

Illinois SCHOOL BOARD *Newsbulletin*

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Teachers retirement system sets more ambitious investment strategy

Some pension experts look askance at plan

Crain's Chicago Business recently reported that The Illinois Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) — which it called the worst-funded major pension plan in the U.S. — “is pumping more of its assets into higher-risk investments while using accounting methods that some pension experts say understate its funding shortfall.”

TRS plans to allocate about one-third of its \$37.8-billion portfolio into investments like hedge funds and private-equity funds, the publication reported on Dec. 19, 2011. “These unconventional assets typically dangle the potential for higher returns,

but only because they also carry greater risks and fees. TRS is shifting its portfolio while it's still developing an in-house risk-management system,” according to the Crain's business periodical.

But TRS Executive Director Richard Ingram disagreed with the characterization of the new funding allocation as “higher-risk,” calling the TRS investment strategy and assumptions reasonable “with a very manageable parameter of risk.”

Ingram, who took the helm at TRS early last year after guiding a similarly situated fund in New Hampshire, noted that the TRS fund averaged 9.9 percent annual returns over the past 30 years, justifying an 8.5 percent

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DISCOUNT RATE AFFECT ON TRS LIABILITIES

8.5% rate

\$81.3 billion*

8.0% rate

\$85.6 billion*

7.75% rate

\$87.9 billion*

5.22% rate

\$120.3 billion*

4.38% rate

\$136.3 billion*

* Current projected liabilities
 Source: Pew Center on the States

First report cards for every charter school campus belie rosy picture

The state of Illinois has released its first-ever report cards for Chicago's charter school campuses, compiling student test scores in the same format used for traditional public schools. Results show that more than 20 schools in some of the city's largest charter networks scored con-

Also see *charter commission*,
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siderably below district-wide averages on basic standardized tests.

In two of the charter networks, Perspectives and Aspira, only one school — Perspectives' IIT Math &

Science Academy — exceeded Chicago District 299's average on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test.

Four other charter school networks — Betty Shabazz, Perspectives, North Lawndale, and Chicago Inter-

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New teacher training

Illinois ranked third nationally for the number of teachers who achieved National Board Certification in 2011. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) released the findings on Dec. 16 during an event at the White House recognizing the new class of teachers who are certified. This is the sixth consecutive year that Illinois has ranked among the top 10 states for the number of new teachers achieving the profession's highest credential.

In 2011, 461 Illinois teachers achieved National Board Certification, and of that number, 141 work in Chicago District 299. Illinois ranks sixth in the nation for the number of NBCT's, with 5153.

Energy efficient schools

The ISBE announced Jan. 9 it has launched the first Illinois Green Ribbon Schools awards program, recognizing schools that promote sustainability and environmental education. Illinois joins 32 other states participating in a pilot federal program to commend the nation's most green and healthy schools. ISBE will accept applications from schools that have integrated best practices in energy, water and waste management, healthy school environments and environmental education. The state may advance four schools to the national competition. Applications are due to ISBE by Feb. 12, and nominations should reflect the program's three pillars: reduced environmental impact, improved health, and increased environmental literacy. Each state may submit up to four nominees from K-12 schools to federal officials. Applications for nominating Illinois schools can be found on the Illinois Green Ribbon Schools page at http://www.isbe.net/green_ribbon.

FRN congressional lobbying to seek adoption of board agenda

The National School Boards Association's 39th annual Federal Relations Network (FRN) Conference will be held Feb. 5-7, in Washington, D.C. This is an opportunity for school board members across the country to meet with their congressional representatives in order to discuss federal education issues.

Conference participants will join with colleagues from across the nation to obtain congressional support for developing practical solutions to school concerns, and strengthening public education. The event culminates in a lobbying effort on Capitol Hill where participants take the school board message directly to their members of Congress.

Among the topics likely to be on the agenda for FRN this year:

- ESEANCLB reauthorization negotiations. Congress is on course to make decisions in early 2012 that will significantly impact student learning, school district operations and school board policies for the next six years. Advocates note that FRN members will be in Washington, D.C. at a pivotal time to help shape the reauthorization of ESEA.
- Federal funding decisions for school districts. The Budget Control Act, the proposed American Jobs Act, and funding for Fiscal Year 2013, which all impact school districts' capacity to advance student achievement, fulfill federal mandates, and retain effective teachers and staff to ensure that successful education programs will be addressed in early 2012. Organizers say the school board voice must be heard by Congress during these key negotiations.

