

Illinois Association for Gifted Children
 Feedback on Draft #1 of the Illinois State Board of Education Every Student Succeeds Act
 Implementation Plan

The Illinois Association for Gifted Children (IAGC) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on Draft #1 of the Illinois State Board of Education’s state plan for implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The recommendations below are organized using the section numbers from the public draft of the state plan posted on the ISBE website. IAGC would be pleased to provide research documentation for its feedback and to respond to any questions about its recommendations.

For more information, please contact IAGC Governing Board member Eric Calvert, Ed.D., by email at eric.calvert@northwestern.edu or by phone at (847) 467-0185.

Section	ISBE Request	IAGC Position
1.2 A	ISBE requests ideas from individuals or groups regarding how funding streams can be combined in order to support each and every child as she or he progresses through school.	<p>ESSA requires that states include in their Title II implementation plans a description of how funds will be spent to support educators gaining competence in gifted education.</p> <p>ESSA also requires districts that receive Title II professional development funds to use those funds to address the learning needs of all students. ESSA specifically says that “all students” includes gifted and talented students.</p> <p>Therefore, IAGC recommends that ISBE set aside 5% of Title II funds to support the development and delivery of research-based professional development resources on supporting gifted and talented students with a particular emphasis on addressing the needs of bright students from low-income and culturally diverse backgrounds. By supporting resource development at the state level, district Title II funds may be used more efficiently to support local educators’ participation in training utilizing these resources.</p> <p>IAGC also encourages ISBE to pursue a competitive federal grant through the Jacob K. Javits program to provide additional resources to schools serving significant numbers of economically disadvantaged and/or minority students.</p>

2.1.A.v	<p>The local choice option is designed to allow a nationally recognized college entrance exam to substitute for the ISBE- identified accountability assessment. ISBE is currently using the SAT with essay for the purposes of the state accountability in ELA and math. ISBE requests feedback from stakeholders regarding this approach.</p>	<p>IAGC strongly supports allowing the SAT and/or ACT to be used as a substitute for ISBE-identified accountability assessments by school districts.</p> <p>Further, IAGC recommends ISBE provide opportunities for gifted and academically advanced students to take the SAT or ACT above-grade-level (beginning in middle school) as a nearly “ceiling-free” diagnostic tool for monitoring gifted students’ growth over time and guide appropriate instruction and supports. This approach has been used successfully for decades in academic talent search programs such as Northwestern University’s Midwest Academic Talent Search, in which thousands of Illinois students participate annually.</p>
3.1	<p>ISBE requests ideas from individuals or groups regarding both additional school quality indicators and other ideas as they relate to additional school quality indicators (e.g., why a particular indicator makes/does not make sense within an accountability system).</p>	<p>IAGC recommends the creation of a composite rating representing access to and participation in advanced coursework and talent development programming for inclusion in the Illinois Report Card. (See attached document for specific recommendations regarding this rating, as well as the “Equal Talents, Unequal Opportunities” report from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation at http://www.excellencegap.org/s/JKCF_ETUO_Report-vdi6.pdf.)</p> <p>In particular, IAGC recommends that this composite rating include the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The percentage of district students assessed for possible placement in a gifted education or advanced academic program in a given year; ● The percentage of district students receiving instruction directly from a teacher who holds a gifted education endorsement in a given year; ● The percentage of district students served by one or more of the following research-supported academic talent development opportunities in a given year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Whole grade or single subject academic acceleration (e.g.

