



ILLINOIS 5ESSENTIALS SURVEY

Capture the Core

A Publication of the Illinois State Board of Education
Statewide System of Support Content Specialists

3rd Grade

JANUARY 2013

Improving Schools 5Essentials at a Time

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Illinois 5Essentials Survey

Beginning February 1, educators and students across Illinois will have an opportunity to participate in the *Illinois 5Essentials Survey: Organizing Schools for Improvement*. This survey was designed to provide a detailed portrait of the inner workings of a school from an organizational perspective.

“The State Board has long understood that test scores alone do not offer the full picture of schools and learning,” said State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch. “The Illinois 5Essentials Survey will finally help us paint that fuller picture of learning conditions and guide local and state improvement initiatives so that every student has access to a world class education.”

This unique opportunity will allow teachers, students and parents to provide feedback on the critical elements of school effectiveness.

The *Illinois 5Essentials Survey* will be administered online by UChicago Impact at

the University of Chicago, on behalf of the Illinois School Board of Education.

5Essentials

The *Illinois 5 Essentials Survey* identifies five indicators that lead to important student outcomes, including improved attendance and larger test score gains.

The five indicators that positively affect school success are:

- Effective Leaders
- Collaborative Teachers
- Involved Families
- Supportive Environments
- Ambitious Instruction

Research derived from the Five Essentials for School Success has proven that schools strong on at least 3 of the 5Essentials are 10 times more likely to improve student outcomes.

Survey Administration

The *Illinois 5Essentials Survey* will be administered February 1- March 31, 2013. All

certified teachers, students in grades 6 through 12, and parents will be asked to participate in the 15 minute survey. Respondent identities and individual responses will be kept completely confidential.



Available Resources

UChicago Impact is committed to providing school administrators throughout the state with the knowledge and resources to successfully administer the Illinois 5Essentials Survey. Through webinars and in-person regional trainings, UChicago Impact is available to assist school personnel through each stage of the 5Essentials Survey process.

For a complete list of upcoming webinars dates, regional training locations and specific information pertaining to the survey, please visit <https://illinois.5-essentials.org/2012/>.

Environment and Engagement: Precursors to Learning

A clear vision for a learning environment that is conducive to learning is the “touchstone from which all other actions flow. It is the yardstick for questions and a reference point for conversations.” Lambert, 2003



Consider the *kind of learning* called for in the Common Core. What environment must a teacher facilitate for 21st Century learning to take place? If students are to constructively collaborate and critique work among peers, is this enabled within a socially safe classroom? If students are to persevere in rigorous academic tasks, what instructional strategies can support their struggle?

Classroom Strategy: When questioning, teachers can:

- Always emphasize what is *correct* in a response
- Allow students time to think or seek help from peers
- Ask students to paraphrase/add to another’s response

Research *proves* that school-wide efforts to create optimal conditions for learning promote students’ cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral development, including increased academic achievement. By allowing true engagement in teaching and learning, a conducive school environment increases the impact of educators’ efforts.

An optimal learning environment is physically welcoming and functional, but much more than that. It must also:

- socially promote communication and interaction;
- affectively promote a sense of belonging and esteem;
- academically promote learning and self-fulfillment.

Thus, the nature of *human interactions* within a school community characterizes the learning environment. (CL7)

Good teachers instinctively facilitate positive interactions in their classrooms. A **shared school-wide vision** for the learning environment takes individual efforts to the next level, by making learning conditions an intentional and integral part of a continuous improvement process. (CI11)

Each month, this newsletter highlights best practices that help students reach their learning goals. Adoption of Common Core State Standards in Math and English are an important step in focusing teaching and learning toward the knowledge and skills students need for life success.

Yet the Common Core, like any learning standards, can only be attained within an environment that supports engagement in the learning process. Thus, information supporting the creation of a **Comprehensive System of Learning Supports** in schools is also included each month (and fills this issue) to detail how to promote conditions for, and reduce barriers to, effective teaching and learning. This integration is an intentional reminder that learning goals and learning supports go hand in hand, as each is a necessary reinforcement of the other. (CL1, CL2, CL3)

Continuous School Improvement Connection:

The **Conditions for Learning Indicators** discussed here (CL4, CL10) and others are included in the Rising Star on IIRC online school improvement system and also accessible via the **ISBE Learning Supports** web page.