Attending the conference this year from Illinois are three IASB officers and one other school board mem-

ber, plus three association staff members: IASB President Carolyne Brooks, of **West Richland CUSD 2**, Noble; IASB Vice President Karen Fisher, of **Ottawa THSD 140**; and Past President Joseph Alesandrini, board president of **Pekin CHSD 303**, plus **East Maine District 63** board vice president John C. Jekot; as well as IASB Executive Director Emeritus Michael D. Johnson; Deputy Executive Director Michael Bartlett; and Director of Governmental Relations Susan Hilton.

The FRN conference annually involves local school board members from every congressional district in grassroots advocacy in support of public education. FRN organizers say the meeting gives local school leaders an opportunity to make a difference in the education of the nation's public school children, and the ultimate goal of FRN advocacy is to make public education a top priority of the federal government.


For more information about the FRN event in February, visit: <http://www.nsba.org/FRN2012/#>.

Illinois
SCHOOL BOARD
Newsbulletin

**Illinois Association
of School Boards**

This newsletter is published monthly by the Illinois Association of School Boards for member boards of education and their superintendents. The Illinois Association of School Boards, an Illinois not-for-profit corporation, is a voluntary association of local boards of education and is not affiliated with any branch of government.

James Russell,
Associate Executive Director
Gary Adkins, Editor
2921 Baker Drive
Springfield, Illinois 62703-5929
(217) 528-9688
One Imperial Place
1 East 22nd Street, Suite 20
Lombard, Illinois 60148-6120
(630) 629-3776
www.iasb.com


**ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

State wins 'Race to Top' funds with focus on STEM aid

Illinois was among the states chosen in the federal education competition to receive a share of \$200 million in "Race to the Top" money to improve K-12 education programs, the Education Department announced Dec. 22. Illinois won \$42.8 million.

The Obama administration has awarded billions of dollars in such competitions to encourage changes in education that it favors. The seven states competing in this round were all runners-up last year, and the Education Department has said it wants to encourage them to finish and carry out many of the changes proposed in their earlier applications.

Competing states committed to make changes such as improving principal and teacher evaluation systems and turning around under-performing schools. They also were asked to show specifically how they would improve science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) instruction, which is the focus of this grant cycle.

About \$21 million of the funds will go directly to local districts that agree to accelerate education reform. Funding of districts will be selective; and only a few districts will be involved. Insiders say the selection process will be rigorous.



"Mrs. Donahue used to be a flight attendant."

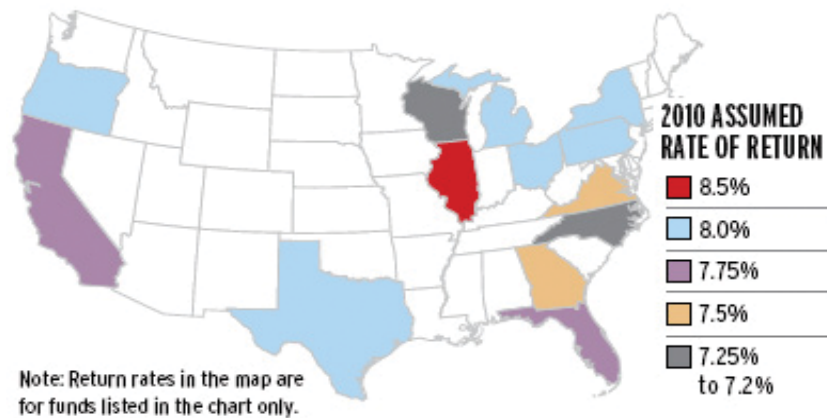
LARGEST U.S. PENSION FUNDS

2010 FUNDING RATIO AND MARKET VALUE OF ASSETS

Fund	Funding ratio	Assets
Illinois Teachers Fund	48.4%	\$37.4 billion
Ohio Teachers	59.1%	\$56.0 billion
California Teachers	71.5%	\$140.3 billion
Ohio PERS	75.3%	\$57.6 billion
New York City ERS	78.7%	\$41.7 billion
Michigan Public Schools	78.9%	\$44.7 billion
Pennsylvania School Employees	79.2%	\$59.8 billion
Virginia Retirement System	80.2%	\$53.2 billion
Texas Teachers	82.9%	\$111.3 billion
California PERF	83.3%	\$245.0 billion
Oregon PERS	85.8%	\$48.7 billion
Florida Teachers	86.6%	\$120.9 billion
Georgia Teachers	87.2%	\$54.8 billion
L.A. County ERS	88.9%	\$39.5 billion
North Carolina Teachers, State Employees	99.3%	\$55.1 billion
Wisconsin Retirement System	99.8%	\$80.6 billion
New York State and Local ERS	101.0%	\$126.4 billion
New York State Teachers	103.2%	\$88.8 billion

Source: NASRA Public Fund Survey

Fiscal years vary by state



Note: Return rates in the map are for funds listed in the chart only.