		<p>students who are learning full time in a setting with older peers and students who are taking one or more individual courses at a higher grade level than is age typical);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Academically advanced courses including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advanced courses taught by a teacher with a gifted endorsement; ■ College Board-approved Advanced Placement and Pre-AP courses; ■ Middle school students enrolled in courses offered for high school credit; ■ Selective enrollment courses for advanced K-12 students provided by a college or university (when sponsored by a school or district); and, ■ Dual enrollment courses taught by community college, college, or university faculty for dual credit in high school and college. ● The “gap” between the percentage of economically disadvantaged students and percentage of non-economically disadvantaged students participating in one or more of the advanced learning options listed above; ● The percentage of all enrolled students scoring at the “exceeds expectations” (Level 5) level on the state achievement
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		<p>assessment;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The gap between the percentage of economically disadvantaged students and non-economically disadvantaged students scoring at the “exceeds expectations” level on the state achievement assessment; ● The percentage of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds attaining the “college ready” benchmark scores on the ACT or SAT; ● The percentage of economically disadvantaged students who attain a score of 3 or higher on one or more AP Exams or who earn IB diplomas; and, ● The percentage of high school students identified as National Merit Semifinalists or attaining one or more other highly selective honors meriting special recognition to be determined by ISBE in consultation with the Gifted Advisory Board. <p>IAGC would also like to express its strong support for the following indicators already included in the draft ESSA implementation plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equitable student access to (and participation in) AP, IB, and dual credit courses among student subgroups, including EL students, minority students, and economically disadvantaged students; ● Access to and participation in extracurricular activities (IAGC recommends giving additional weight to extracurriculars in academic and artistic domains); ● Postsecondary plans (IAGC recommends that the implementation of this indicator take into consideration addressing
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		<p>“undermatching,” or the degree to which students do not apply to more selective institutions of higher education for which they are qualified on the basis of academic achievements); and,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to and participation in mentorship programs, especially those providing authentic exposure to possible future academic and career fields.
3.1	<p>ISBE requests ideas from individuals or groups regarding the two examples of weighting (e.g., comments on these examples, issues such as the example identified by the Accountability Workgroup, and other, different possibilities of indicators and weighting).</p>	<p>IAGC recommends that ISBE identify gifted or high ability students as a subgroup for disaggregation and define this group to ensure consistency in data reporting.</p> <p>In the interest of valid assessment of high achieving students and of educator impact with this population, IAGC recommends the inclusion/allowance of above-grade level assessment in future specification of allowable statewide tests.</p> <p>To help avoid the “bubble syndrome” with respect to weighting of academic achievement as measured by statewide assessments, IAGC recommends that points awarded do not disproportionately emphasize basic proficiency but rather incentivize helping students attain the highest levels of achievement. Additionally, IAGC recommends establishing multiple achievement levels in score reporting beyond the level representing grade-level proficiency.</p> <p>Finally, IAGC strongly recommends assigning a significant point value to the composite indicator described in the attached document.</p>
3.1	<p>What other data do we want included in our reporting system, but not in our accountability system?</p>	<p>IAGC recommends that reporting requirements include information about the assessments and criteria used for identifying gifted students and/or selecting students for advanced academic programming to help reveal effective and promising local practices.</p>

3.2	With respect to the definition of improved student outcomes, should improvements in achievement be required, or is increased growth sufficient? If so, why? If not, why not?	IAGC recommends that growth be the priority so that students who are already performing at or above grade level expectations are not ignored in school improvement efforts.
3.2	Should there be minimal required amounts of growth (beyond the requirement to no longer meet the criteria for identification)? If so, what amount of growth would be sufficient? If not, why not?	ISBE intervention in low performing schools should not focus exclusively on raising achievement for students performing grade level, but should also include growth for students at or above grade level as well, and should shine attention on the availability of advanced academic programming. Efforts to address achievement gaps should not focus merely on “raising the floor” but also on “raising the ceiling” in low performing schools.
3.3	How should the state define “greatest need”?	IAGC recommends that the definition of "greatest need" include low levels of participation in advanced academic programming as well as large disparities between racial and economic student subgroups in participation in advanced academic programming.
3.3 (C)	What are the challenges of which ISBE should be aware in regard to the identification and implementation of “evidence-based practices”?	IAGC recommends that ISBE prioritize support for research-based interventions for high-ability learners, including academic acceleration and grouping practices based on research-supported ongoing, culturally fair, and psychometrically valid assessment of student readiness.
4.2	ISBE requests additional comments on suggestions of uses of Title II funds.	<p>IAGC advocated for and applauded the inclusion of language in ESSA that requires state Title II implementation plans to include professional development to meet the needs of high achievement students.</p> <p>To build educator capacity to effectively serve gifted children and address new mandates in ESSA regarding gifted education, IAGC recommends that the state of Illinois designate at least 5% of Title II funds it receives to aid school districts serving significant numbers of low income students in accessing professional development</p>

