Chicago Teachers Union
ISLE/inBloom Fact Sheet

1. What is ISLE?

ISLE stands for the Illinois Shared Learning Environment. ISLE is a joint effort of ISBE and Illinois DCEO (Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity) to create a statewide student data management system and teacher-, student-, and parent-facing web portal. ISLE comes out of work on Illinois' P-20 Longitudinal Data System that was part of the initial Race to the Top application in 2009 or 2010. Conceptually, ISLE will be very similar to CPS's IMPACT system, allowing teachers to have online student record access, gradebook software, attendance, etc., with the ability to expand data collection and access to workforce planning. The official ISLE website, including all the lofty mission statement language, can be found here: http://ilsharedlearning.org/Pages/default.aspx

2. Who is involved in ISLE?

ISLE involvement can be split into two overlapping groups. The first group is the technology infrastructure development partners. Bloomington District 87 and Normal Unit 5 are the primary school districts, as their pilot systems were designed and developed with significant resources from State Farm Insurance (the largest employer in Bloomington-Normal), and they form the blueprint for the statewide rollout. The SIU-Carbondale Center for Workforce Development, the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the U of I Urbana, and the Illinois Interactive Report Card crew at Northern Illinois University are developing much of the content templates and website layout. The second group is the advisory committee, which consists of representatives from a range of groups. Representatives from each of the tech partners are included, as are reps from CTU (Kurt Hilgendorf), IFT (Amy Alsop), IEA, CPS, Urbana District 116, Advance Illinois and a few others. The ISBE point person is Brandon Williams, a Broad Foundation resident formerly of Motorola. Jason Tyszko is the DCEO point person. The Civic Consulting Alliance (CCA, the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago's consulting arm) is providing "pro bono" support in its first statewide consulting effort. CCA was also involved in the search for Todd Babbitz and provided support for the school closing hearings.

3. Who is inBloom and what is their involvement in ISLE?

inBloom is a technically non-profit organization that is spearheading a national effort to develop and link student data collection and analysis from nine states across the country: Illinois, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, and North Carolina. inBloom will host the data shared with ISLE. inBloom has received significant funding from the Gates Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York ($100 million), and they hired Rupert Murdoch's Wireless Generation to develop significant tech infrastructure. There are two main payoffs for inBloom. First is the creation of an online marketplace for selling various education applications to school districts. Second is the proliferation of "personalized learning", a concept in which data-mining and computer-based learning is theoretically used to individualize instruction for every student in a district. As such, inBloom furthers Gates' education privatization and de-skilling agenda.

4. What concerns do parents have about inBloom?

Parents in New York have challenged inBloom's data privacy protection. inBloom contends that its privacy policies are robust and that they will only have what districts choose to share. Brandon Williams at ISBE has been especially sensitive about this issue, regularly attempting to trivialize it by pointing out that concerns are mainly voiced in the "blogosphere", but parents in every state except Illinois have been protesting the sharing of student data with inBloom. Several of the pilot states have been hesitant to sign up and have resisted the project, citing security concerns. A more detailed explanation can be found here:
http://nycpublicschoolparents.blogspot.com/2013/05/more-states-fall-away-from-inbloom.html

5. How will ISLE proceed in Illinois?

Josiah Groff at DBB researched the legality of inBloom and concluded two things: 1). it's likely legal under existing Illinois law, and 2.) a lawsuit would likely fail barring changes in implementation or further information. As such, challenges to ISLE will likely happen in the policy arena. One major open question is how ISLE will be governed, and it is in this area that we may have significant influence.