The 2014 Illinois Report Card will contain a summary of results from an online, statewide survey of individual schools’ learning conditions and environment. The 5Essentials Survey, administered for the second time this school year, is designed to inform school improvement by measuring change and providing individualized reports for each school. The 5Essentials Survey is for all pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade teachers and sixth- through 12th-grade students across the state. All responses are anonymous. Through 20 years of study, the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research developed the survey and discovered five components that are critical for school success:

1. **Effective Leaders**: The principal works with teachers to implement a clear and strategic vision for school success.

2. **Collaborative Teachers**: The staff is committed to the school, receives strong professional development, and works together to improve the school.

3. **Involved Families**: The entire school staff builds strong relationships with families and communities to support learning.

4. **Supportive Environment**: The school is safe and orderly. Teachers have high expectations for students. Students are supported by their teachers and peers.

5. **Ambitious Instruction**: Classes are academically demanding and engage students by emphasizing the application of knowledge.

Research has shown that schools strong on three or more of the 5Essentials were 10 times more likely to improve student learning than schools that were weak on the 5Essentials.
Survey security and integrity

Illinois 5Essentials is a confidential survey. No student or teacher names or other unique identifiers will be connected with individual responses or used in any report. Additionally, measures are in place to ensure survey integrity, deter multiple entries and to confirm participants selected the correct school.

The University of Chicago uses a thorough analysis and data auditing process that includes identifying surveys where responses have no variation and schools with a mismatch between the number of teachers/students in ISBE lists and the number of surveys submitted.

During the 2013-14 administration, five districts piloted the use of teacher and student rosters to enhance survey security while preserving student and teacher confidentiality. In the upcoming year, all Illinois 5Essentials student surveys will use rosters along with teacher surveys for 75 districts.

Using rosters for teacher surveys helps to minimize the possibility that teachers will take the survey more than once or that unauthorized people will participate. In order to protect teacher confidentiality in a rostered survey, school and district staff and ISBE staff will never receive identifiable teacher data. That is, they will never know how individual teachers responded to specific questions. In addition, neither school staff nor ISBE staff will know which teachers did or did not respond.

Protections of student confidentiality are slightly different. Administrators at the school level can see which students did or did not respond – but they will never know how an individual student responded to individual questions.

Research has shown that schools that were strong in three to five of the Essentials were 10 times more likely to improve student learning than schools weak in three to five of the Essentials. Those differences remained true even after controlling for other student and school characteristics, including poverty, race and gender. Strength on components within the Essentials also correlated with increased teacher retention, student attendance, college enrollment and high school graduation.

ISBE is statutorily required to provide and each school district is required at least biennially to administer a learning conditions survey to help present a more complete picture of what happens in the classroom.

Beyond this legal requirement, three goals guide this survey implementation. First, we want schools and districts to incorporate the survey results into their planning for improvement. Second, we hope the survey can help schools better target resources to the areas that need it most. Finally, we seek to engage all in school improvement by identifying both areas of strength as well as areas requiring more attention or resources.

In 2014, only districts participating in Race to the Top and those that did not participate in the survey the previous year were required to participate. Any district that had teacher or student responses in 2013 was not required to participate. However, all districts had the option to participate and were strongly encouraged to do so as a second year of data could help a school confirm patterns, inform improvement efforts and keep parents, students and teachers engaged in the school and district’s larger goals and needs to move towards improvement. Thirty-five percent of Illinois districts met the response rate threshold required to receive a report on the survey in 2014. Statewide, 52 percent of teachers and 38 percent of students participated. Districts once again also had the option of asking parents to participate in the survey. Four percent of parents participated in 2014.
The administration window for the 2015 survey will be Jan. 12 through March 13, 2015. All school districts that did not administer a survey in 2014 will be required to participate.

The information collected through the survey is reviewed and analyzed to generate a 5Essentials Report for each school. The 5Essentials Report includes a breakdown of teacher and student responses and, most importantly, provides a comprehensive picture of how schools fared on five factors (detailed above) that have been tied to school improvement. The reports use statewide survey results from 2013 to set a benchmark for performance. The 2014 results, collected from March 17 through April 25, will be shared publicly through the State School Report Card in late October.

In a continued effort to improve the survey of learning conditions and the guidance this data provides for school improvement, ISBE is working with the Illinois Education Research Council to conduct a study examining how Illinois public schools are using the 5Essentials Survey data for school improvement. The University of Chicago is also working on a separate study that will describe results statewide and provide a preliminary look at the statewide correlation between the survey results and student achievement. Last spring, the University of Chicago also conducted focus groups of teachers, principals and superintendents to review and collect suggestions from practitioners for further improving the survey and survey implementation process.

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