The fiscal year 2015 (July 1, 2014, to June 30, 2015) State Budget for K-12 education totals about $6.8 billion. This figure amounts to an increase of about $118 million from the FY 2014 appropriation levels. The legislature has increased its investment in education over the last two fiscal years, though it is important to note that from FY 2009 to FY 2013, the state education budget experienced an overall drop of $852 million.

The majority of this year’s increase is being used for General State Aid (GSA). The GSA formula supports local school districts’ general operations. Central to the GSA calculation is the “Foundation Level,” which is intended to represent the minimum level of funding required to meet the basic education needs of a single pupil in the Illinois K-12 public school system. That Foundation Level has been set in statute at $6,119 per pupil since 2010. In recent years, appropriations have fallen short of fully funding the Foundation Level and the Supplemental Low-Income Grant amounts that constitute the total GSA grant. As a result, GSA is once again being significantly prorated this school year, with payments made at approximately 89 percent of the amount owed to school districts.

The Illinois State Board of Education’s (ISBE) FY 2015 budget request asked for full funding, or about $54.5 million, to administer both the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments for elementary and high school students as well as the ACT. ISBE received feedback from districts that still wanted the option of giving their students access to the ACT. However, the state budget appropriated $9.9 million less for assessments than ISBE’s original recommendation. Therefore, the Board decided to reduce the scope of PARCC exams available for high school students this year and once again cover the cost of the ACT administration – but on an optional basis.

### Student Demographics

The number of operating school districts has declined from 886 in 2004 to 863 in 2014. There are now 375 elementary districts, 100 high school districts and 388 unit districts. The number of public schools has dropped in the last decade from 3,907 in 2004 to 3,794 in 2014. The average school size has seen a slight increase to 546 students in 2014, up from 527 in 2004. Overall student enrollment in the regular Illinois public schools over the last 10 years increased from 2,060,048 in 2004 to 2,073,480 in 2014. Starting in 2011, student enrollment has been based on the home school.

Meanwhile, Illinois continues to experience a significant increase in low-income students. Low-income students increased from 39 percent of the enrollment in 2004 to 51.5 percent in 2014. It was 49.9 percent in 2013. Pupils are considered low-income if they are from families receiving public aid, are living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, are being supported in foster homes with public funds, or are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

Students who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Native American, or Two or More Races made up 50.1 percent of the enrollment in 2014, up from 42.3 percent in 2004. The increase in minority percentage is accounted for mainly by increases among Hispanic and Asian students.

### Learning Outcomes

In May 2014, the Education Commission of the States identified Illinois as having the best report card out of all 50 states and the District of Columbia for its accessible accountability reports, according to both researchers and parents. The 2014 Report Card was released in October with new metrics and capabilities that build on the functionality and enhanced features of the redesigned Report Card, which was introduced in October 2013. The new, more user-friendly Report Card highlights multiple measures of academic performance as well as school climate and learning conditions, rendering a more complete picture of the state’s nearly 4,000 public schools.
New Report Card metrics include 12-month and 16-month enrollment statistics for former Illinois high school students in two-year and four-year colleges. The 2014 results show 66.3 percent of all Illinois graduates are enrolled in higher education 12 months after graduation, compared to 70.4 percent of graduates enrolled after the 16-month mark. The Report Card also highlights the percentage of students who finish their freshman year of high school on track for college readiness, meaning they have earned at least five full-year course credits (10 semester credits) and have earned no more than one semester F in a core course (English, math, science or social studies). Statewide, nearly 88 percent of the state’s high school freshmen are on track to graduate.

The 2014 Report Card includes performance results from the state’s previous assessment system, the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE). These tests are being replaced this spring with the PARCC exams. Under the previous accountability system, 54.3 percent of students are meeting or exceeding standards on the PSAE, compared to 53.3 percent for 2014. The state average for ACT composite scores for 11th-grade students taking the test in spring 2014 also slightly increased to 20.4 from 20.3 the previous year, and the percentage of students ready for college coursework (students who earned a combined score of at least a 21 on the ACT) also grew slightly to 45.8 percent, compared to 45.7 percent for last year. The percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards for the ISAT is 58.7 percent for 2014, a slight drop of 0.1 percent from the previous year.

The 2014 Report Card shows that the student academic growth score (growth from year to year on ISAT scores) has decreased in reading from 102.1 in 2013 to 99.4. The growth score increased in math from 101.4 in 2013 to 102.9. Schools that score below the average are not meeting the state average growth, and those scoring above are exceeding the average growth for a school. The growth score simply indicates the average amount of growth for students in a district or school and adds more context to other metrics.

**Student Performance and Achievement**

In August, ISBE announced that the graduating Class of 2014 achieved a composite score of 20.7 on the ACT, giving Illinois the second highest score among the 12 states that tested 100 percent of their graduates. In addition, the percentage of students meeting all four of ACT’s College and Career Readiness Benchmarks increased to 26 percent from 25 percent last year. This figure has increased steadily over the last five years, with 23 percent of graduates hitting the benchmarks in 2010, 25 percent in 2013 and 26 percent in 2014.

Since 2003, Illinois’ composite score has been among the highest for the group of states that annually tested all of their students. This year was the second consecutive year Illinois has ranked second. Illinois’ ACT composite score is just slightly below the national average of 21.0, which is based primarily on the scores of self-selected, college-bound students. The majority of states only test students intending to go to college as opposed to Illinois, where every 11th-grader was required to take the ACT last spring as part of the PSAE. Illinois high school students will no longer take the PSAE, although the state has made the ACT available to districts during the 2014-15 school year. Instead, the new PARCC assessments focused on college and career readiness will be administered to high school students as well as third- through eighth-graders.

Illinois has also closed the equity gap for Latino students on Advanced Placement (AP) exams. According to the 10th Annual AP Report to the Nation, the percent of Latino Class of 2013 graduates who took the rigorous AP exams during high school surpassed the total percent of Latino graduates statewide, continuing a decade-long trend of continued Latino participation in these accelerated college prep courses. Latino students comprised 18.4 percent of Illinois’ Class of 2013, but they represented 19.8 percent of graduates who took at least one AP exam during high school. Furthermore, the number of Latino graduates taking AP courses has more than quadrupled in the last decade, with 8,661 in 2013 compared to 1,994 in 2003. Illinois and Florida are the only two states that have a Latino graduate population greater than 10 percent that were able to remove the equity gap in AP participation for these students.
As its student population grows more diverse and economically challenged, Illinois continues to see record numbers of graduates taking these rigorous tests, with the percentage of graduates earning successful scores today almost doubling the total number of graduates who took the exam 10 years ago. Low-income students comprised 29.3 percent of graduates who took AP exams in 2013, compared to only 19 percent in 2008 and 12.1 percent in 2003. Meanwhile, the number of low-income graduates scoring a 3 or higher nearly tripled in the last five years from 1,969, or 9.7 percent in 2008, to 5,758, or 19.8 percent in 2013.

Illinois ranks 13th in the nation for the percentage of 2013 graduates – 21.5 percent – who scored at least a 3 on an AP exam during their high school career. The national average is 20.1 percent. Additionally, the percentage of Illinois graduates who reached that benchmark grew by 8.5 percentage points from 13 percent in 2003, putting Illinois among only 17 states that exceeded the national average of graduates scoring a 3 or higher in 2013.