



ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Rod Blagojevich
Governor

Jesse H. Ruiz
Chairman

Dr. Randy J. Dunn
State Superintendent of Education (Interim)

MARCH 2005

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT ON

Local School Board Review and Approval

OF

School and District Improvement Plans

This document is intended to provide non-regulatory guidance on the subject matter listed above. For specific questions, please contact the person(s) identified in the document.

Preface

The purpose of this guidance is to assist local school boards in Illinois in their review and approval of school and district improvement plans. This is especially important with respect to plans for those schools and districts that have not made adequate yearly progress and face a series of increasingly intrusive sanctions. This guidance reflects ISBE's current understanding of the requirements set forth in the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* and the Illinois School Code. In some areas, ISBE has not promulgated administrative rules adopting the requirements described in this guidance. Where this is the case, the document states that ISBE intends to seek the adoption of administrative rules incorporating these requirements. Such rules will first need to be adopted by the State Board of Education and then submitted to the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR). ISBE encourages comment on any suggested requirements in this document by submitting an e-mail to lessredtape@isbe.net with a subject line "School and District Improvement Plan Guidance." Once these rules have been adopted by the State Board and JCAR, ISBE will update this draft guidance to reflect such requirements.

Table of Contents

Preface	2
Part 1.0: The School Improvement Plan	
1.1 Are all schools in Illinois required to write school improvement plans?	7
1.2 For all schools that do not make adequate yearly progress, what is the requirement for school improvement plans?	7
1.3 Who approves a school improvement plan?	7
1.4 What is the sequence for submitting school improvement plans that must be approved by both a local school board and ISBE?	7
1.5 Is there a required time-span for these school improvement plans?	7
1.6 When must a school improvement plan be submitted?	8
1.7 If a school does not make adequate yearly progress in the spring of the first year of its ISBE-approved two-year school improvement plan, does ISBE require the school to resubmit it?	8
1.8 If a school does not make adequate yearly progress in the spring of the first year of its school board-approved two-year school improvement plan, does a board require the school to resubmit it?	8
1.9 After a school improvement plan is submitted for approval, how soon must it be approved?	8
1.10 Can a school improvement plan be conditionally approved?	8
1.11 What must be addressed in a school improvement plan?	9
1.12 How does ISBE evaluate school improvement plans?	10
1.13 Must school improvement plans follow a particular format?	10
1.14 Are local school boards required to use ISBE's rubric to score the school improvement plan for a school not making adequate yearly progress?	11
1.15 Can a local school board or others choose to edit ISBE's rubric before using it?	11
1.16 Must a local board involve an outside evaluation process for school improvement plans?	11
1.17 After a school improvement plan is approved, when must it be implemented?	11
1.18 What is the penalty if a school does not submit a school improvement plan, its school improvement plan is not approved, or if it fails to implement an approved school improvement plan?	11

Part 2.0: The District Improvement Plan

- | | | |
|------|---|----|
| 2.1 | What are the <i>NCLB</i> sanctions for a district that does not make adequate yearly progress? | 12 |
| 2.2 | What are the Illinois sanctions for <i>all</i> districts that do not make adequate yearly progress? | 12 |
| 2.3 | What are the major differences between Title I and non-Title I sanctions for districts? | 13 |
| 2.4 | When are districts first designated as being in Academic Early Warning Status? | 13 |
| 2.5 | What is the sequence for submitting a district improvement plan that must be approved by both a local school board and ISBE? | 13 |
| 2.6 | Is there a required time-span for these district improvement plans? | 14 |
| 2.7 | What must be included in a district improvement plan? | 14 |
| 2.8 | How does ISBE evaluate a district improvement plan? | 14 |
| 2.9 | Must district improvement plans follow a particular format? | 15 |
| 2.10 | When must a district improvement plan be submitted? | 15 |
| 2.11 | If a district does not make adequate yearly progress in the spring of the first year of its ISBE-approved two-year district improvement plan, does ISBE require the district to resubmit it? | 15 |
| 2.12 | If a district does not make adequate yearly progress in the spring of the first year of its school board-approved two-year district improvement plan, does a board require the district to resubmit it? | 15 |
| 2.13 | Is Chicago District 299 exempt? | 15 |
| 2.14 | Are district improvement plans and school improvement plans separate documents? | 16 |
| 2.15 | What is the penalty if a district does not submit a district improvement plan, its district improvement plan is not approved, or if it fails to implement an approved district improvement plan? | 16 |

Part 3.0: Peer Review, Improvement Panels, and Outside Evaluations

- | | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 3.1 | What is peer review? | 17 |
| 3.2 | Does the peer review requirement apply to non-Title I school improvement plans and district improvement plans? | 17 |

3.3	What is the role of school and district improvement panels for schools and districts that do not make adequate yearly progress for a fourth consecutive year?	17
3.4	How does the State Superintendent of Education intend to appoint members to improvement panels?	18
3.5	Are peer review groups and improvement panels subject for the Illinois Open Meetings Act?	18
3.6	Can an improvement panel’s review of a school improvement plan meet the <i>NCLB</i> requirements for peer review?	19
3.7	What types of decisions should a board make in consultation with a peer review team or improvement panel?	19

