

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

## STOP ILLINOIS BRAIN DRAIN

a report by Stand for Children Illinois

Illinois has a bad case of brain drain – the second worst in the nation.

More Illinois high school graduates go to out-of-state colleges than students from any other state except New Jersey. As they leave Illinois, so do their well-educated minds and buying power. And what about those who stay in the Prairie State but whose potential we have failed to tap because we did not provide adequate guidance, training, or resources?

Those precious years of high school, and the opportunities that Illinois must seize upon, are the subject of **“STOP ILLINOIS BRAIN DRAIN: Building Pathways to Prosperity for High School Students,”** a new report by Stand for Children Illinois.

The facts are stark:

- More than one-third of Illinois high schools do not offer Calculus, a course that students considering careers in engineering and other advanced STEM fields should be able to access.
- Statewide, Illinois has a counselor-to-student ratio of 1:664 – the sixth worst in the country and a far cry from the recommended ratio of one counselor for every 250 students.
- Manufacturing, energy, and health sciences represent about half of the jobs in Illinois, yet only 12% of career and technical education students enroll in classes in these sectors.

Illinois needs to break down the silos between its high schools on one hand, and colleges, career centers, and workplace experiences, on the other. From the moment students enter high school, their schools should be setting them up well for their next phase of life, not just their next class. Students should be immersed in career possibilities and supported to understand how to achieve their career goals.

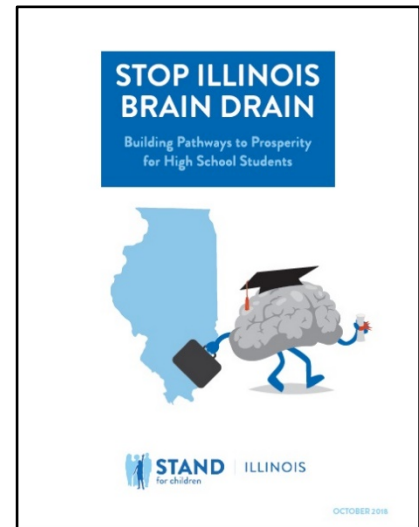
The report points to a number of structural improvements in place in the state that can be leveraged to reduce brain drain. These recommendations incentivize the replication of promising models of success, and each enhances one another. The state must ensure that high school students in every corner of the state have access to enriching pathways that lead to prosperity. The implications are enduring and state-wide.

These recommendations fall into four categories:

1. Open More Doors to Individualized Coursework
2. Provide Practical Workplace Experiences
3. Modernize the Approach for Supporting Students
4. Adequately Fund Education and Spend Wisely

Recommendations include:

- Addressing the shortage of high school counselors and the demands on their time which compete with their core duties, as well as adding College and Career Coordinator positions.
- Providing low-income students in rural and urban areas with more robust competency-based learning programs, dual-credit courses, and Advanced Placement opportunities.



For more information, contact Jessica Handy,  
Government Affairs Director, [jhandy@stand.org](mailto:jhandy@stand.org)