

The Illinois P-2 Indicator: Reversing the River Takes Time

Elliot Regenstein
Foresight Law + Policy
CEELO Roundtable Meeting
June 7, 2018



A River's Course Can Be Reversed

More than a century ago, the Chicago River flowed into Lake Michigan – which ended up polluting the City's water source.



Engineers reversed the flow of the river in 1900, which since then has flowed out of Lake Michigan. That led to dramatic improvements in water quality, even if it has not always guaranteed clean water ...

Overview

- ⌘ Understanding the Power of the River
- ⌘ The Importance of Reversing the Flow
- ⌘ The Sources of a New Flow: The Early Learning Council and P-20 Council
- ⌘ Setting a New Course: The P-2 Indicator Process
- ⌘ Navigating the Rapids from Here

Understanding the Power of the River

- ⌘ Since 2012, focused on the disconnect between early learning accountability and K-12 accountability
 - *A Framework for Rethinking State Education Accountability and Support from Birth through High School (2014)*
 - *Changing the Metrics of Turnaround to Encourage Early Learning Strategies (2014)*
 - *Valuing the Early Years in State Accountability Systems Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (2016)*
 - *Uses and Misuses of Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (2017)*
- ⌘ Accountability's focus on improvement in test scores puts a permanent short-term focus on the tested years
 - School Improvement Grants reinforce this problem

Understanding the Power of the River

- ⌘ A central problem: Accountability's focus on improvement in test scores puts a permanent short-term focus on the tested years
 - School Improvement Grants reinforce this problem
 - Even worse in low-income, high-mobility communities
- ⌘ For local school officials, heading downstream in this environment means ignoring early learning
 - Some have swum upstream anyway!
 - Other local officials have stepped in
 - But many of them do what we tell them
- ⌘ Bottom line: Under NCLB there was a significant disconnect on early learning policy between (1) the long-term health of the education system and (2) the direction set by the federally-mandated accountability system

The Importance of Reversing the Flow

- ⌘ Simply put, it is not realistic to achieve any kind of dramatic scaled improvement without an early learning/early grades strategy
- ⌘ Recent data from Stanford researcher Sean Reardon shows that a district that can produce 11 years of growth in 10 years will be among the highest performers in the nation
- ⌘ What that means: In all but a handful of districts, if a cohort finishes second grade more than a year behind *it's already too late*
- ⌘ We know that in many places, children enter *preschool* more than a year behind – and preschools and schools aren't set up to catch them up at scale
- ⌘ Given how many children still aren't getting any education before kindergarten, *this is the single greatest opportunity to dramatically improve long-term outcomes*

The Sources of a New Flow: The Early Learning Council and P-20 Council

- ⌘ When Illinois began working on ESSA implementation plan, the Early Learning Council formed a workgroup to develop recommendations.
- ⌘ The workgroup's recommendations included:
 - Developing a P-2 indicator to ensure that the accountability system places weight on the early grades
 - Including more information about the early years on school report cards
 - A focus on the early years in the school improvement process – including better data collection about how kids are doing before third grade

The Sources of a New Flow: The Early Learning Council and P-20 Council

- ⌘ The Early Learning Council workgroup proposed some key rationales and principles for the P-2 indicator:
- Real accountability for K-2 should strengthen the connection to early learning
 - The measures used for K-2 accountability must be clear, fair, and developmentally appropriate
 - Those measures should not include assessment results – that’s not what the assessments are designed for, and it could narrow the curriculum
 - Some indicators for the entire K-12 system, like chronic absenteeism, could be disaggregated and overweighted in K-2
 - The measures used should not be proxies for poverty, and schools should have a path to improvement on those indicators

The Sources of a New Flow: The Early Learning Council and P-20 Council

- ⌘ Given the state's timeline, the Early Learning Council recommended forming a work group to study the issue in more depth after the April 2017 submission of the state's plan.
- ⌘ The Early Learning Council Executive Committee and P-20 Council both adopted this recommendation.
- ⌘ The State Board proposed a P-2 indicator to account for 5% of a school's overall score, and created a work group to determine the elements of that indicator.
 - The work group included a broad cross section of stakeholders.
 - The Regional Education Lab provided staff support, and the group had an activist chair.