Part 4.0: Related Topics

4.1	What new actions must a district take in a Title I school required to undergo corrective actions?	20
4.2	What new actions must a district take in a Title I school required to undergo restructuring?	20
4.3	What new actions must ISBE take in a Title I district required to undergo corrective actions?	21
4.4	What new actions must ISBE take in <i>all</i> districts required to undergo restructuring?	21
4.5	Who must approve a restructuring plan?	21
4.6	Is it possible for all schools in a district to make adequate yearly progress, but the district not make adequate yearly progress?	22
4.7	Is it possible for a district to make adequate yearly progress, yet one or more of the schools in the district do not?	22
4.8	Are there any options in the calculation of a school’s or a district’s adequate yearly progress?	22
4.9	What is Safe Harbor?	22
4.10	Is the Safe Harbor method of calculating adequate yearly progress for subgroups in schools the same for subgroups in districts?	22
4.11	Is the academic achievement target for adequate yearly progress the same for all groups?	23
4.12	What happens the first year an Academic Early Warning Status or Academic Watch Status school or district makes adequate yearly progress?	23

4.13	What happens the second year an Academic Early Warning Status or Academic Watch Status school or district makes adequate yearly progress?	23
4.14	With respect to the ISBE and district options to replace district and school staff, what is the status of collective bargaining rights, agreements, court orders, memoranda of understanding, etc.?	23

Part 5.0: Resources

5.1	What is the web address for the district school improvement plan rubrics, templates, and scoring rules?	24
5.2	To whom should questions regarding adequate yearly progress results, current school or district status, etc., be directed?	24
5.3	To whom should questions regarding school improvement plan and district improvement plan rubrics, corrective action, and restructuring be directed?	24
5.4	To whom should questions regarding choice and supplemental educational services be directed?	24
5.5	To whom should questions regarding curriculum, instruction, and the Illinois Learning Standards be directed?	24
5.6	To whom should questions regarding the classification of students into subgroups, test dates, test results, alternative assessments, and related assessment questions be directed?	24
5.7	To whom should questions regarding special education students, such as requests for exceptions, be directed?	24
5.8	Where can one find additional information on <i>NCLB</i> ?	25

Appendices

1.	Schedule of <i>NCLB</i> and Illinois Sanctions for Schools	26
2.	Schedule of <i>NCLB</i> and Illinois Sanctions for Districts	27

Part 1.0: The School Improvement Plan

1.1 Are all schools in Illinois required to write school improvement plans?

Yes, since 2000. With few exceptions, all public schools have been required to write school improvement plans since 1987. The two-year exemptions that were automatically granted to “exceeds-and-top-15-percent-of-meets” schools ceased in 1998 and expired in 2000, the period of transition from the Illinois Goals Assessment Program to the Illinois Standards Achievement Tests and the Prairie State Achievement Exams. Beginning in 2000-01, all public schools have been required to write school improvement plans. Hereafter, all school improvement plans are understood to be *revised* school improvement plans. (105 ILCS 5/2-3.25d)

1.2 For all schools that do not make adequate yearly progress, what is the requirement for school improvement plans?

With respect to all schools, after the second year and each consecutive year thereafter that a school does not make adequate yearly progress, a school or a district must prepare a school improvement plan and submit it for approval. (105 ILCS 5/2-3.25d; *NCLB*, “LEA and School Improvement: Non-Regulatory Guidance,” January 7, 2004, C-1) Under Illinois law, districts bear ultimate responsibility for the preparation of school improvement plans, although all school improvement plans must be developed with staff in the affected school. (105 ILCS 5/2-3.25d(c))

1.3 Who approves a school improvement plan?

All schools that do not make adequate yearly progress the second and third year of assessment must submit school improvement plans to their local school board for final approval. All schools that do not make adequate yearly progress the fourth and fifth year of assessment must submit school improvement plans to both their local school board and to ISBE for approval. In Chicago District 299, all such plans must also be approved by the school’s local school council. (105 ILCS 5/2-3.25d)

1.4 What is the sequence for submitting school improvement plans that must be approved by both a local school board and ISBE?

School improvement plans must first be approved by local school boards, then by ISBE.

1.5 Is there a required time-span for these school improvement plans?

Yes. In Title I schools, each school improvement plan must span the next two school years. For example, a school that does not make adequate yearly progress the second year of assessment (for example, in spring of 2005) must submit a school improvement plan that will be in effect the next two school years (2005-06 and 2006-07). In non-Title I schools, ISBE intends to seek the

adoption of an administrative rule requiring school improvement plans to span at least the next two school years.

By Illinois law, Chicago District 299 school improvement plans must be three-year school improvement plans. (105 ILCS 5/34-2.4)

1.6 When must a school improvement plan be submitted?

For Title I schools, *NCLB* requires that ISBE provide each district the names of its schools that do not meet Illinois criteria for adequate yearly progress. Based on this information, the school board or its designee identifies its schools. (*NCLB*, Sec. 1116(b)(1)(A)) After developing or revising its school improvement plan in consultation with parents, school staff, district staff, and outside experts, a school or a district must submit its school improvement plan for approval no later than three months after the date the school was identified as not making adequate yearly progress. (*NCLB*, Sec. 1116(b)(3)(A))

Illinois law requires ISBE to adopt rules addressing the submission of school improvement plans. (105 ILCS 5/2-3.25f) ISBE intends to seek the adoption of an administrative rule implementing the same three-month schedule set forth in *NCLB*.

1.7 If a school does not make adequate yearly progress in the spring of the first year of its ISBE-approved, two-year school improvement plan, does ISBE require the school to resubmit it?