Teacher’s words and actions matter, as they directly impact student motivation. Engagement is most effectively encouraged not through a checklist of behaviors, but the adoption of a *mindset* based on mutual respect, support, and high expectations. (CL4, CL19)

Because the learning environment stems from attitudes and competencies of educators and the students they serve, social/emotional skill building is a critical factor. State legislation requires the incorporation of social and emotional learning into educational programming, which can be done effectively through an *integrative* approach. Rather than isolating social and emotional skills in a separate curriculum, teachers can use other subject area instruction, as well as daily “teachable moments,” as natural springboards for social/emotional skill building.

Research shows that as students feel more competent and connected, levels of engagement increase. (CL10)

Student engagement increases when...

academic tasks are challenging, purposeful, and applicable to one’s own life.

students are involved in setting their learning goals.

students are encouraged to interact and discuss ideas with their teachers and peers.

praise emphasizes improvement, effort, and process.

peer cooperation, not competition, is encouraged.

instruction allows student choice and decision-making.

appropriate academic scaffolding leads to autonomy.

teachers create a socially-supportive environment.

students develop a positive perception of their school.

Professional Development Connection: (CL16, CL17)

Effective teacher practices related to environment and engagement are highlighted in the Danielson Framework and should be emphasized in preparation, development, and evaluation programs aligned for professional growth.



Winter has arrived! In the coat closet today there is a vest, a quilted down coat, and a long wool coat. Hmm... how different humans are in that one small area of comfort and warmth. These differences are also reflected in teaching and learning styles. Viewing students in a classroom under the lens of the "three coats" and differentiating instruction in light of academic diversity provides an opportunity and a challenge! This challenge can be met by providing a classroom culture adapted to provide effective and responsive instruction to meet individual student needs [\(CL 8\)](#).

A three tiered approach provides an organizational structure through which teachers can incorporate differentiated instruction to balance the needs of individual students with the needs of the whole class and ensure an optimal learning environment. It takes student motivation into account, addresses barriers to teaching and learning, and re-engages disengaged students. It provides quality core instruction for all students, strategic and targeted interventions for some students, and comprehensive and intensive interventions for a few students. [\(CL 4, 8, 10\)](#) It integrates teaching literacy and social skills within lessons. So, how can all this be accomplished throughout the school day?



The structure of the Common Core State Standards can provide helpful guidance. The learning progressions that are explicit in [ELA](#) (English Language Arts) and implied in [Math](#) can offer insight for teachers in how to move students forward from their present skill levels.

Also embedded within Common Core is the art of questioning. The use of questioning strategies encourages students to think, reason, and critique at higher levels and supports student re/engagement. Questions such as: "How did you figure that out? How are you planning to go about this? Which parts are you sure about and which parts are you not sure about?" encourage agency and empower students to build on their strengths. Good questioning techniques are interventions that enhance the learning opportunities for all in the classroom.

Another practical adaptation would be to examine practices regarding independent reading for students. Begin with stamina. Students may not have the stamina and perseverance required for independent reading. Teaching the skill of stamina/perseverance by building in

small increments on a daily basis may be necessary. Building of stamina should be transferred to the Math arena as well. It takes stamina and perseverance to work through Math problem solving, and students need to be implicitly taught how to "battle through" rather than give up. Research has shown taking the time to build stamina enhances the learning environment.



Generalizing learning also helps to ensure comprehension for diverse learners. Teachers can help students generalize from subject to subject, classroom to community, and from academic areas to personal relationships [\(CL 4, 7\)](#) Generalizing a unit about the great depression could look like this:

- read and discuss books/movies/newspapers
- calculate the value of lost crops and income
- compare and contrast the relationship between the great depression and today and how it affects families and communities
- explore the effects of drought and weather patterns
- listen to taped interviews and talk with families

The effectiveness of this integrated approach in simultaneously addressing academic and social content is supported by research. [\(CL 8\)](#)

Teachers should embrace the power of combining the teaching of literacy and social, emotional, behavioral skills simultaneously. This type of instruction has proven to show significant improvement in test scores as well as more motivated and enthusiastic students. [\(CL 8\)](#) Recognizing and embracing the interrelatedness of the "soft skills" of teaching to the academic instruction provides focus and instruction becomes easier because the students are engaged and come to school motivated to learn.

Professional Reading Resources:
[Choice Words](#), by Peter Johnston
[Crucial Conversations Tools for Talking When Stakes are High](#), by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler

