

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ALL

ADULTS WORKING TOGETHER TO ENSURE ILLINOIS' KIDS COME FIRST

We are at a pivotal time in our nation and our state's history. Across the country we are seeing communities, politicians, educators and parents rise up in passionate defense of what they believe to be the best way to reform our education system.

There is a path forward where everyone can come together to find real solutions to improve education in Illinois. Developed by educators, Accountability for All is a comprehensive set of education reform proposals that tackles what needs fixing to ensure our kids come first, everyone is held accountable and the best teachers stay in our classrooms.

Accountability for All's key proposals are detailed below:

1 GRANT TENURE FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE

Without tenure, teachers would not have the right to due process and the freedom to speak openly about what their students really need without fear of negative consequences from school administrators.

We agree, though, that tenure should be obtained through a process that ensures teacher evaluations play a more significant role. Currently, Illinois awards tenure based on four consecutive school terms of service. We are proposing that positive evaluations, received under the Performance Evaluation and Reform Act (PERA) passed in 2010, be required for determining tenure for teachers. In our proposal, a teacher must have received overall annual positive evaluations in three school terms, including the most recent school term, in order to obtain tenure

2 REDUCE TIME IT TAKES TO REMOVE UNDERPERFORMING TEACHERS

The amount of time it takes for underperforming teachers to be dismissed is too long and can negatively impact a child's education and progress. That's why we propose significantly streamlining the dismissal process to no more than 120 days.

The process - run through an objective, independent third party - will ensure fairness and due process for teachers while resolving the dismissal faster and forcing the parties to more realistically assess and present their cases. These efficiencies will significantly cut costs as well.

3 CONSIDER PERFORMANCE AND EXPERIENCE WHEN DECIDING LAYOFFS

During these tough economic times layoffs are a fact of life. To keep the best teachers teaching, our proposal assures that students will continue to receive teachers who have the necessary qualifications and certifications, while preventing how much a teacher makes in salary and benefits from being a factor in lay-off decisions.

Experience in the classroom absolutely matters. Experienced teachers know what works and what does not when it comes to helping children reach their greatest potential.

We agree that experience and performance must both be taken into account. It is imperative that we do everything we can to keep our highest performing teachers in the classroom. That's why we are proposing that performance evaluations play a role in determining which teachers will be laid off during a financial crisis in a district.

To be clear, there is a lot of political rhetoric out there about the issue of seniority or experience. According to an independent analysis of seniority-based layoffs, "the case against seniority is misleading and overstated ... using simplistic, misleading arguments to stir up outrage is counterproductive, and it risks pressuring states and districts into hasty, ill-considered policy decisions." - A Quality-Based Look at Seniority-Based Layoffs by Matthew De Carlo, Shanker Institute.

4 IMPROVE TEACHER AND SCHOOL BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Accountability for All requires innovative training and mentoring programs for teachers and school administrators, so they can provide an educational environment that puts Illinois' kids first. Students' individual needs are diverse and constantly evolving. Our students should look forward to coming to school every day because their teachers are challenging them in new ways. Everyone needs to be held accountable for our kids' educational progress. That's why Accountability for All proposes all school board members in Illinois, for the first time ever, be required to participate in training that will improve their performance in their elected roles and better serve the needs of their districts.

In addition to teacher and school board development, Accountability for All includes a proposal that ensures district level administrators are evaluated according to the same standards adopted through the Performance Evaluation Reform Act.



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5 GIVE KIDS A VOICE THROUGH A "STUDENT BILL OF RIGHTS"

To ensure Illinois kids' needs come first, they must also have a voice at the table. That's why we are proposing a "Student Bill of Rights." This document - drafted by parents, teachers and educators - serves as a contract with our kids that will put the qualified teachers kids deserve in their classrooms from the first day of every school year.

6 CREATE AN ONLINE BEST PRACTICE CLEARINGHOUSE

Currently the State Board of Education identifies high-performing schools based on a number of criteria. We are proposing an online clearinghouse of information that would take this one step further by identifying the best practices of campuses and school districts regarding instruction, public school finance, resource allocation and business practices. This proposal would help distribute specific, actionable information about successful practices across the state and provide much needed information to Illinois' 869 school districts.

*The best guarantee of a child's continued success in the classroom is that all adults involved are held accountable for student development and teacher performance, including parents, educators, administrators and district leaders. **For more information on Accountability for All, please visit www.illinoiskidsfirst.com.***

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