No, unless the plan is changed. If ISBE approves a two-year school improvement plan, the school improvement plan remains valid for two years. If, however, a school or district modifies or changes an ISBE-approved school improvement plan, those changes must be submitted to ISBE for approval.

1.8 If a school does not make adequate yearly progress in the spring of the first year of its school board-approved, two-year school improvement plan, does a board require the school to resubmit it?

The local school board decides.

1.9 After a school improvement plan is submitted for approval, how soon must it be approved?

Neither Illinois law nor *NCLB* specifies the period between submitting a school improvement plan and its approval, saying “expeditiously,” but no later than the beginning of the school year immediately following the year in which the assessments were administered.

1.10 Can a school improvement plan be conditionally approved?

NCLB permits a local school board to conditionally approve a school improvement plan on:

- (i) inclusion of one or more of the corrective actions specified in *NCLB* (*NCLB*, Sec. 1116(b)(7)(C)(iv)); or
- (ii) feedback on the school improvement plan from parents and community leaders.

1.11 What must be addressed in a school improvement plan?

Both *NCLB* and State law include requirements for school improvement plans. (*NCLB* 1116(b)(3); 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.10(b)(4)). For Title I schools, a school improvement plan must:

- (1) Include demographic information about students and information about attendance, truancy, mobility, retention, and expulsion rates and, for high schools, graduation and dropout rates (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.10(b)(4)(A);
- (2) Include information about the extent to which all students in the grade levels chosen by the district pursuant to Section 2-3.63 of the School Code are achieving in the locally established fundamental learning areas (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.10(b)(4)(B));
- (3) Include information on the school's State assessment results (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.10(b)(4)(C));
- (4) incorporate strategies based on scientifically based research and an analysis of State and local assessment data and other information that will strengthen the core academic subjects in the school and address the specific academic areas in which the school's performance has been deficient (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.10(b)(4)(D), *NCLB* 1116(b)(3)(i));
- (5) adopt policies and practices concerning the school's core academic subjects that have the greatest likelihood of ensuring that all subgroups enrolled in the school will meet the State's proficient level of achievement not later than the end of the 2013-2014 school year, including (i) specific, measurable steps to be taken, (ii) a timeline for these activities, and (iii) a budget for these activities (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.10(b)(4)(E), *NCLB* 1116(b)(3)(ii));
- (6) include professional development activities for at least the staff providing services in the academic areas in which the school's performance has been deficient (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.10(b)(4)(F), *NCLB* 1116(b)(3)(iv)). These activities should be consistent with the district's Title I application. As part of its Title I application to ISBE, districts must provide an assurance that the school will spend not less than 10 percent of its Title I, Part A funds for each fiscal year that the school is in school improvement status, for the purpose of providing to the school's teachers and principal high-quality professional development that —
 - (I) directly addresses the academic achievement problem that caused the school to be identified for school improvement;
 - (II) meets the requirements for professional development activities set forth by the Department of Education (<http://www.isbe.net/nclb/pdfs/pddefinition.pdf>); and
 - (III) is provided in a manner that affords increased

opportunity for participating in that professional development (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.10(b)(4)(F), *NCLB* 1116(b)(3)(iii));

- (7) incorporate a teacher mentoring program (*NCLB* 1116(b)(3)(x));
- (8) establish specific annual, measurable targets for continuous and substantial progress by each subgroup of students enrolled in the school that will ensure that all such subgroups will make adequate yearly progress and meet the State's proficient level of achievement not later than the 2013 – 2014 school year (*NCLB* 1116(b)(3)(v));
- (9) describe how the school will provide written notice about the school improvement process to parents of each student enrolled in such school, in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language that the parents can understand (*NCLB* 1116(b)(3)(vi));
- (10) specify responsibilities of the school, the school board, and ISBE under the plan, including the internal and external technical assistance to be provided by the district and the district's fiscal responsibilities under section 1120A of *NCLB* (*NCLB* 1116(b)(3)(vii));
- (11) include strategies to promote effective parental involvement in the school (*NCLB* 1116(b)(3)(viii));
- (12) incorporate, as appropriate, activities before school, after school, during the summer, and during any extension of the school year (*NCLB* 1116(b)(3)(ix)); and
- (13) include a process for monitoring progress and revising the plan as needed (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.10(b)(4)(G)).

Non-Title I schools are required to include items 1 through 6 above, and item 13 (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.10(b)(4)). Illinois law specifies further content for school improvement plans in Chicago District 299. (105 ILCS 5/34-2.4a-n.) (See Appendices 1 & 2)

1.12 How does ISBE evaluate school improvement plans?

ISBE has published a school improvement plan scoring guide, or rubric, that it uses to score school improvement plans. The rubric and scoring procedures are posted on ISBE's website. (See 6.1.) If a plan follows the components of this rubric, it addresses all *NCLB* and Illinois requirements.

Specific criteria for each of the components are set forth in the school improvement plan rubric. In all, there are 50 criteria.

1.13 Must school improvement plans follow a particular format?

No. ISBE has posted an optional school improvement plan template for grade schools and high schools at its website. (See 5.1.) Schools following the optional school improvement plan template will address all of the requirements mandated by *NCLB* and State law, as set forth in 1.11. Districts should ensure that all requirements mandated by *NCLB* and State law have been addressed whatever format is followed.