		<p>on serving diverse gifted and talented learners.</p> <p>IAGC recommends ISBE require districts to submit a plan specifying how these designated funds will be expended for one or more of the following purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Funding district employee tuition for coursework in an ISBE-approved gifted endorsement programs or graduate programs in gifted education;● Funding district educator participation in gifted education-focused conferences, webinars, workshops or online learning experiences facilitated by provider approved by the ISBE Gifted Advisory Council with specific expertise in gifted education focusing on one or more of the following themes:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Selecting appropriate criteria for the identification/selection of students for advanced programming;○ Differentiating curriculum and instruction <i>specifically</i> for advanced students;○ Reviewing research-based gifted education and talent development program models;○ Developing and monitoring implementation of individualized learning plans for gifted and advanced students that address both academic and psycho-social development;○ Creating assessment practices that demonstrate continuous student growth for gifted students; and,○ Providing differentiated guidance,
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		<p>counseling, or college and career development programming for gifted students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Consistent with the purpose of Title II, IAGC recommends ISBE require that professional development activities address support for traditionally underserved populations, which may include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Gifted and talented economically disadvantaged students;○ Gifted and talented students from culturally diverse backgrounds;○ Gifted English language learners and linguistically diverse students; and/or,○ “Twice exceptional” students (gifted students with disabilities).● Additionally, IAGC recommends ISBE encourage districts to address in their plans these additional populations who are frequently underserved in gifted programs but not specifically addressed in Title II gifted education language:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Gifted and talented lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning students;○ Gifted and talented students in rural schools with limited capacity to provide specialized courses and programming; and,○ Profoundly gifted students.● IAGC further recommends requiring school districts with above average “excellence gaps” in the percentages of students from disadvantaged and non-
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		<p>disadvantaged populations identified as gifted and participating in advanced academic programming to utilize at least 10% of Title I funds received to fund a plan approved by the ISBE Gifted Advisory Council to increase successful participation by economically disadvantaged minority students, underrepresented minority students, English language learners, and students with disabilities in advanced academic programs.</p>
4.2	<p>ISBE requests additional suggestions for ways it may improve the skills of teachers, principals, or other school leaders in identifying students with specific learning needs.</p>	<p>IAGC recommends that efforts include providing professional development on understanding the learning needs of gifted and high ability students as well as appropriate practices for assessment, curriculum modification, and academic acceleration. This professional development should be tailored to the specific roles of educators within their school districts.</p>
4.3	<p>The equity plan does not include a definition of “Ineffective teacher.” ISBE proposes the following, but requests the assistance of stakeholders in developing a definition.</p>	<p>IAGC recommends that ISBE consider the implications of using tests with low ceilings to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers predominately serving gifted and academically advanced students based on student growth, as this approach may underestimate the effectiveness of these teachers.</p>
5.1 (G)	<p>ISBE requests additional suggestions for ways it may consider the use of Title IV, Part A funds to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Provide all students with access to a wellrounded education; 2) Improve school conditions for student learning; and 3) Improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students. 	<p>IAGC recommends ISBE explicitly allow and encourage districts to use Title IV funds to support access to advanced online coursework where similar local coursework is not available and to designate a portion of its Title IV, Part A funds for this purpose.</p>

5.2	ISBE requests additional suggestions for other factors it may wish to consider in regard to the waiving of the 40 percent poverty threshold.	IAGC recommends using the 40% threshold to allow districts increased flexibility and to allow more districts to incorporate school-wide talent development efforts into their Title I plans.
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