

ISBE'S WEEKLY MESSAGE

From Illinois State Superintendent Dr. Tony Sanders

December 2, 2025

ISBE EXTENDS FEEDBACK OPPORTUNITIES ON ACCOUNTABILITY REDESIGN

Dear Colleagues:

All good things take time. Earlier this year, we presented our plan to redesign our state's accountability system, as the logical next step following the implementation of new assessment performance levels. We scheduled many listening sessions, both in-person and virtual, with a public comment period originally scheduled to remain open through Dec. 7. The feedback we have received so far has been invaluable! You have affirmed the need to revamp the current, flawed system – tied to weighted indicators and arbitrary caps on category rankings. But some details of the system we will adopt in its place would benefit from a bit more reflection, and for that reason, we're adjusting our [timeline](#) to receive more feedback.

To recap what we have done so far, we shared our initial redesign proposal and opened public comment on Oct. 28. To expand opportunities for reflection, we will:

- Publish a statewide modeling data set this week to let schools see how the proposed changes would look with their 2025 data.
- Extend the [current public comment period](#) through **Jan. 7, 2026**, for a total of 72 days.

You will then see a first draft of our ESSA State Plan that is guided by all the feedback we have heard.

- ESSA State Plan first draft: **Jan. 12, 2026**
- First draft public comment period: **Jan. 12-Feb. 25, 2026**

Next, we will take any additional feedback submitted during that 45-day public comment window and use that advice to build our final draft.

- ESSA State Plan final draft: **March 2, 2026**
- Final draft public comment: **March 2-April 2, 2026**

You can [register now](#) for the upcoming Accountability Redesign Phase II Virtual Listening Tour. These sessions — all virtual — will happen **4-6 p.m.** on **Jan. 15, Jan. 21, Feb. 11, and March 16.**

This new, expanded schedule will mean that the Illinois State Board of Education will discuss this final revision at their March meeting and vote on the Accountability Redesign in April.

We cannot stretch the [timeframe](#) further without jeopardizing our federal approval, but we are happy to extend our schedule to make sure we get such a significant change right. We want every district to have the chance to “try on” this new structure using their own schools’ data. We want the category names to reflect realities and aspirations. We want to make sure we set thresholds properly. In short, we want to give our students, educators, and communities a system they can believe in and trust.

There is another old saying: “Haste makes waste.” In this week’s winter storm, I wanted to communicate that to every driver. But this advice applies to many projects and pursuits. We are hoping you will use this extra time to help us proceed with all due caution toward the goal of designing a system where each school has a profile of performance showing their strengths and opportunities for growth, side by side.

All my best,
Tony

Dr. Tony Sanders
State Superintendent of Education