1.14 Are local school boards required to use ISBE’s rubric to score the school improvement plan for a school not making adequate yearly progress?

No. However, all school improvement plans must meet the applicable minimum requirements set forth in Section 1.11. Otherwise, the final approval of the school improvement plan is the prerogative of the local school board using whatever method, scoring rules, or standard it chooses.

1.15 Can a local school board or others choose to edit ISBE’s rubric before using it?

Yes.

1.16 Must a local board involve an outside evaluation process for school improvement plans?

Part 3.0 of this guidance document addresses outside evaluation requirements for school and district improvement plans.

1.17 After a school improvement plan is approved, when must it be implemented?

For Title I schools, a school improvement plan must be implemented as soon as it is approved, even if the school year has begun. (“LEA and School Improvement: Non-Regulatory Guidance,” *NCLB*, January 7, 2004) State law requires that schools and districts make reasonable efforts to implement an approved plan. (105 ILCS 5/2-3.25f) Accordingly, implementation of all school improvement plans begins as soon as reasonably possible upon approval.

1.18 What is the penalty if a school does not submit a school improvement plan, its school improvement plan is not approved, or if it fails to implement an approved school improvement plan?

A school that does not submit a school improvement plan, continues to submit a school improvement plan that is unapprovable, or fails to make a reasonable effort to implement its approved school improvement plan may suffer loss of state recognition and loss of state funding by attendance center or program, as ISBE deems appropriate. (105 ILCS 5/2-3.25f)

Part 2.0: The District Improvement Plan

2.1 What are the *NCLB* sanctions for a district that does not make adequate yearly progress?

A large majority of districts in Illinois are Title I districts. For Title I districts (numbers refer to years):

1. The school year after the first spring assessment in which a district does not make adequate yearly progress, no sanction is applied.
2. After the second spring, *NCLB* requires that ISBE place the district in district improvement and require it to prepare a district improvement plan with specific content. *NCLB* does not specify the time span of a district improvement plan or to whom the district improvement plan must be sent for approval.
3. After the third spring a district does not make adequate yearly progress, the district remains in district improvement. No new sanctions are specified.
4. After the fourth spring, ISBE must implement corrective action(s) in the district.

In addition, *NCLB* specifies that ISBE may identify a district for corrective action at any time during the district improvement process. (*NCLB* 115 Stat. 1489ff; “LEA and School Improvement: Non-Regulatory Guidance,” *NCLB*, January 7, 2004) Additional district improvement plan requirements and recommendations are set forth under the next question.

In sum, the schedule for corrective action for both schools and districts is the same, but the options are not. Part 4.0 presents the options for corrective action for schools and for districts.

2.2 What are the Illinois sanctions for *all* districts that do not make adequate yearly progress?

For all districts (numbers refer to years):

1. The school year after the first spring assessment in which a district does not make adequate yearly progress, no sanction is applied.
2. After the second spring a district does not make adequate yearly progress, ISBE places the district in Academic Early Warning Status and requires it to submit a district improvement plan to its local school board for approval.
3. After the third spring, the district remains in Academic Early Warning Status and must submit a revised district improvement plan to its local school board for approval.
4. After the fourth spring, ISBE places the district in Academic Watch Status and requires it to submit a revised district improvement plan to both its local school board and ISBE for approval. ISBE must appoint a district improvement panel.
5. After the fifth spring, the district must develop a restructuring plan and a revised district improvement plan and submit them to both its local school board and ISBE for approval. (The district improvement plan and restructuring plan are separate documents.)

6. After the sixth spring, the district must implement its restructuring plan.
7. After the seventh spring, ISBE must take one of the following actions: a) direct the regional superintendent of schools to remove school board members and/or appoint an independent authority to operate the district, b) change the district's recognition status to nonrecognized, or c) reassign pupils or reassign or replace school district personnel who are relevant to the failure to meet adequate yearly progress. If a school district is nonrecognized in its entirety, it will be automatically dissolved on the next July 1 and its territory realigned with another school district(s) by the regional board of school trustees. (105 ILCS 5/2-3.25d-f)

Part 4.0 presents options for restructuring.

Only local school boards approve district improvement plans after years two and three, but both a local school board and ISBE approve district improvement plans after years four and five—the same schedule as school improvement plans. Other requirements—such as notifying parents and the public, restrictions on the use of Title I money, parental involvement, professional development, technical assistance, and appeals procedures—are beyond the scope of this document.

2.3 What are the major differences between Title I and non-Title I sanctions for districts?

There are at least two:

- Non-Title I districts do not have to undertake corrective action.
- *NCLB*'s corrective action sanction for Title I districts is implemented two years sooner than Illinois' restructuring sanctions for non-Title I districts. (See 2.1, year 4; 2.2, year 6.)

2.4 When are districts first designated as being in Academic Early Warning Status?

If a district does not make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years, ISBE places it in Academic Early Warning Status, which includes both Title I and non-Title I districts. Data from the spring assessment in 2003 served as the base year for all districts because it was the first year ISBE required districts to submit data for percent tested, attendance rates, and graduation rates for adequate yearly progress calculations per *NCLB*. It was also the first year that ISBE used only reading and mathematics in the calculation of adequate yearly progress. In prior years, five learning areas were used. For the first time, ISBE designated districts in Academic Early Warning Status in December, 2004.

2.5 What is the sequence for submitting a district improvement plan that must be approved by both a local school board and ISBE?