RETIREMENT from page 1

assumption. He said he is not chasing higher returns to plug the asset gap.

Chicago Business said that even before TRS changed its investment goals under Ingram, the plan ranked fourth-riskiest among public pensions in the U.S. because of its ratio of alternative and stock investments relative to cash and fixed-income holdings. A 2010 survey by *Chicago Business*' sister publication *Pensions & Investments* showed that "TRS had 83.2 percent of its portfolio in equities, alternatives and other classes, with just 16.8 percent in fixed-income and

cash."

"The pension plan was 70 percent funded in 1987. It has fallen increasingly short mainly because the state has shirked its \$15 billion in recommended contributions since 1970, denying the fund the assets needed to earn sufficient investment income. Bruising investment losses in the recent financial collapse also depressed assets," the publication stated.

To read more visit:

<http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20111217/ISSUE01/312179972/pension-peril-illinois-trs-goes-higher-risk-with-investments>.

national — saw the majority of their campuses showing over-all pass rates below the district average. One Shabazz high school campus — DuSable — had a passing rate that ranked it among the bottom 30 high schools in the state.

There is wide variation, as well, in standardized test scores for charter schools outside Chicago. Standardized test scores were above state averages in some such charter schools and below state averages in others.

But most Illinois charter schools — 87 out of 100 — are located in Chicago, which may mean that Illinois' charter schools will largely be judged on the quality of Chicago's charters.

Unlike the rest of the state, Chicago has long encouraged its charter schools to multiply under a single charter—presumably when their first site was successful. For the past decade the Illinois State Board of Education had only released the composite average score across all campuses.

School performance guidelines established by Chicago District 299 indicate that 28 percent of charter

schools are high-performing, 40 percent are in the middle range and the remaining schools at the lowest range, making them eligible for closure under the district guidelines.

No CPS charters will be on the closure list this year, according to District 299 spokeswoman Becky Carroll.

Charter schools are granted five-year contracts and CPS must wait until they are due for renewal to decide their fate, she said. CPS has closed only one charter school, back in the 1990s, although a few have shut their doors on their own because of financial problems and low performance.

Test score data are not the only thing the newly released school report cards show about Chicago's charter schools. The class size numbers, demographic characteristics, and teacher information listed for each charter campus show some significant differences between charter schools within networks, and between charter schools compared to the district average.

A few of the more interesting points from an analysis of the Chicago scores:

- Charters enroll lower percentages of students in bilingual education or with disabilities compared to the district average
- The mobility rate at charter schools is lower than the district average of 17 percent
- Charters are staffed by more teachers with emergency and provisional credentials
- Charters employ fewer teachers classed as highly-qualified.
- Charter schools have higher average class sizes than district schools

Experts note that, in general, the lowest-scoring Charter schools are those serving a disproportionate number of low-income students.

The new state data will allow the public to see for the first time how individual charter schools are measuring up against traditional public schools. State report card data about charters, as well as public schools in general, is available online at: <http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/public-site/getSearchCriteria.aspx>.

Charter commission holds first meeting as independent review body

The Illinois State Charter School Commission held its first meeting Nov. 15, 2011, to begin its work of evaluating proposals for new charter schools throughout Illinois. The Commission was established by the Charter School Quality Act of 2011, Public Act 97-0152, which was signed into law on July 20.

Educators, parents, community organizations, and others may form a non-profit board to apply to start a charter school. If approved, the non-profit receives a five-year contract or "charter" to operate the school. At the end of the five years, the school's academic performance is evaluated to determine if the results are strong enough to continue to operate.

The nine-member commission was established to evaluate proposals for new charter schools that are denied by local school districts and subse-

quently appealed to the state.

More school districts could see some of their students and state aid diverted to state-chartered schools with the recent establishment of the Commission, officials said. The new panel replaces the Illinois State Board of Education as the authority for approving state chartered schools when local districts oppose a proposed charter.

At its first meeting, the Commission accepted its first appeal from the Mastery Charter School in Maywood and scheduled a public hearing on that proposal. The Commission also reviewed its obligations under Illinois ethics laws, Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act.

The Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance is represented on the new panel by Michael Jacoby, executive director, Illinois Association of Business School Officials. The other

members of the Commission include:

- Glen Barton, former Chairman and CEO of Caterpillar, Peoria;
- Greg Richmond, president and CEO of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, Chicago.
- Sean Denney, lobbyist, Illinois Education Association, Evanston;
- Jaime Guzman, chief advisor to the Board of Trustees, City Colleges of Chicago, Chicago;
- Angela Rudolph, program officer, Joyce Foundation. Chicago;
- Paul Swanstrom, former superintendent, Joliet Township High Schools, Crete;
- Patria Van Pelt-Watkins, executive director, TARGET Area Development Corp., Chicago;
- Rudy Valdez, general manager-Asia Programs, Hamilton Sunstrand Corp., Rockford.

Open Meetings Act training common to division meetings scheduled this spring

Each of IASB divisions will offer an opportunity this spring for board members to comply with the Illinois Open Meetings Act (OMA) mandatory training requirement. Fourteen division dinner meetings will offer the training as a breakout panel; two division dinner meetings will offer the training as a pre-meeting session; the other seven divisions will schedule the training as a stand-alone event held in addition to the scheduled division dinner meeting.

Another hot topic at division meetings will be legislative issues, with sessions presented by IASB governmental relations staff. The discussions will cover the latest information from the Capitol on school funding, pension reform, and other key education initiatives.

OMA training begins Feb. 9 and concludes May 9. Regular division meetings begin Feb. 23 and conclude May 1 (see list online at site listed below). The training will be offered by the IASB Office of General Counsel. A \$25 registration fee is required. Space is limited, so register early. For dates and locations in your division, visit www.iasb.com and click on the Events Calendar, then View Upcoming Events.

Attendance at division meetings earns five credits in IASB's Master Board Member program. Reservations can be made by mail, phone, fax or online.

For more information on these upcoming division meetings — and others planned for the spring — visit online at: <https://www.iasb.com/calendar/calendar.cfm>.

Open Meetings Act is topic of stand-alone training where division meetings don't offer it

Even divisions that are not offering OMA training at their regularly scheduled spring division dinner meetings have scheduled the training as a stand-alone event. A \$50 registration fee is required. The list is as follows:

Feb. 9 — Kishwaukee,
Sycamore Middle School

Feb. 28 — Starved Rock,
Ottawa High School

Feb. 29 — North Cook,
Maine West High School,

Des Plaines

Mar. 6 — DuPage,
Marquardt Middle School,
Glendale Heights

Apr. 12 — Northwest,
Centennial Elementary School,
Polo

Apr. 12 — Three Rivers
Joliet West High School

May 9 — Lake,
Warren Township High School,
Gurnee

OMA training requirement must be met this year

The Open Meetings Act requires elected local officials, including any school board member who is in office as of Jan. 1, 2012, to receive training in the Act. School board members have just one year from that date to receive the

training.

Anyone appointed or elected to a school board after Jan. 1, 2012 must complete the OMA training within 90 days of taking the oath of office. Training is available from IASB through several options. (See above)

NEWS FROM IASB

2011 periodical indexes

IASB has completed online indexes for two Association periodicals issued through 2011, namely *The Illinois School Board Journal*, and the *Illinois School Board Newsbulletin*. Topics indexed cover everything from accountability and achievement to vision and writing. The *Journal* can be searched through either of two indexes: one by subject and one index by author. Indices for both publications are also available for 2008, 2009 and 2010, and both are available from the Publications page on the IASB website at <http://www.iasb.com/publications.cfm>.

Journal focus on reading

The January/February issue of *The Illinois School Board Journal* will kick off a year-long look at topics school board members discuss all the time. But the focus will be to show how the three R's and three B's of education (reading, writing, arithmetic); plus beans (finance), balls (extra-curriculars) and buses (transportation) can be discussed without straying into staff work. A new focus on reading in **Peoria SD 150** is profiled, along with board-level questions that every district should discuss. In addition, you'll find articles on board collaboration, explaining tax rates and the third in a series of articles by out-going executive director emeritus Michael Johnson.

Another district joins IASB

Cary CCSD 26 in the association's Kishwaukee Division has joined IASB. The district was last a member in fiscal year 2006-2007. This brings the count of member districts to 852 out of a total of 864 school districts in Illinois, leaving 12 non-members.

IASB seeks names for excellence awards, honors for service

IASB annually recognizes people and organizations whose actions have contributed to excellence in education that produced an impact statewide. Recognition is provided through the Harold P. Seamon Award for Distinguished Service to public education. Only one award may be given each year. Nominations are sought from now through April 15.

Outstanding nominees are sought from all walks of life—the award is not just for educators. IASB will present the award at the 2012 Joint Annual Conference in November.

Recipients must have done one or more of the following: displayed exceptional service and commitment; provided innovative approaches to meeting school challenges; or enhanced local governance by school boards.

