FAQs

ILLINOIS 5ESSENTIALS SURVEY

August 2014, ISBE Division of Public Information

1. Q: What are the 5Essentials and 5Essentials Survey?

A: The 5Essentials is designed to drive improvement in schools nationwide. It reliably measures changes in a school organization through the 5Essentials Survey and provides individualized reports for each school. The 5Essentials system is based on more than 20 years of research by the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research on five components found to be critical for school success:

- **Effective Leaders:** The principal works with teachers to implement a clear and strategic vision for school success.
- **Collaborative Teachers:** The staff is committed to the school, receives strong professional development and works together to improve the school.
- **Involved Families:** The entire school staff builds strong relationships with families and communities to support learning.
- **Supportive Environment:** The school is safe, orderly and welcoming. Teachers have high expectations for students. Students are supported by their teachers and peers.
- **Ambitious Instruction:** Classes are academically demanding and students are engaged in learning and involved in tasks and discussions that emphasize the application of knowledge.

The information collected through the survey is reviewed and analyzed to generate a 5Essentials Report for each school, which provides a comprehensive picture of the school environment based on the five essential areas critical for school improvement.

2. Q: Why did ISBE implement this survey?

A: The State Board has long recognized that test scores alone do not provide a full picture of teaching and learning in any one school. Under legislation (Senate Bill 7, Performance Evaluation and Reform Act - PERA), the State Board is now mandated, on a biennial basis, to implement a learning conditions survey that will finally help paint that fuller picture. While this survey may help inform state policy and improvement initiatives, it is primarily intended to help local administrators, such as teachers, principals and superintendents, identify strengths and weaknesses at the district and school level and better target resources and interventions.
Aggregated data from this anonymous survey will also be shared with parents and the general public on school report cards released in the fall.

3. **Q: Which schools are required to participate in the survey?**

   **A:** All district schools, including alternative schools that fall under the district’s domain, are required, by legislation, to participate in the survey at least every other year. For the 2015 survey, all school districts that did not administer a survey in 2014 will be required to participate. In the spring of 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. However, all districts have the option to participate every year and are strongly encouraged to do so. 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.

4. **Q: What do the surveys ask?**

   **A:** All survey items are multiple choice questions. There are no open-ended responses.
   - The 5Essentials Student Survey asks questions about students’ experiences, attitudes and activities in school.
   - The 5Essentials Teacher Survey asks questions about a variety of topics, including instruction, professional development and the school as a workplace.
   - The parent survey supplement asks questions about the parent’s overall relationship with the school.

5. **Q: What happens to the information collected through the survey?**

   **A:** The information is reviewed and analyzed to generate a 5Essentials Report for each school. The report includes a breakdown of teacher and student responses and, most importantly, provides a comprehensive picture of the school environment based on the five components detailed above in a meaningful context of successful schools. The 2014 results, collected from March 17 through April 25, will be shared publicly through the State School Report Card in late October. The School Report Cards will report scores on the five essentials of the survey and will also provide a link to a detailed report containing results on the 5Essential Measures, which are statistical measures created from multiple survey items, and the responses to individual survey questions.

6. **Q: If my school district only participated in the 2013 survey, what will appear on the 2014 Report Card?**

   **A:** For schools that did not administer the survey in 2014, a report on raw data from 2013 will be available.
7. Q: How long will the survey take?
   
   A: On average, the survey should only take 15-20 minutes for participants to complete. In almost all cases, the survey is completed in less than 30 minutes.

8. Q: How will the survey be administered?

   A: The survey will be conducted online and will be accessible via the Illinois 5Essentials website. Detailed information can be found in the survey manual, available soon.

9. Q: Are responses confidential?

   A: All survey responses are strictly confidential. No student or teacher names or other unique identifiers will be connected with individual responses or used in any report.

10. Q: Is student and teacher participation mandatory?

    A: Individual participation in the Illinois 5Essentials Survey is completely voluntary. However, at least 50 percent of teaching/instructional staff must participate in order for a school to receive a report with teacher results and similarly 50 percent of students must complete a survey in order to generate a student report.

11. Q: Is there a way for parents to participate in the survey?

    A: Yes. As part of the Illinois 5Essentials Survey process, schools will have the opportunity to hear from their parent community through an optional parent survey. Parent survey results are sent to districts, but not shown on the State School Report Card.

12. Q: Where can I find more information about the Illinois 5Essentials Survey?

    A: Additional information, including survey questions, a calendar of upcoming webinars, news, etc., can be found on the Illinois 5Essentials website (Illinois.5-essentials.org). For questions, please contact 5Essentials Client Services at 5essentials@uchicago.edu or (866) 440-1874.

###