A district improvement plan first must be approved by its local school board, then by ISBE.

2.6 Is there a required time-span for these district improvement plans?

No. However, as districts must make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years to be removed from improvement status, ISBE intends to seek the adoption of an administrative rule requiring that each district improvement plan span at least the next two school years, the same as school improvement plans.

2.7 What must be included in a district improvement plan?

For Title I schools, the district improvement plan must:

- (i) incorporate scientifically based research strategies that strengthen the core academic program in schools served by the district;
- (ii) identify actions that have the greatest likelihood of improving the achievement of participating children in meeting the State's student academic achievement standards;
- (iii) address the professional development needs of the instructional staff serving the district. Title I guidance directs districts to spend not less than 10 percent of the funds they receive under subpart 2 for each fiscal year in which the agency is identified for improvement for professional development (including funds reserved for professional development under subsection (b)(3)(A)(iii)), but excluding funds reserved for professional development under section 1119;
- (iv) include specific measurable achievement goals and targets for each subgroup of students, consistent with adequate yearly progress
- (v) address the fundamental teaching and learning needs in the schools of the district, and the specific academic problems of low-achieving students, including a determination of why the district's prior plan failed to bring about increased student academic achievement;
- (vi) incorporate, as appropriate, activities before school, after school, during the summer, and during an extension of the school year;
- (vii) specify the responsibilities of ISBE and the district under the plan, including specifying the technical assistance to be provided by ISBE and the district's responsibilities under section 1120A of *NCLB*; and
- (viii) include strategies to promote effective parental involvement in the school.

As Illinois law requires ISBE to adopt administrative rules addressing the development of all district improvement plans, ISBE intends to adopt an administrative rule implementing the same requirements (where applicable) for district improvement plans for non-Title I schools as well. (*NCLB* 1116(c)(7)) (105 ILCS 5/2-3.25d(c)).

2.8 How does ISBE evaluate district improvement plans?

ISBE has published a district improvement plan scoring guide, or rubric, that it uses to score district improvement plans. The rubric and scoring procedures are posted on ISBE's website.

The rubric comprises the same components that are used to evaluate school improvement plans and the scoring procedures are identical. Most criteria in the school improvement plan and district improvement plan are virtually identical. However, some criteria are different. For example, the district improvement plan rubric includes the criteria “role of the school board,” “mentoring of principals,” and “support for school improvement plans” that logically apply only to districts.

2.9 Must district improvement plans follow a particular format?

No. ISBE has posted an optional district improvement plan template for grade schools and high schools at its website. Schools following the optional school improvement plan template will address all of the requirements mandated by *NCLB*, as set forth in 2.7.

2.10 When must a district improvement plan be submitted?

For Title I districts, a district improvement plan must be submitted for approval no later than three months after the date that ISBE notifies the district that it did not make adequate yearly progress. Unlike schools, no 45-day peer review process is specified.

Illinois law requires ISBE to adopt rules specifying the submission requirements for all district improvement plans. ISBE intends to adopt the same three-month schedule set forth in *NCLB*.

2.11 If a district does not make adequate yearly progress in the spring of the first year of its ISBE-approved, two-year district improvement plan, does ISBE require the district to resubmit it?

No, unless the plan is changed. If ISBE approves a two-year district improvement plan, the district improvement plan remains valid for two years. If, however, a district modifies or changes an ISBE-approved district improvement plan, those changes must be submitted to ISBE for approval.

2.12 If a district does not make adequate yearly progress in the spring of the first year of its school board-approved, two-year district improvement plan, does a board require the district to resubmit it?

The local school board decides.

2.13 Is Chicago District 299 exempt?

No. If District 299 does not make adequate yearly progress for four consecutive years, it is required to submit its district improvement plan to ISBE.

2.14 Are district improvement plans and school improvement plans separate documents?

Yes. A district that substitutes a school improvement plan(s) in lieu of a district improvement plan will not fulfill its requirement. The only exception is a district with only one building and one principal. In that case, the school improvement plan and district improvement plan may be the same.

A district improvement plan is not merely a synthesis or compilation of individual school improvement plans. Rather, a district improvement plan should include strategies that, as appropriate, target and integrate the following units:

1. needs of specific subgroups that did not make adequate yearly progress;
2. unique needs of specific schools that did not make adequate yearly progress;
3. common needs of all schools that did not make adequate yearly progress;
4. common needs of all schools; and
5. ways the district office can improve its operations and support activities.

In most instances, the student groups targeted in school improvement plans are the same student groups targeted in district improvement plans. Therefore, school improvement plans and a district improvement plan must be aligned to ensure that their respective strategies do not conflict, contradict, or replicate efforts.

2.15 What is the penalty if a district does not submit a district improvement plan, its district improvement plan is not approved, or if it fails to implement an approved district improvement plan?