In addition, IASB Honorary Memberships for Exceptional Service are awarded for rendering distinguished service to IASB or to public education in general. These contributions may extend district-wide or regionally. Up to three Honorary Memberships statewide may be awarded each year. The awards are presented at regional meetings.

Finally, there is the IASB Service Award for 25 years of service (not necessarily continuous) producing a positive impact through a close affiliation with and direct service to schools, either as an employee or volunteer. Current board members and IASB staff are not eligible recipients. Service Awards are issued to as many people as meet the requirements to receive them; they are presented at regional meetings. There is no deadline by which these names must be submitted.

Submit nominations to: IASB Awards Committee Liaison, 2921 Baker Drive, Springfield, IL 62703-5929, phone IASB, ext. 1139, or fax 217/753-2485.



The 2011 Joint Annual Conference drew 1,618 exhibitors who provided detailed information and insights on a wide range of concerns in public education. A total of 220 exhibits were displayed in the exhibit hall, which was often very crowded.

Website application forms, instructions going online for Conference exhibitors

IASB has developed a new online registration procedure for contracts and housing for all exhibitors in the 2012 Joint Annual Conference.

The new forms will be posted online Monday, Feb. 6. The forms and instructions will not be mailed out this year, however the completed forms still must be printed and mailed in to IASB.

Signed contracts and booth fees must be submitted through the mail by March 12 for firms wishing to reserve the same exhibit space as in 2011. After March 12, all booths will be assigned on a first-paid/first-received contract basis.

Instructions and forms will be posted online at: <http://www.iasb.com/jac12/exhibitor.cfm>.

The change in procedures was made in order to give all would-be exhibitors access to the conference registration/housing forms immediately and simultaneously. This new approach will be preceded by an email reminder sent to past exhibitors, plus an online reminder to be posted on the Association's website later this month.

Potential conference exhibitors are being asked to ensure that IASB has received the correct email address for the individual they wish to receive a reminder about these new procedures.

Questions about exhibitions, forms or procedures, should be directed to IASB Meetings Management at 217/528-9688, ext. 1115.

More information on 2012 Conference coming soon

Information about the 2012 Joint Annual Conference will be announced as it becomes available.

Currently, IASB has posted online, at <http://www.iasb.com>, the request for panel proposals and a request for student talent DVDs.

Proposals now sought for “Share the Success” panel sessions

The Illinois Association of School Boards is seeking proposals for “Share the Success” panel sessions at the 2012 Joint Annual Conference.

School districts and other organizations are invited to submit specific proposals for these 90-minute sessions.

The chosen panels are presented by the board members, administrators and other school or community members who were involved in the particular programs showcased, based on actual school system experiences.

Presenters give insight and practical information on how to solve common problems. They share discoveries and innovations from programs succeeding in their school districts. And they provide tips on how school boards can achieve such successes in their own school districts.

IASB seeks specific panel suggestions, to be submitted by filling out forms either online or by mail, in any of the following categories:

- Governance/Leadership
- Finance and Funding
- Current Issues
- Community Relations and Communications
- School Law
- Facilities/Transportation/Technology
- Best Practices
- Governmental Relations

Proposals can be made electronically. The forms can be found at: <http://www.iasb.com/jac12/rfp.cfm>. A committee of Association members will evaluate all proposals received in the IASB Springfield office by Feb. 17. Invitations will be issued to the districts and organizations recommended by those evaluators. Preference will be given to registered conference attendees. Acceptance of an invitation to present a Share the Success panel represents a joint commitment to create a valuable educational experience for conference attendees.

Districts and organizations that

are not selected to make their presentations during a 90-minute panel session may be offered a different opportunity to present at the conference. IASB will once again be featuring a “Carousel of Panels” session on Saturday afternoon, Nov. 17.

The Carousel is designed to allow districts and organizations a chance to make three, one-half-hour presentations on their topic in just under a two-hour period, allowing attendees an opportunity to obtain a wide variety of information in minimal time. Participants of the 2011 Carousel of Panels – both presenters and attendees – commented very favorably on the carousel experience and look forward to its return in 2012.

The 2012 Joint Annual Conference is set for Nov. 16-18 in Chicago.

Updated information about the 2012 conference will be posted online as it is received. Instructions and forms for registration and housing will all be posted on the IASB website at <http://www.iasb.com/jac12/>

Conference photos now available online via secured third party website – no fee to browse

Photos taken each day at the 2011 Joint Annual Conference are now posted online.

More than 1,100 photos – from Friday morning’s pre-conference workshops to the final general session on Sunday – are posted on a secured third party website.

