



Position: Policy Associate

Organization Overview

Advance Illinois is a statewide education advocacy organization dedicated to policy research, mobilization and grassroots support for policy change that will have a dramatic impact on closing the achievement gap in Illinois. Its mission is to serve as an independent, objective voice promoting policies to create a world-class education system in Illinois that prepares all students to be college and work ready.

Led by a high-powered Board of Directors who are business, civic, education and grassroots leaders from communities across Illinois, Advance Illinois aims to help transform the Illinois education policy landscape to create better policies and supports that enable all Illinois students to excel. Advance Illinois' main office is located in Chicago, with a satellite office in Springfield.

Illinois Student Achievement

Illinois is a cultural and economic leader among states and even nations. Illinois' student population of 2.2 million performs near average on most student achievement dimensions including the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), ACT, and Advanced Placement exams. Illinois graduation rates are slightly above the national average.

On the surface, it appears that Illinois' education system will prepare students to maintain this level of achievement. However, disaggregated data shows many challenges facing Illinois. For example, current data shows that only an estimated 20 percent of Illinois ninth graders will eventually graduate from college. Students perform disproportionately higher on Illinois state achievement exams than on NAEP, indicating that Illinois standards may not be rigorous enough to ensure success. These problems are exacerbated by inequitable funding across Illinois' 870 school districts caused by a heavy reliance on local property taxes. Finally, Illinois' racial and socio-economic achievement gap is among the worst in the nation.

In the broader world context, Illinois is an average state in a below-average nation. Today, the United States ranks in the lower fifty percent of developed countries in reading, mathematics, and science in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Data shows U.S. students are less likely to graduate in high demand technical fields and to qualify for today's high demand jobs. These challenges are increasingly apparent to Illinois' corporate leaders, who are finding it more difficult to hire Illinois students that possess the skills needed to compete for jobs in today's economy. Our students' long-term success depends on their ability to compete with peers across the globe.



Position Summary

Advance Illinois seeks an outstanding Policy Associate to work on issues related to state education policy. The ideal candidate will have strong analytical, research, writing and communication skills, and the proven ability to support multiple projects. The candidate will have demonstrated experience working with state policymakers in a variety of settings.

The Policy Associate will report to the Director of Policy and will support the policy needs of Outreach, Communications, and Government Relations. They should be comfortable working in a small team environment and partnering with staff members with varying experience and levels.

Additionally candidates must have:

Master's Degree plus relevant substantive knowledge and experience in state education reform.

The ideal candidate also will possess:

- Relevant work experience and substantive knowledge of state education policy and education research;
- Strong knowledge of government policy, programs, and cross-system strategies at the state and national levels to support children and youth
- Excellent communications skills – writing, speaking, listening, advising
- Excellent research and analytic skills, including the ability to quickly synthesize large amounts of information
- Demonstrated ability to take independent action and assume responsibility
- Ability to identify and track key issues of concern to governors and develop promising initiatives to address these concerns
- Interpersonal skills necessary to work effectively with a variety of colleagues
- Demonstrated ability to coordinate project activities
- Proficiency in using software such as Microsoft Word, Excel, and Power Point, including demonstrated ability to design the layout of document text, tables, and graphs

Responsibilities:

- Provides information and technical assistance to Staff and other external policymakers. Occasionally provides policy analysis to committees, task forces, work groups that Advance Illinois participates in.
- Contributes to project strategy to deliver relevant and timely expertise to Advance Illinois staff.
- Manage the collection, analysis and dissemination of information necessary for successful project completion and to inform technical assistance to partners, the state, and districts.
- Organizes, participates in, and conducts workshops, conferences, and seminars. Create presentations and develop talking points, support state strategy sessions, and other meetings.



- Writes issue briefs, articles and memoranda on policy issues and best practices for Advance Illinois staff.
- Updates and maintains relevant websites and electronic portals related to issue areas.

Compensation

Competitive and commensurate with background and experience

Location

Chicago, Illinois

Application Procedures

The review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until the position is filled. For best consideration, applications should be submitted *electronically*. Applications should include a letter of interest and a current resume. **Nominations** for the position, **applications**, or **inquiries** about the position and/or the search process should be directed to the Benjamin Boer (bboer@advanceillinois.org).