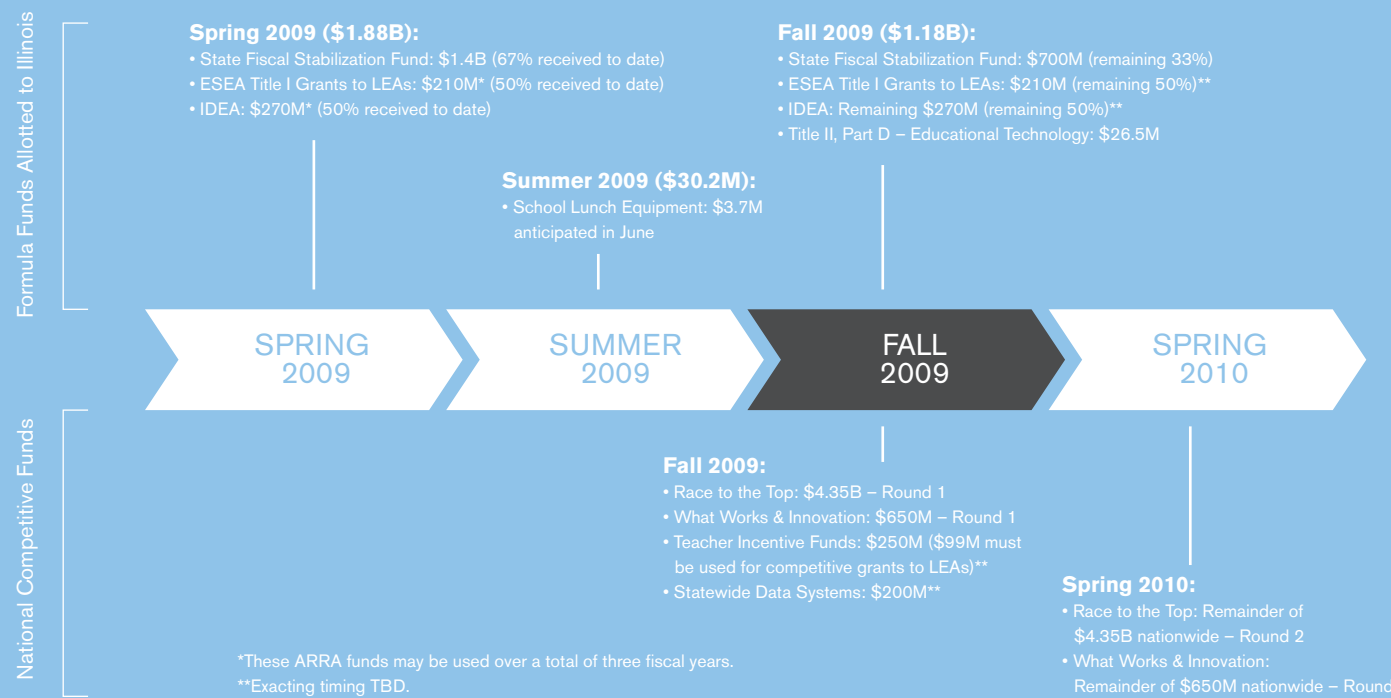


## Illinois is Ready

For nearly a year, Advance Illinois has traveled the state to learn what Illinoisans want from their schools. We listened to parents, students, educators, neighborhood activists, civic leaders and elected officials. The common denominator? We all want to see Illinois schools try new and different ways to challenge students to compete in the 21st century.

### Availability and Distribution of ARRA Funds for Illinois



“Business as usual, to be clear, would basically eliminate Illinois from competition. But we’re not looking just at past track record. We’re looking at folks who are really willing to challenge the status quo. Illinois has a chance to either stay at a very mediocre level or fundamentally break through and start to reward excellence and create innovation and incent innovation.”

— U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan

To learn more about the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, please visit Advance Illinois at [www.advanceillinois.org](http://www.advanceillinois.org) or Learning Point Associates at [www.learningpt.org](http://www.learningpt.org)

1. Illinois State Board of Education. April 20, 2009. <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/news/2009/april20.pdf>

2. More detail on these four areas of reform—and the metrics the US Department of Education intends states to use to report progress against these areas—is available at [www.advanceillinois.org](http://www.advanceillinois.org).

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## The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: Doing Better For All Students

“What is required is not simply new investments, but new reforms. It’s time to expect more from our students. It’s time to start rewarding good teachers; stop making excuses for bad ones. It’s time to demand results from government at every level. It’s time to prepare every child, everywhere in America, to out-compete any worker, anywhere in the world.”

— President Barack Obama

EVERY STUDENT WORLD READY

## NEW RESOURCES FOR ILLINOIS

President Barack Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan have a message for Illinois: It's time to do better for all students.

The Obama administration is backing up this message with unprecedented levels of federal funding to help improve schooling. Nationwide, this is the largest federal investment in public education ever. For Illinois, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) could provide more than \$3 billion in new dollars to improve public schools. Illinois has an historic and potentially groundbreaking opportunity to use this one-time federal money to implement high-impact reforms.

While restoring state and local education funding and preserving teaching jobs is important, Illinois must use the one-time resources wisely—to invest in the future. The goal: Upgrade policies and create lasting tools that will enable all young people to graduate from high school ready for the world.