There is no fee for this member service. However, visitors will need to use a password to log into the site.

The website address is <http://momentshare.com/levyphoto/>. A valid email address, user name (iasb2011) and password (chicago) are required in order to log on to the site.

The images will appear in a low-resolution, “thumbnail” format. Visitors will be able click on any photo to see a larger image, or use the slide show button that automatically scrolls through the entire gallery.

It is also possible to choose to view each image in color, black and white or sepia tone.

Those who wish will also be able to order their own prints. They are ideal for use in school board or district newsletters, websites or for personal keepsakes.

Photo reprints can be ordered in a variety of sizes, from wallets to 11 by 14 inches. All major credit cards can be used for payment.

IRS tax deduction applies to board service to schools

School board members are allowed a deduction on their federal income tax returns for non-reimbursed expenses arising out of board service. The cost of driving to and from board meetings is one such deduction.

Board members must itemize deductions and file Form 1040 to qualify. For further information contact the IRS or see IRS Publication 526, “Charitable Contributions,” containing guidelines pertinent to board member deductions. Free copies of that publication are available from the IRS and may be obtained via fax or mail by calling 1-800/829-3676.

Warning from energy cooperative: False representation tactics seen

Officials from Ameren Energy Marketing and Constellation NewEnergy are urging local school districts to be careful when dealing with unsolicited calls from vendors that may be misrepresenting these firms.

"The only companies who have a legal right to use 'Ameren' or 'Constellation' in their names are Ameren Energy Marketing and Constellation NewEnergy – Gas Division, and their respective affiliates," said Tonya Powell, spokesperson for Ameren Energy Marketing.

Both companies are program administrators for the Illinois Energy Consortium (IEC), a sponsored program of the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB).

Powell said that the suspicious callers often "Ameren" or "Constellation" in front of their own name, to convince school officials that they are

affiliated with the program or the program administrators.

She said district officials should always ask for proper company identification before sharing any infor-

"If in doubt, take note of their phone number and verify it with the utility or our contacts at Constellation or Ameren Energy Marketing,"

**– Tonya Powell,
Ameren Energy Marketing**

mation about the district. Both Ameren and Constellation issue company I.D.s to all their employees.

Another ruse is to employ high pressure sales tactics, such as claiming the district only has a few days

to sign with their firm to avoid loss of service. This too is false, Powell said.

Districts that receive a call or unscheduled visit from anyone they think might be misrepresenting themselves, or using questionable tactics, should report them to their local utility.

"If in doubt, take note of their phone number and verify it with the utility or our contacts at Constellation or Ameren Energy Marketing," Powell added.

Districts with additional questions or concerns should contact the IEC Program Administrators for assistance: Ameren Energy Marketing – Tonya Powell at 314.613.9120; or Constellation NewEnergy – Gas Division – Liz Peronto at 888.579.6600.

Information about the Illinois Energy Consortium is also available online at: <http://www.illec.org/>.

Two districts faced strikes this school year, seven met with 'intent' notices

As of Jan. 10, 2012, there was no strikes in progress, and nine school districts have settled, based on data provided by the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board. A strike in Zion-Benton THSD 126 was tentatively settled on Jan. 10 after five days; it was one of only two strikes in Illinois schools this year. The other strike lasted eleven days in Illini Bluffs CUSD 327, Glasford. School districts that have had a notice of intent to strike filed with the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board in the current school year are listed below.

Settled

Zion-Benton THSD 126 - IASB Region - Lake; Bargaining Unit Size: 280 IFT/AFT Certified and ESP employees; Notice Filed Dec. 5, 2011; strike

began Jan. 5, 2012.

Altamont CUSD 10 –IASB Region – Wabash Valley; Bargaining Unit Size: 62 K-12 Certified Classroom teachers; Notice Filed Oct. 17, 2011; Settled Dec. 15, 2011.

Highland CUSD 5 - IASB Region - Southwestern; Bargaining Unit Size: 174 FT & PT Teachers, Nurses, Speech Path; Notice Filed Nov. 22, 2011; Settled Nov. 22, 2011.

Nokomis CUSD 22 –IASB Region – Kaskaskia; Bargaining Unit Size: 40 IEA/NEA Certified Employees; Notice Filed Oct. 19, 2011; Settled Nov. 21, 2011.

Lake Forest CHSD 115 - IASB Region - Lake; Bargaining Unit Size: 130 IEA/NEA Certified Teachers 40% or more; Notice Filed Nov. 16, 2011; Settled Nov. 18, 2011.