A district that does not submit a school improvement plan, continues to submit a district improvement plan that is unapprovable, or fails to make a reasonable effort to implement its approved district improvement plan may suffer loss of state recognition and loss of state funding, as ISBE deems appropriate. (105 ILCS 5/2-3.25f)

Part 3.0: Peer Review, Improvement Panels, and Outside Evaluations

3.1 What is peer review?

NCLB requires a peer review process for school improvement plans but does not rigidly define peer review. Peer review must occur during the preparation of a school improvement plan after the second year and each consecutive year thereafter that a school does not make adequate yearly progress. Federal guidance states that a district “should involve as peer reviewers teachers and administrators from schools and districts similar to the one in improvement, but significantly more successful in meeting the learning needs of their students.” (“LEA and School Improvement: Non-Regulatory Guidance,” January 7, 2004, C-17.) As appropriate, peer reviewers may be teachers from other schools, personnel from other districts, Regional Office of Education staff, Intermediate Service Center staff, university faculty, consultants, et al., or combinations thereof. The peer review process takes place during the 45 days prior to submitting the school improvement plan for approval by the school board.

3.2 Does the peer review requirement apply to non-Title I school improvement plans and district improvement plans?

No. As described in 3.3, all schools and districts that have not made adequate yearly progress for a fourth consecutive year must coordinate the development of their improvement plans with an improvement panel. Prior to the appointment of an improvement panel, non-Title I schools and districts should determine whether the development of their improvement plans would benefit from outside evaluation and review. As one of several options a board may consider, the board may designate an outside team to evaluate school improvement plans on its behalf. Based on this evaluation, a report from the team to the board will inform the board of each plan’s strengths and weaknesses.

3.3 What is the role of school and district improvement panels for schools and districts that do not make adequate yearly progress for a fourth consecutive year?

Section 3.25e of the School Code requires the State Superintendent of Education to appoint improvement panels for schools and districts in Academic Watch Status. Members appointed to improvement panels must include, but not be limited to, individuals who are familiar with educational issues. (Additional selection criteria apply to Chicago District 299.) The State Superintendent of Education will designate one member of the panel to serve as chair. The improvement panel will assist the school or district in the development and implementation of its improvement plan and make progress reports and comments to ISBE as required. (105 ILCS 5/2-3.25e)

3.4. How does the State Superintendent of Education appoint members to improvement panels?

To assist with this task, the State Superintendent requests that schools and districts participate in this process as follows:

1. The district/school may recommend to the State Superintendent of Education three panel members familiar with educational issues. Generally, to avoid conflicts of interest, panel members may not be board members or employees of the district. The one exception is that members of a school improvement panel can include employees from another school within the district with demonstrated effectiveness and recognized expertise in school improvement. Panel members may not have other conflicts of interest, such as a contractual relationship with a school or district.
2. The district/school may request assistance from the regional superintendent of schools in the identification of panel members. ISBE will request the regional superintendent's endorsement of all recommendations.
3. The district/school may request assistance from the RESPRO in the identification of panel members.
4. Districts/schools should also recommend the member of the panel who will serve as chair.
5. Districts/schools must submit their recommendations to the State Superintendent no later than 45 days following the notification of being in Academic Watch Status. Otherwise, ISBE will proceed with the appointment of a panel without recommendations from the district/school.

The State Superintendent will notify districts/schools of his decision regarding the recommended panel members no later than 30 days following receipt of the district/school recommendations.

3.5 Are peer review groups and improvement panels subject to the Illinois Open Meetings Act?

ISBE advises that peer review groups and school and district improvement panels follow the requirements of the Illinois Open Meetings Act, (5 ILCS 120/1 *et seq*). Under the Open Meetings Act, peer review groups and improvement panels must follow certain requirements for postings, notice and the keeping of minutes. The Open Meetings Act defines a "meeting" as a gathering of a majority of a quorum for discussing public business. (5 ILCS 120/1.02) For example, if two members on a three-person panel are discussing a school improvement plan in-person or via telephone, this gathering would constitute a "meeting" under the Open Meetings Act. Additional guidance on the Open Meetings Act is available on the website of the Office of the Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan. (See ag.stage.il.us/government/openmeetings.html).

3.6 Can an improvement panel's review of a school improvement plan meet the *NCLB* requirement for peer review?

Yes, as long as the improvement panel's membership consists of individuals appropriate for the peer review process (i.e., teachers from other schools, personnel from other districts, Regional Office of Education staff, Intermediate Service Center staff, university faculty, consultants, et al., or combinations thereof). (See 3.3 and 3.4.) A local school board can choose to have a separate peer review and improvement panel review process. The local school board should ensure a rigorous review of the plan in either case.

3.7 What types of decisions should a board make in consultation with a peer review team or improvement panel?

The board may consult with the peer review panel and improvement panel (if separate) when determining the improvement plan's content, standards of evaluation, scoring, and timelines. For example, the board may consult with such panels on whether to 1) use ISBE's rubric as a content guide, 2) use or modify ISBE's scoring guide as the standard for evaluation, 3) undergo ISBE rubric training exercises, and 4) tender its final evaluation by a specific date.

Part 4.0: Related Topics

4.1 What new actions must a district take in a Title I school required to undergo corrective actions?

A district must take one or more of the following corrective actions in the school:

1. institute a new curriculum and provide professional development for all relevant staff;
2. extend the length of the school year or day;
3. replace the school staff who are deemed relevant to the school not making adequate yearly progress;
4. significantly decrease management authority at the school;
5. restructure the internal organization of the school; or
6. appoint an outside expert(s) to advise the school how to strengthen its school improvement plan and address the specific issues underlying the school's inability to make adequate yearly progress. (See www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/ayp/edlite-slide029.html.)

Corrective action does not apply to non-Title I schools.