Setting a New Course: The P-2 Indicator Process

- ⌘ The group started by articulating some key principles (jointly with other analogous work groups):
- The accountability system defines a successful school
 - No accountability system should drive bad educational practice
 - Social-emotional development is critically important, but it may not be possible to measure it in an accountability system
 - Data collection is a burden
 - We are in uncharted territory, and we are humble about doing the best we can with the information we have – knowing that it will need to be revisited

Setting a New Course: The P-2 Indicator Process

⌘ The group also articulated principles unique to K-2:

- The accountability system should support a focus on K-2 as a critical part of the education continuum
- K-2 accountability should be a thoughtful bridge between 3-8 accountability and early childhood accountability
- Third grade tests represent the culmination of growth in prior years, and the system should create the right incentives for third-grade scores

Setting a New Course: The P-2 Indicator Process

- ⌘ The group then identified 17 critical values in P-2 education – with the belief that whatever metrics we chose should reflect those values to the extent possible.
- ⌘ The group did an initial sweep of the critical values, and eliminated 11 values that we thought were important but that we did not think were appropriate for inclusion in an accountability system or did not comply with ESSA requirements.
 - This was based in part on prior conversations during the state’s ESSA plan development process.
 - All 17 are identified in our report. In many cases we recommend some other approach to reflecting that value, like inclusion in the school improvement process or on data dashboards.

Setting a New Course: The P-2 Indicator Process

- ⌘ We identified six areas that we thought were worthy of deeper study, and sought help from CCSSO to better understand those issues.
- ⌘ CCSSO and Bellwether prepared memos analyzing the six issues, including in-depth explanations of what metrics might be available that complied with ESSA requirements.
- ⌘ The group then had in-depth discussions about each of those six potential indicators.

Setting a New Course: The P-2 Indicator Process

- ⌘ After robust conversation, we agreed to the following recommendation:
 - Providing required services to Dual Language Learners would count for 3% in schools with a sufficient n size of dual language learners.
 - K-2 chronic absenteeism would count for 2% in schools with a sufficient n size of dual language learners, and 5% in all other schools.
 - Kindergarten was included even though it sits outside Illinois' compulsory school age.
 - Access to enrichment and acceleration would be included as a “zero-weight” indicator.
- ⌘ The final report included a dissent, and supplemental materials from advocates.
- ⌘ Our report was issued December 31, 2017.

Setting a New Course: The P-2 Indicator Process

- ⌘ Our report was presented to the Illinois State Board of Education in January.
- ⌘ In March, ISBE staff proposed a different allocation in advance of the Board meeting:
 - Providing required services to Dual Language Learners would count for 1.5%.
 - K-2 chronic absenteeism would count for 1.5%.
 - Third grade reading would count for 2%. Student grades would be used for this measure.
- ⌘ Consideration of the proposal was tabled until April due to concerns raised by numerous groups about the use of grades in the P-2 indicator and another proposed indicator.
 - The Illinois Balanced Accountability Measures Committee officially went on record opposing the use of grades.

Setting a New Course: The P-2 Indicator Process

- ⌘ In April, ISBE staff added a new provision to the recommendation: implementation of the P-2 indicator would be delayed for three years to validate the indicator.
- ⌘ The State Board adopted this recommendation at its April Board meeting.

Navigating the Rapids from Here

⌘ Pending recommendation:

- Treat elements of P-2 indicator as independent and validate them accordingly
- Bring each element on-line as it is validated
- Validate them as quickly as possible

⌘ Concerns about the approach to validation

⌘ Going back to the Early Learning Council, P-20 Council (Data, Assessment, and Accountability Committee), and the State Board

⌘ What we've already accomplished: understanding the direction the river needs to go

⌘ What will 2019 hold?

⌘ This is a long process – even if it is adopted, what impact will it have? How can it be adjusted over time?

State Sparks Share

Renee DeMars-Johnson—Website on Data Reporting
Judy Walker—KRA Data