North Boone CUSD 200 - IASB Region - Kishwaukee; Bargaining Unit Size: 111 IEA/NEA Certified Personnel; Notice filed Oct. 24, 2011; Settled Nov. 17, 2011.

Sullivan CUSD 300 –IASB Region – Abe Lincoln; Bargaining Unit Size: 87 IEA/NEA Certified Personnel; Notice Filed Sep. 22, 2011; Settled Oct. 13, 2011.

Trico CUSD 176 –IASB Region – Shawnee; Bargaining Unit Size: 65 IEA/NEA Certified Employees; Notice Filed Aug. 23, 2011; Settled Oct. 11, 2011.

Illini Bluffs CUSD 327 –IASB Region – Central Illinois Valley; Bargaining Unit Size: 60 Full & Part-Time Faculty; Notice Filed Aug. 4, 2011; Strike Aug. 17, 2011; Settled Aug. 28, 2011.

NEWS HEADLINES

Chicago (Dec. 25, *Chicago Tribune*) Chicago District 299 notes that fixing structural imbalances like cracked brick facades or deteriorating foundations in its aging buildings requires a significant investment. Officials recently announced \$660 million in capital project expenditures for the next fiscal year to build two schools, and additions to three others, and to make exterior structural improvements to 16 more. The investments come as a new leadership team is coming to grips with needed building repairs in the nation's third-largest school district. The average CPS school is 73 years old.

Chicago (Dec. 15, *Chicago Tribune*) Protesters shut down a Chicago school board meeting over proposed school closings and improvement projects on Dec. 14, 2011. More than 50 protesters took over the Chicago District 299 board meeting, shouting down board members over concerns about proposed school closings, consolidations and turnaround projects. Board President David Vitale abruptly suspended the public meeting after protesters disrupted a presentation by CPS chief Jean-Claude Brizard by reading from prepared statements denouncing the board, its policies, charter school expansion and alleged systemic failures. District officials are seeking to close five underperforming schools almost immediately, gradually close two more and "turn around" as many as 10 schools in a large-scale restructuring.

Greenview (Dec. 20, *The State Journal-Register, Springfield*) Greenview CUSD 200 Superintendent Gary DePatis thinks he has a way to offer students in his small rural school district a top-flight curriculum and exceptional teaching staff in spite of dwindling state aid. A survey he and two other superintendents conducted determined that, apart from mon-

ey, the top three concerns among officials of small districts are developing a first-rate curriculum, attracting and retaining quality teachers and addressing declining enrollment. Officials in many districts want to avoid school consolidations if they can, because closing schools can turn small communities into ghost towns. The top concerns he mentions are derived from the responses of 135 rural and small school districts.

Gurnee (Dec. 20, *Chicago Tribune*) Woodland CCSD 50 officials say their system is cash strapped, even as most of their state funds are diverted to a charter school. After losing \$3 million to Prairie Crossing Charter School, District 50 officials think the state should fund that school directly. "If the state is going to authorize a charter school, then the state should have to pay for a state-chartered school," said Superintendent Joy Swoboda. Prairie Crossing is one of two directly state-chartered schools in Illinois. Other charter schools function within a school district. The state granted a charter to Prairie Crossing in 1999, overruling the wishes of its two feeder districts, Woodland and Fremont School District 70. A lottery determines which students may attend Prairie Crossing.

Springfield (Dec. 20, *The State Journal-Register*) The failure rate of high school freshmen dropped significantly in Springfield District 186 schools during the first half of this school year. The District 186 board learned Dec. 19 that the rate – the proportion of students with one or more failing grades — dropped from about 25 percent to 17 percent at Springfield High; from 34 percent to 31 percent at Southeast; and from 39 percent to 30 percent at Lanphier, according to Kathy Sanders, director of research, testing and evaluation. Attendance also has improved

about 1 percent for all grade levels at the three high schools. Freshman attendance also improved, but is still lower than overall attendance. The school district this fall created freshman academies at the three high schools to help incoming ninth-graders get a better start in high school.

Statewide (Dec 21, *Chicago Tribune*) Back pay for the state education agency's consultants and principal consultants will be negotiated in January for all such employees who worked overtime traveling to public schools statewide. In a ruling handed down in November, an arbitrator determined that Illinois State Board of Education consultants should have been able to include time spent traveling as part of their work time, so some would have been eligible for compensatory time off. An arbitrator determined that consultants who worked in departments where this policy had been in place prior to November 2009 shall be "made whole" for hours spent traveling beyond the 7.5-hour workday. The Illinois Federation of Teachers, which represents the state workers, objected to the change that ended compensatory time for overtime they worked because of travel. The union and the agency could not resolve the dispute, and the matter went to arbitration.