4.2 What new actions must a district take in a school required to undergo restructuring?

Under *NCLB*, a district must take one or more of the following actions in a Title I school required to undergo restructuring:

1. reopen the school as a public charter school;
2. replace all or most of the school staff, which may include the principal, who are relevant to the school's inability to make adequate yearly progress;
3. enter into a contract with an entity, such as a private management company, with a demonstrated record of effectiveness, to operate the school as a public school;
4. turn the operation of the school over to the state if this action is permitted under state law and the state agrees; and/or
5. implement any other major restructuring of the school's governance that makes fundamental reform that has substantial promise of enabling the school to make adequate yearly progress. (*NCLB*, Sec. 1116,(b), (8), (B))

As Illinois law requires all schools that have failed to meet adequate yearly progress for a fifth consecutive year to undergo restructuring, ISBE intends to adopt an administrative rule authorizing all schools to adopt one of the options set forth above when developing a restructuring plan. ISBE intends to propose the following parameters for the implementation of "any other major restructuring of a school's governance that makes fundamental reform that has substantial promise of enabling the school to make adequate yearly progress" (Option 5 above):

The restructuring plan must describe the current problems in the school's governance and operation. Supported by data and approved by the local school board, the restructuring plan must describe fundamental changes that will be made in a least one of the following areas:

1. governance and management,
2. financing and material resources,
3. curriculum, or
4. staffing.

4.3 What new actions must ISBE take in a Title I district required to undergo corrective actions?

ISBE must take one or more of the following corrective actions in the district:

1. defer programmatic funds or reduce administrative funds;
2. implement a new curriculum and professional development for all relevant staff;
3. replace district personnel who are relevant to its inability to make adequate yearly progress;
4. remove individual schools from its jurisdiction and arrange for their public governance and supervision;
5. appoint a receiver or trustee to administer district affairs, in place of the superintendent and school board;
6. abolish or restructure the district, and/or
7. authorize students to transfer to a higher-performing public school operated by another district. (115 Stat. 1490; "LEA and School Improvement: Non-Regulatory Guidance," *NCLB*, January 7, 2004)

Corrective action does not apply to non-Title I districts.

4.4 What new actions must ISBE take in *all* districts required to undergo restructuring?

Illinois law sets forth a restructuring requirement after year five, then sets forth specific ISBE options for year seven. ISBE is in discussion about restructuring options for years 5 and 6.

4.5 Who must approve a restructuring plan?

After approval by the local school board, the State Superintendent of Education will approve each school or district restructuring plan. ISBE staff will review each plan based on its data quality, documented needs, characteristics of its students, scientifically-based research, and whether the proposed changes are sufficient in extent or scope to promote increased achievement for all of the students in the school or district.

4.6 Is it possible for all schools in a district to make adequate yearly progress, but the district not make adequate yearly progress?

Yes. All schools in a district may make adequate yearly progress only because the number of valid test scores for a low performing subgroup is less than 40 in each school. But, when added across all the schools in the district, if the total number of valid test scores rises to 40 or more, *NCLB* criteria apply. The district may not make adequate yearly progress for that subgroup.

4.7 Is it possible for a district to make adequate yearly progress, yet one or more of the schools in the district do not?

Yes. When the scores of a low performing group of students in one building are combined with the scores of higher performing students in other buildings districtwide, the group may make adequate yearly progress. Thus, the district may make adequate yearly progress, even though one or more schools do not.

4.8 Are there any options in the calculation of a school's or a district's adequate yearly progress?

Yes. It is called Safe Harbor.

4.9 What is Safe Harbor?

Safe Harbor criteria apply only to the calculation of adequate yearly progress in the *academic* performance of *subgroups*. Any subgroup in a school or district may make adequate yearly progress if the percentage of students in that subgroup who did not meet or exceed Illinois' standards of academic achievement on the state assessments decreases by 10 percent the next year. For example, if 80 percent of a subgroup does not meet academic standards in mathematics, then the next year the Safe Harbor target for its making adequate yearly progress is 28 percent meets-and-exceeds: $[(80)(.10) + 20 = 28]$. (*NCLB* 115 Stat. 1448; "Approved Accountability Workbook for Illinois," ISBE, February, 2004, p. 4-5)

4.10 Is the Safe Harbor method of calculating adequate yearly progress for subgroups in schools the same for subgroups in districts?

Yes. Safe Harbor criteria are exactly the same for schools and districts. ISBE automatically supplies these calculations to schools and districts via their Report Cards.

4.11 Is the academic achievement target for adequate yearly progress the same for all groups?

No. In Illinois, the achievement target for each subgroup is three percent less than it is for the composite group. For example, if the adequate yearly progress target for the composite group is 47.5 percent, the target for each subgroup is 44.5 percent. This adjustment is made due to the smaller sizes of subgroups.

4.12 What happens the first year an Academic Early Warning Status or Academic Watch Status school or district makes adequate yearly progress?

If a school or a district makes adequate yearly progress, it remains in its current status and sanction. For example, if a school that is offering parents a choice of schools learns that it made adequate yearly progress, the next year it must continue to offer parents choice, but it does not have to offer supplemental educational services.

If the following year it does not make adequate yearly progress, then its status is “unfrozen,” i.e., the sanction is increased. In this example, it must offer both choice and supplemental educational services. In effect, making adequate yearly progress for only one year while in Academic Early Warning Status or Academic Watch Status merely delays new sanctions a year. (The *NCLB* term “consecutive”—as in “fourth consecutive year”—is therefore not always literally true. It can be interrupted for a year.)

