# Sample School

**Sample District**

**Needs Assessment Site Visit Report**

July 2025

Contents

[About the Needs Assessment Process 3](#_Toc181598672)

[How to Use This Report 5](#_Toc181598673)

[NEEDS ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK 7](#_Toc181598674)

## About the Needs Assessment Process

The Illinois needs assessment process is a partnership between the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®), a not-for-proﬁt research organization. The needs assessment is designed to provide formative feedback regarding a school’s strengths and opportunities for growth in four key school improvement areas, with the purpose of supporting schools in designing school improvement plans.

Research regarding schools that have successfully achieved dramatic academic and nonacademic improvements has identiﬁed four key school improvement areas that contribute to rapid improvements in student outcomes.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREAS

|  |
| --- |
| 1. LEADERSHIP AND VISION |
| A circle with blue and green outline with people in the middle  Description automatically generated2. CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT |
| 3. CULTURE AND CLIMATE |
| 4. TARGETED INSTRUCTION AND SUPPORT |

The Illinois needs assessments conducted by AIR use data from multiple sources—including a principal interview and leadership survey, an instructional staﬀ survey, teacher focus groups, student focus groups (for intensive schools only) and instructional observations—to identify strengths and areas for growth according to multiple indicators within the four school improvement practice areas. Ratings from classroom observations are based on the nationally normed Classroom Assessment Scoring System developed by Teachstone®. In the needs assessment summary report, ratings in each school improvement area provide formative feedback to the school. When used in tandem with the continuum that guides the Illinois needs assessment process, this report will help school teams assess areas of strength and areas for improvement to inform continuous school improvement eﬀorts.

ILLINOIS SCHOOL NEEDS ASSESSMENT CONTINUUM

Based on information gathered from the site visit, schools are rated for each indicator on a 4-point implementation continuum: initial, emerging, established, or robust (see table 1 for deﬁnitions of the ratings). The process for assigning the ratings is as follows: (1) code data and analyze implementation for each indicator; (2) for relevant indicators, consider qualitative and quantitative data, as well as a review of relevant documents; and (3) assign ratings for each indicator.

Table 1. IL School Needs Assessment Continuum Ratings

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Initial | Emerging | Established | Robust |
| Evidence suggests that necessary organizational practices, structures, or processes are nonexistent or are not yet fully eﬀective. | Evidence suggests that few necessary organizational practices, structures or processes are in place, that these are only in initial stages of development, or concentrated in a small segment of the school, such as the leadership team. | Evidence suggests that some necessary organizational practices, structures, or processes are in place and are implemented eﬀectively. However, key systems are not yet implemented schoolwide for all relevant teachers and students. | Evidence suggests that necessary organizational practices, structures, or processes are in place and are implemented eﬀectively for all or nearly all relevant teachers and students. |

## How to Use This Report

This report begins with a broad school overview, including key demographic information, methods used to conduct the needs assessment, as well as a summary of strengths and areas for growth. Following is an overview of the school’s ratings for each indicator. Finally, the body of the report includes a presentation of each indicator, the school’s rating for that indicator, and all of the data that contributed to each indicator for the report.1

Within each indicator, the report includes the school’s rating, language from the Illinois Needs Assessment Continuum, a summary of the rationale for the rating, and a presentation of speciﬁc data that contributed to that indicator. This often includes data from existing sources such as the University of Chicago 5Essentials Survey. In addition, each section presents data collected by AIR from the school for this report.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Sample School is part of the Sample District. During the 2023–24 school year, the school had approximately 51 teaching staﬀ and 741 students in Grades K - 8; 18.4% of students are students with disabilities, 93.5% are considered economically disadvantaged.2 In the 2023–24 school year, Sample School was designated as a school in need of comprehensive support.

Grounded in the four improvement areas, the summary below highlights strengths and areas for improvement in school structures and systems.

SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS

* Sample has multiple structures that support positive interpersonal relationships between teachers and students and between staff members (e.g., advisories, SEL curriculum, spirit week). These positive relationships provide an environment that is conducive to learning for all students, as evidenced by the school's clear and consistently enforced behavioral expectations.
* Sample has established strong relationships with community organizations that provide students and families with programming and resources that caters to the unique needs of the diverse community. Teachers have the ability to proactively assess students' needs and refer students and families to services that are best suited to meet their needs.
* Sample prioritizes social-emotional learning strategies using the “7 Mindsets” program and curriculum. Lessons occur daily, helping teachers to support students’ social-emotional wellbeing and develop positive relationships with their peers and teachers. Teachers have access to additional social-emotional supports throughout the day (e.g., through Buddy rooms).
* Teachers at Sample have many opportunities to participate in teams that oversee various efforts within the school (e.g., Advancement Via Individual Differentiation, attendance, social-emotional learning, and the Universal Leadership Team). In addition to providing staff with leadership opportunities, teams support implementation and monitoring of school improvement initiatives.
* NA
* NA

1In the production of this report, AIR researchers employed AI technology to assist in data processing that increased efficiencies for research team members in the analysis and writing of the comprehensive needs assessment summary report. All reports have undergone rigorous quality assurance reviews by AIR data experts.