Statewide (Jan. 4, *The Associated Press*) Six Illinois school districts have been given \$618,000 in low-interest loans for classroom technology upgrades. Officials announced on Jan. 3 that loans ranging from \$75,000 to \$220,000 were given to districts in Lexington, Irvington, New Berlin, Elmwood, Swansea and Carpentersville. The three-year loans, which carry a 2 percent interest rate, help schools in financial difficulty keep up with technology advancements to help students learn. More than \$75 million has been loaned since 1999.

Open meetings law training requirement, student expulsion key topics of new laws

More than 200 new laws officially took effect in Illinois when the clock struck 12 on New Year's Eve. For example, House Bill 1670 requires all current and future elected and appointed officials in Illinois, including school board members, to take Open Meetings Act training courses, including those administered by the public access counselor in the Illinois Attorney General's office (Public Act 97-0504).

Other new laws include:

- **H.B. 2086** allows expelled students to be immediately transferred to an alternative program — unless there are safety concerns — and can not be denied because of the expulsion (PA 97-0495).
- **H.B. 3281** allows school boards and administrators to suspend or expel a student if that student explicitly threatens a school employee, another

student or any school-related personnel on the Internet or any social networking websites. The bill gives boards and administrators a way to deal with online threats from students towards other students, faculty or anyone else (PA 97-0340).

- **H.B. 1240**, regarding background information sharing, requires that information about the criminal background of an employee obtained by a school district within the last year must be shared, upon request, with any other school district (PA 97-0248).

All new laws are available at: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/default.asp>. More targeted information for school leaders is now offered online in a new IASB publication, expected to be mailed by the end of the month, called *New School Laws*. It can be found at <http://www.iasb.com/gov-rel/newlaws.cfm>.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 24 – School Finance for Board Members Beyond The Basics, Edison Junior High School, Pekin

January 25 – Professional Advancement - Seeking the Superintendency, IASB Springfield

January 31 – BoardBook Webinar, online

February 4 – South Cook Legislative Breakfast, Calumet PSD 132

February 9 – Open Meetings Act Training - Kishwaukee Division, Sycamore Middle School, Sycamore

February 11 – The Board's First Responsibility: Detecting and Communicating a Compelling Vision, Crowne Plaza Springfield

February 16 – BoardBook Webinar, online

February 18 – The Board's First Responsibility: Detecting and Communicating a Compelling Vision, NIU Naperville

February 18 – The Board's First Responsibility: Detecting and Communicating a Compelling Vision, Holiday Inn, Carbondale

School board member turnover rate in 2011 was 21.7 percent, lowest rate in previous 12 elections

The turnover rate of Illinois school board members in 2011 elections was 21.7 percent. The results nearly matched the 2009 election results and represents the lowest turnover rate seen in the previous 12 biennial elections.

IASB membership records indicate that 1,288 new members filled board seats in 2011, compared to a total of 5,931 positions. In 2009, 1,297 new board members were seated out of a total of 5,967 available positions.

Turnover rates among Illinois school board members over the previous 12 elections ranged from a low of 22.0 percent in 1999, when 1,335 new members were elected among the total of 6,076 board members, to a high of 30.4 percent in 1989, when 1,852 new members were elected out of a total of 6,093 board members.

A significant source of board turnover typically comes from incumbents who decide not to run again. But the school board election last year saw more incumbents reelected, with 1,799 returned to office, than at any similar election in 20 years. And the percentage of incumbents returned to office in 2011 (58.3 percent) was higher than any time in the past 20 years.

"This seems to suggest voters were more satisfied with the incumbents in school board races than usual," said Ben Schwarm, IASB's Associate Executive Director for Advocacy and Governmental Relations.

The newly released numbers, showing details for the past 12 biennial elections, are available on the IASB website at <http://www.iasb.com/training/issue8.cfm>.

Add four directors to executive panel

The IASB Board of Directors at their organizational meeting on Nov. 20, 2011, voted to elect four current directors to the executive committee for the coming year. Elected were: Joanne Osmond, **Lake Villa CCSD 41**; Roger Pfister, **Carbondale ESD 95**; Phil Pritzker, **Wheeling CCSD 21**; and Joanne Zendol, **Berwyn South SD 100**. These members are in addition to IASB officers who automatically serve as committee members, including President Carolyne Brooks, Vice President Karen Fisher, Immediate Past President Joseph Alesandrini, and Treasurer Dale Hansen.

The next meeting of the IASB Board of Directors will be on Feb. 26 in Chicago.