4.13 What happens the second year an Academic Early Warning Status or Academic Watch Status school or district makes adequate yearly progress?

If a school or district makes adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years, it is removed from Academic Early Warning Status and Academic Watch Status and is no longer subject to the sanctions outlined above. It begins anew. It cannot be placed in Academic Early Warning Status again for at least two school years.

4.14 With respect to the ISBE and district options to replace district and school staff (see 4.1, option 3; 4.2, option 1; 4.3, option 3), what is the status of collective bargaining rights, agreements, court orders, memoranda of understanding, etc.?

Illinois law requires each district to determine the teaching competency of each teacher in its employ and grants it the authority to assign staff. (Illinois School Code, Article 24A) *NCLB* specifically provides that corrective action will not alter or otherwise affect the rights, remedies, and procedures afforded school or district employees under federal, state, or local laws or under the terms of collective bargaining agreements, memoranda of understanding, or other agreements between school or district employees and their employers. This includes applicable regulations or court orders. (*NCLB*, Section 1116(d))

Part 5.0: Resources

5.1 What is the web address for the district and school improvement plan rubrics, templates, and scoring rules?

The links appear at the bottom of the page:

http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/improvement_process.htm

5.2 To whom should questions regarding adequate yearly progress results, current school or district status, etc., be directed?

Call the Division of Data Analysis at 217-782-3950.

5.3 To whom should questions regarding school improvement plan and district improvement plan rubrics, corrective action, and restructuring be directed?

Call the Division of Federal Grants and Programs at 217-524-4832.

5.4 To whom should questions regarding choice and supplemental educational services be directed?

Call the Division of Accountability at 217-782-2948.

5.5 To whom should questions regarding curriculum, instruction, and the Illinois Learning Standards be directed?

Call the Division of Curriculum and Instruction at 217-557-7323.

5.6 To whom should questions regarding the classification of students into subgroups, test dates, test results, alternative assessments, and related assessment questions be directed?

Call the Division of Assessment at 217-782-4823.

5.7 To whom should questions regarding special education students, such as requests for exceptions, be directed?

Call the Division of Special Education Services at 217-782-5589.

5.8 Where can one find additional information on *NCLB*?

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/>

<http://www.isbe.net/nclb/>

APPENDIX 1
SCHEDULE OF NCLB AND ILLINOIS SANCTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

YEAR	AYP	ALL SCHOOLS	ONLY TITLE I SCHOOLS
1			
fall		standard operation	
spring	No	no sanction	
2			
fall		standard operation	
spring	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Early Warning Status • Submit school improvement plan to local school board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental choice
3			
fall		Implement school improvement plan	Implement parental choice
spring	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Early Warning Status continues • Submit school improvement plan to local school board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplemental educational services
4			
fall		Implement school improvement plan	Parental choice continues Implement supplemental educational services
spring	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Watch Status • Submit school improvement plan to local school board and to ISBE • ISBE appoints school improvement panel to help develop school improvement plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corrective action options selected by district
5			
fall		Improvement panel helps to implement school improvement plan and report results to ISBE	Parental choice continues Supplemental educational services continue Implement corrective action
spring	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Watch Status continues • Submit school improvement plan to local school board and to ISBE • District will develop a restructuring plan for the school 	
6			
fall		Improvement panel helps to implement school improvement plan District develops a restructuring plan for the school	Parental choice continues Supplemental educational services continue Corrective action continues
spring	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School notified that it will have to implement district restructuring plan 	
7			
fall		School implements district restructuring plan	Parental choice continues Supplemental educational services continue
spring	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISBE selects one option: remove school board, appoint authority to manage school, nonrecognize school, reassign pupils, or replace personnel 	
8			
fall		ISBE implements one option: remove school board, appoint authority to manage school, nonrecognize school, reassign pupils, or replace personnel	

APPENDIX 2
SCHEDULE OF NCLB AND ILLINOIS SANCTIONS FOR DISTRICTS

YEAR	AYP	ALL DISTRICTS	ONLY TITLE I DISTRICTS
1			
fall		standard operation	
spring	No	no sanction	
2			
fall		standard operation	
spring	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Early Warning Status • Submit district improvement plan to local school board 	
3			
fall		Implement district improvement plan	
spring	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Early Warning Status continues • Submit district improvement plan to local school board 	
4			
fall		Implement district improvement plan	
spring	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Watch Status • Submit district improvement plan to local school board and to ISBE • ISBE appoints district improvement panel to help develop district improvement plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISBE selects one or more corrective actions
5			
fall		Improvement panel helps to implement district improvement plan and report results to ISBE	Implement corrective action(s)
spring	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Watch Status continues • Submit district improvement plan to local school board and to ISBE • ISBE notifies district that it will have to develop a district restructuring plan 	
6			
fall		District develops a restructuring plan	Implement corrective action(s)
spring	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISBE notifies district that it will have to implement its restructuring plan 	
7			
fall		District implements district restructuring plan	
spring	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISBE selects one option: remove school board, appoint authority to manage school, nonrecognize school, reassign pupils, or replace personnel 	
8			
fall		ISBE implements one option: remove school board, appoint authority to manage school, nonrecognize school, reassign pupils, or replace personnel	
spring	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a district is nonrecognized in its entirety, it will be dissolved on July 1 	