2Based on 2023-2024 school year data reported on the Illinois Report Card of the ISBE website ([https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.illinoisreportcard.com%2F&data=05%7C02%7Ccheckman%40air.org%7C3fd2e96152fe49db2b4f08dd5206f30f%7C9ea45dbc7b724abfa77cc770a0a8b962%7C0%7C0%7C638756911975562390%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=eJGDumG8bQVfNG%2FZFRWKrWanWSJkwu0qV7uCB09cFhM%3D&reserved=0)).

AREAS FOR GROWTH

* Sample uses data to address disparities in attendance and discipline, and these efforts have improved student outcomes. However, while Sample tracks and reviews data for historically marginalized groups, actions taken in response to these data reviews may be infrequent or limited.
* The school supports teachers' professional growth through regular observations, feedback, and monthly professional development (PD) opportunities. However, PD is primarily district-directed and does not consistently address current instructional needs, as staff have few opportunities to provide input regarding the content. Teachers also lack the support they received from an instructional in coach in prior years.
* Although Sample teachers are provided with twice-weekly PLC sessions, opportunities for collaboration can be limited, as other agenda items often take precedence. Some teachers meet informally outside of PLC time to plan for instruction, given the limited opportunities for collaborative planning.
* Sample communicates to families in multiple languages utilizing dual language staff and written communications in families’ home languages. While the school has successfully engaged diverse families in social activities and events, it currently struggles to engage families in academic activities.
* NA

Data collected from the school for this report included the following:

* **Principal interview and leadership survey**, which asked the school principal for feedback on all indicators. Sample School conducted 2 principal interviews and included 2 survey responses.
* **Staff survey**, which asked all instructional staff for feedback on indicators. Sample School had 25 survey respondents.
* **Classroom observations** using the CLASS protocol, with scores based on the nationally normed Classroom Assessment Scoring System developed by Teachstone® and the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) at the University of Virginia. CLASS uses distinct tools for Grades K-3, upper elementary, and secondary levels. When conducting a visit to a classroom, the observer rates each dimension on a scale of 1 to 7.
* **The University of Chicago's 5Essentials Survey** According to the 2024 Illinois Report Card data, Sample School had a student response rate of NA% and a teacher response rate of NA% to the survey. (for more information, see their website <https://uchicagoimpact.org/our-offerings/5essentials>) and Illinois Report Card data (for more information, see their website <https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/>
* **Teacher focus group**, or an in-person discussion with a sample of instructional staff on the focus indicators for each school.

**Illinois Equity Journey Continuum**

The data in this needs assessment report will also provide deeper insights and school-level data related to the Equity Journey Continuum (EJC). The EJC analyzes quantitative data that is already collected and reported by districts in three areas that are aligned to the ISBE Strategic Plan: Student Learning, Learning Conditions, and Elevating Educators. The EJC is an informational tool for districts to track their progress toward closing gaps in student achievement, opportunities, and supports. Through the lens of equity, the tool analyzes a continuum of district-level data points to make that data more useful for improving outcomes for all students. Your district's EJC information is publicly available in the [Illinois District Report Card](https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/). ISBE defines the three EJC concepts as follows:

* **Student Learning:** Every child will make significant academic gains each year, increasing their knowledge, skills, and opportunities so they graduate equipped to pursue a successful future, with the state paying special attention to addressing historic inequities.
* **Learning Conditions:** All districts and schools will receive the resources necessary to create safe, healthy, and welcoming learning environments, and will be equipped to meet the unique academic and social and emotional needs of each and every student.
* **Elevating Educators:** Illinois’ diverse student population will have educators who are prepared through multiple pathways and are supported in and recognized for their efforts to provide each and every child an education that meets their needs.

Combined, the Needs Assessment and EJC can assist districts, schools, and their communities to make informed decisions about their district's equity strengths, opportunities for growth, access, and supports, and help prioritize equity efforts and resources to ensure students from all backgrounds can achieve high standards.

## Needs Assessment Feedback

RATINGS OVERVIEW

Ratings for each indicator across the four school improvement areas for Sample School are included in Table 2. More details about the ﬁndings for the indicators follow.

Table 2. Ratings for Needs Assessment Indicators

