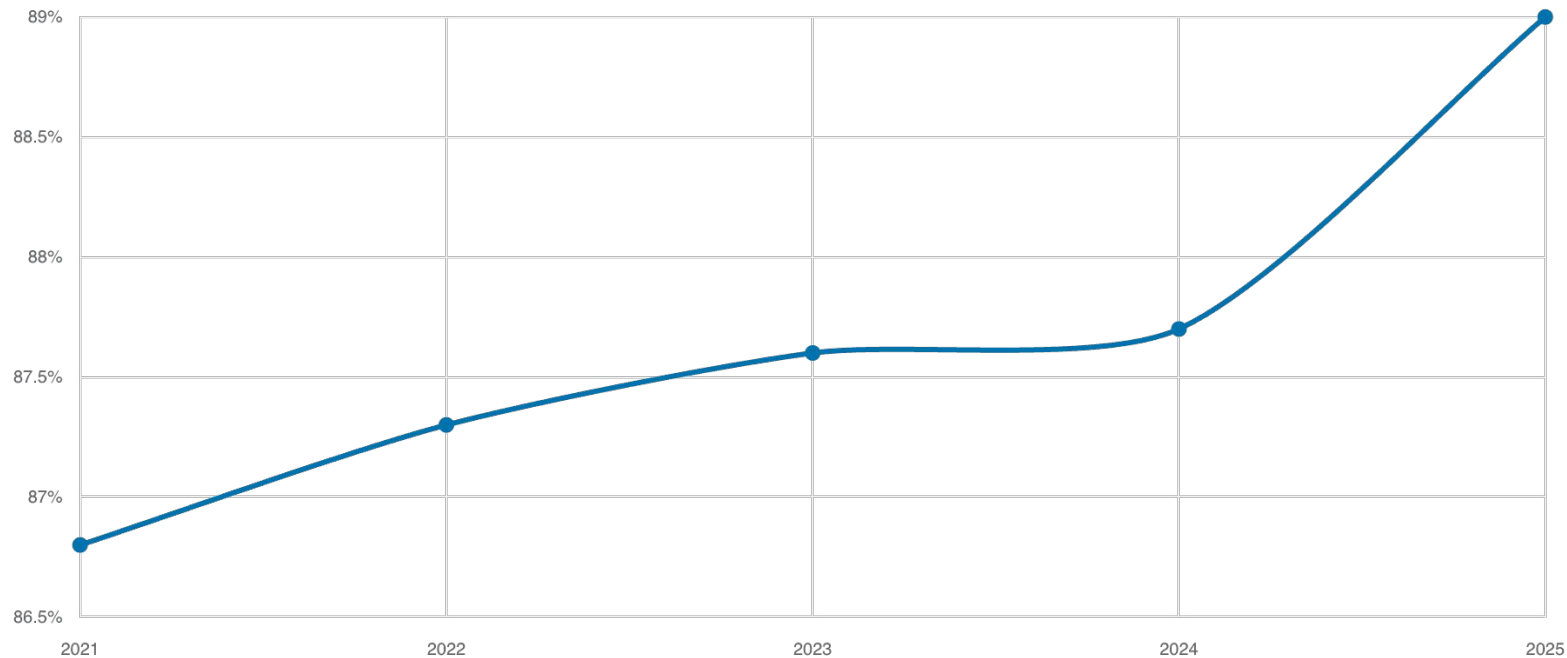
- **Post-pandemic recovery continues:** growth in 9th grade on-track, chronic absenteeism, and high school graduation
- **Growth in key college and career readiness strategies:** growth in overall dual credit and Career Technical Education (CTE) participation
- **Postsecondary transitions still a challenge:** postsecondary enrollment down year-over-year, community college math remediation rates went up, and community college English remediation only improved slightly

**Join us for a data dive in January!**

# 9th Grade on Track by School Year



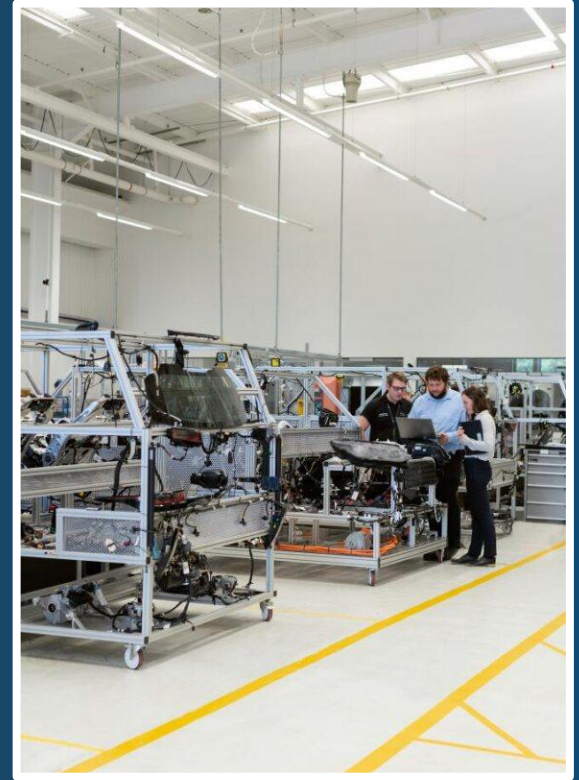
# 4-Year Graduation Rates by School Year