### Support for Schools: State Fiscal Stabilization Funding

Illinois received the first **\$1.4 billion** of **state fiscal stabilization funding** in April, 2009, which is the first installment of a total **\$2.1 billion** in **state fiscal stabilization funding** over the next two years. Stabilization funding will help state agencies and local school districts minimize and avoid reductions in education funding and services.

To be eligible for the remaining \$700 million in stabilization funding, due in fall 2009, state and local data should show how both stabilization funding and other dollars have (1) promoted progress on state “assurances” (see sidebar) and (2) been used to prevent cuts in education funding and jobs.

On top of stabilization funding, Illinois schools and districts will receive an additional **\$1 billion** in Recovery Act funding for federal entitlement programs that serve low-income and special education students, such as Title I. These funds are being distributed based on the existing federal formulas for these programs and amount to \$1,200 of new funding per low-income student.<sup>1</sup>

#### Four Assurances for Success:

The state stabilization funds are awarded in exchange for a state's commitment (“assurances”) to advance essential education reforms in four areas demonstrated to improve student learning.

- College- and career-ready standards and assessments
- Longitudinal data systems, tracking achievement from pre-K through higher education
- Teacher effectiveness and equitable distribution of effective teachers to needy students
- Intensive support and effective interventions for the lowest-performing schools<sup>2</sup>

### Leveraging Even More Resources: Race to the Top

As a state, Illinois is eligible to compete for the \$4.35 billion in Race to the Top funds if the state can report significant progress toward meeting the four assurances.

*Illinois school districts and their nonprofit partners* that have made significant gains in closing achievement gaps will be able to compete for funds from a \$650 million “What Works and Innovation” competitive grant.

More than \$500 million also is available through competitive grants to implement pre-K–20 Longitudinal Data Systems and to try new approaches to modernizing teacher preparation and compensation through the Teacher Incentive Fund and Teacher Quality Enhancement grants.

## INNOVATING AND INVESTING FOR SUCCESS

Simply using the one-time federal dollars to restore funding cuts will be an opportunity lost. Illinois has an historic opportunity to use the Recovery Act funding to fundamentally redesign the way we educate all of our young people—and especially those who attend schools with low standards and who stand to gain most from a quality education. We can use these resources to introduce bold new ideas and to expand proven practices, giving state and district leaders the flexibility they need to apply innovative solutions to some of their most pressing education challenges.

### Four Big Ideas to Invest In Our Future

#### **BIG IDEA ONE: Illinois needs a coherent and comprehensive plan to leverage stimulus dollars.**

The plan must be visionary—pushing our collective thinking well beyond the status quo. It should build on the four reform assurances—college- and career-ready expectations for all, robust and user-friendly data systems, placing effective teachers with the neediest students and turning around our lowest-performing schools—and take these ideas to the next level.

#### **BIG IDEA TWO: If we want to succeed, Illinois must change some foundational education policies to set the table for reform.**

As Secretary Duncan told the Chicago Tribune in April, Illinois is not in the upper tier of states able to compete successfully for Race to the Top or other competitive stimulus funds. Just as the General Assembly acted in spring 2009 to build a longitudinal data system, expand charter schools across Illinois and address the state's lowest-performing schools, state policymakers must continue to tackle some of our greatest challenges. For example:

- We could get serious about helping struggling schools by making it easier for their principals to build the right team of teachers by exempting low-performing schools from seniority hiring rights.
- We can agree as a state on what it means to be “college- and career-ready,” adopting a definition that can help guide counseling and coursetaking in high school and improve students' chances of success after high school.

#### **BIG IDEA THREE: Illinois should reconsider the way we recruit, train, induct, assign and compensate effective teachers and principals in Illinois.**

Students can only reach as high as they are supported to go. The core of a great education is talented teachers and empowered school principals. Yet our current system for teacher development is broken. The state needs to overhaul

its approaches—starting first by defining what it means to be an effective teacher or principal and creating better guidelines for evaluating teachers and principals, and then, by giving school districts more latitude to attract and retain outstanding educators.

#### **BIG IDEA FOUR: Illinois should launch an Innovation Fund to empower teachers, principals, superintendents and community leaders to introduce bold new ideas and to expand proven practices.**

Districts and schools must be given the support, resources and flexibility to innovate and address the biggest challenges they face. We are not suggesting wanton experimentation; innovation should be grounded in evidence. Participation in the Fund should be voluntary, but require a commitment to accountability, transparency, innovation and results. The state needs to overhaul its approaches—starting first by defining what it means to be an effective teacher or principal, including the ability to promote student achievement. And it should give school districts more latitude to attract and retain outstanding educators.

### A Caution: Investing Responsibly to Get Results

This unprecedented level of federal investment provides an historic opportunity to change the way we do education. Or, schools, districts and the state of Illinois could squander the opportunity by merely plugging budget holes, making unsustainable ongoing commitments with the one-time funds or spending without regard to alignment with improvement priorities. Though it's important to spend the money quickly to stimulate the economy and prevent job losses, we must as a state balance speed with careful planning and effective reforms. We must invest prudently to improve teaching and learning. All of Illinois—and the nation—will be watching.

*If Illinois has the courage to embrace these big ideas, we can not only do better—we can achieve excellence.*