



STANDOUT STATE

Illinois

Building buy-in while building a data system

Illinois has gone from simple spreadsheets to a sophisticated report card system to promote preparation program improvement.

Illinois took advantage of a confluence of events to create a report card to support and encourage prep program improvement. During its review of preparation programs, the state recognized the need for more robust data and began asking more specific and standardized questions, necessitating a way to organize and distill that information. Illinois also received funding from foundations and established a public-private partnership to support and advocate for the work. Finally, reviews of the state's preparation programs by external bodies prompted prep programs' eagerness to prove their merit, creating greater goodwill toward a state-led data monitoring system.

Illinois started gradually, creating Excel spreadsheets to track information from their more standardized reporting process. As it honed its data collection process, the state's needs quickly outstripped Excel's functionality. To create a more user-friendly database, Illinois sought additional capacity through the use of consultants and brought in technical expertise in building accountability systems, communications expertise to develop branding and resources, and thought partners to help organize external engagement. [The milestones of the state's process to develop its system are available here.](#)

Leaders from the Illinois State Board of Education explain that this work has been supported by three pillars: public transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. The state now makes more data, such as program pass rates, publicly available in its [Educator Preparation Profiles](#). It also now considers pass rates in its program approval rating. Illinois has access to pass rate data by subarea, which can be tied to specific courses and professors, making it actionable (though this level of detail is not public). Importantly, the state continues to improve the system, gathering input from programs and refining the system as they build and use it.

Critical to this work has been building buy-in with key stakeholders. Institutions and districts were brought to the table from the beginning — from planning, to piloting, to rolling out the full-scale system.