# Federal policy updates

- US Department of Education (USED) **layoffs reversed** by Shutdown Deal (extending federal funding until January 30)
- November 18, 2025: USED and Department of Labor establishing **Elementary and Secondary Partnership**, as well as transferring authority of several USED offices to other government agencies
- **USED reclassifying careers** and omitting education, social work and nursing from “professional” category: impacts on pathways
- **Workforce Pell to begin** July 1, 2026: USED Negotiated Rulemaking Dec. 8-12, 2025 and Jan. 5-9, 2026
- Want to learn more? Check out **Advance Illinois’ Federal Education Response Group**, meeting every 3 weeks. Their next meeting, Thursday 12/11 from 10:30-12, will focus on Workforce Pell. [Link to register](#)

# New Resources and Emerging Policy



# New Resource: Understanding Chicago Public Schools' Organizational Learning using the Academic Progress Indicator

EdSystems details the design process, evaluation and findings from the new Academic Progress Indicator (API) in this [report](#)



## Measuring Student Growth to Support Organizational Learning Using the Academic Progress Indicator (API)

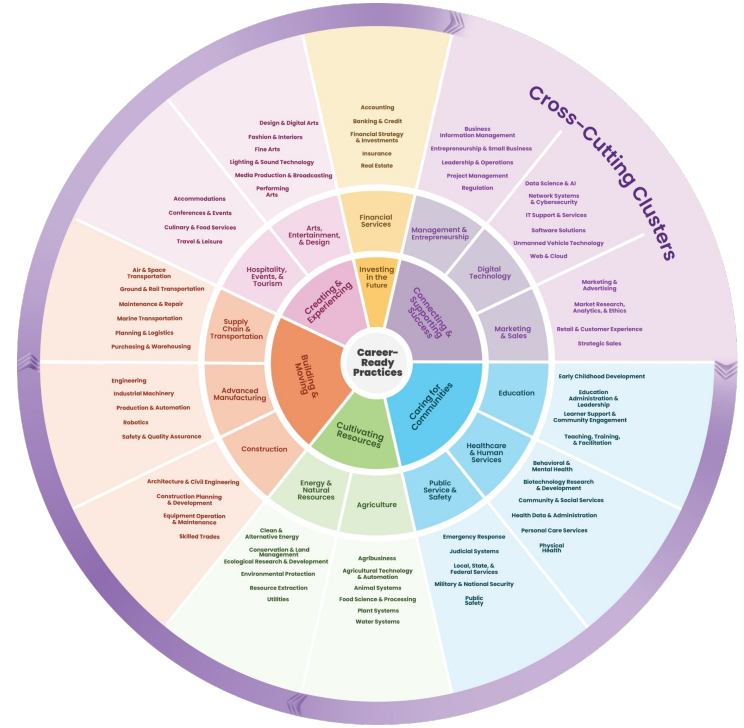
*An evaluation of Chicago Public Schools' new student progress metric*

November 2025



# Watch this Space: New Advance CTE Career Clusters Framework

- The 2024 modernized framework creates a bridge between education and work to serve as a central building block for high-quality CTE programs
- ISBE will be leading implementation
- Burning questions or want to engage?  
Email [mgreene@niu.edu](mailto:mgreene@niu.edu)



# Transitional Instruction CC Workshops: Dec. 15 & 17

## Who?

- *Target colleges:*
  - *Math:* Colleges with at least one established TM partnership
  - *English:* Colleges looking to establish their first TELA partnership(s)
- *Team composition:* CC leaders are encouraged to bring a small team comprised of those leading implementation and/or scaling a transitional instruction (e.g. Chief Academic Officers, math/English department chairs, Academic Deans, math/English faculty, etc). Colleges are also encouraged to consider bringing high school partners to the workshop.

**What:** Data-focused engagement to identify opportunities to establish or enhance local transitional instruction courses that improve postsecondary outcomes for local students. The workshop will include a combination of cross-college conversation, facilitated team time, and action planning.

## When?

- *Transitional Math:* Monday, 12/15 (2 – 4pm)
- *Transitional English:* Wednesday, 12/17 (9:30 – 11:30am)

**Where?** Virtual – zoom registration will be sent to interested college teams. If you are interested in joining one of the workshops, [please complete this Google Form](#) by Wednesday, 12/3.



# stronger together

Creating Opportunity for Every Learner

➤ Illinois Education and Career  
Success Network Conference  
2.26.2026, Palos Hills, Illinois



ILLINOIS EDUCATION AND CAREER  
**SUCCESS NETWORK**

**Please fill out our exit survey.**

See you at the [2026 Policy Committee  
Data Deep Dive](#), January 22, 2026

**Thank You!**



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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

