

Illinois SCHOOL BOARD *Newsbulletin*

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Finance referendums yield subpar outcomes in Feb. 2 primary balloting

Local voters approved two of six school tax questions (33%), and six of 12 school bond propositions (50%) on their primary election ballots Feb. 2. This outcome fell significantly below the average approval rate seen for both tax and bond issues put forward in primary elections in even-numbered years since 1990. Historically, 43 percent of tax questions and 66 percent of building bond issues have been adopted at such elections.

Voters passed just one of three countywide sales tax increase proposals earmarked for school facility purposes. The measure passed with a 53 percent rate in Lawrence County. Voters said no to identical 1 percent sales tax increase proposals in Coles and Shelby counties.

The two school districts that won their tax rate referenda for educational purposes were **Ridgeview CUSD 19**, Colfax, in McLean County (proposing a 50-cent increase per \$100 of assessed valuation); and **Sunnybrook District 171**, Lansing, in Cook County (proposing a 40-cent increase per \$100 of assessed valuation).

Ridgeview schools had asked homeowners to pay more in property tax-

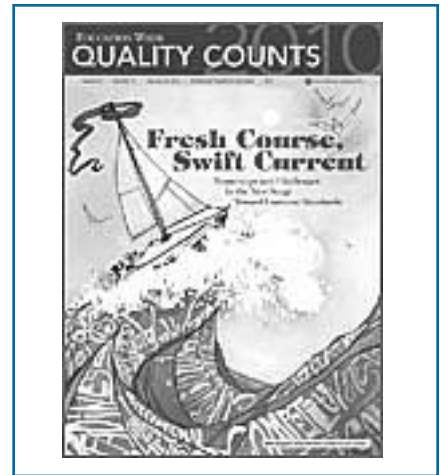
es to avoid cuts beyond what was already planned to cut the deficit. The ballot question asked whether the district could raise its tax rate to \$3.60, from \$3.10, per \$100 of equalized assessed valuation for four years. The change will raise school-related taxes on a \$150,000 home by \$250 a year, increasing the tax from the current \$1,550 to \$1,800.

After four years, the district anticipates more tax income from additional phases of the Horizon Wind Energy LLC wind farms in eastern McLean County.

Had the tax increase failed, the district expected a \$785,770 deficit next year followed by an \$890,826 deficit the subsequent year. With the tax increase, the deficits should be \$271,787 and \$361,054, respectively.

Meanwhile, the Sunnybrook District 171 school board's request for a tax increase was designed to avoid cutting \$1.2 million from the operating budget of local schools. The referendum's approval raises the tax rate for educational purposes for levy year 2008 to 2.8% of the equalized assessed

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Illinois schools get passing grades again in Quality Counts

Illinois' educational systems once again received a passing grade (C-) for educational performance in the past year from Education Week's annual "Quality Counts" report. Its overall score of 71.8 compares to the 72.9 score it received in 2009 and a national average score of 75.9.

The yearly survey graded states on six categories: chance for success, standards, assessments and accountability, K-12 achievement, transitions and alignment, school finance, and the teaching profession (see Illinois grades in the accompanying chart).

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Denials recommended for district requests for waivers

Three districts have met with state resistance to requests for waivers from unfunded mandates. The applications are being recommended for denial by ISBE because the requests are for services the state sees as crucial, and the requests allegedly are not based on sound educational practice. The districts and waiver topics at issue are:

- **Arlington Heights S.D. 25** – Transitional Bilingual Education/Transitional Program of Instruction Program Director Qualification Requirements
- **Elgin S.D. 46** – ELL student teacher ratio
- **Kildeer CCSD 96** – Transitional Bilingual Education/Transitional Program of Instruction Program Director Qualification Requirements

Mandate waiver report shows 85 requests submitted

The preliminary spring mandate waiver report shows a total of 85 mandate waiver requests have been filed so far. Most are for renewal of P.E. waivers, followed by limitation of administrative costs, and requests for driver's ed fee increases.

ISBE always suggests that each would-be applicant school district carefully review the requirements outlined in the "Overview for Waiver Process" found online at <http://www.isbe.net/isbe-waivers/html/overview.htm>.

If the state board fails to disapprove a request, it is deemed granted.

Application forms and instructions for waivers and waiver modifications are provided by ISBE and can be downloaded at <http://www.isbe.net/isbewaivers/html/application.htm>

Three new members chosen for Illinois State Board of Education for four years

The Illinois State Board of Education has three new members. The appointments to the nine-member board were announced in December by Gov. Patrick Quinn.

The newest members, who will each serve for four years, are James Baumann of Lake Bluff, Steven Gilford of Evanston and Melinda LaBarre of Springfield.

Among the veterans to "retire" is Joyce Karon of Barrington. She will continue to be involved in education policy development on the state level by joining the Illinois P-20 Council.

"Joyce will play a fundamental role in the state's bid for "Race to the Top" (RTTT) dollars, said Governor Quinn.

"I want to thank Joyce Karon for her leadership of the board finance and audit committee during these trying financial times," said State Superintendent Chris Koch. "She took the agency through the steps of budget preparation, attending hearings throughout the state and oversee-



James Baumann



Steven Gilford



Melinda LaBarre



Joyce Karon

ing this committee during a time in which we have seen revenues decrease and the need for services increase. It's a tough job, but she handled it well," Koch added.

Karon has been a member of the state board since 2003, attending 99 out of a possible 101 meetings during her seven years. Karon has served

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Those Who Excel awards nominations being sought

Do you know of an outstanding school board member, administrator, staff member or team that deserves statewide public recognition? Should a particular teacher become the 2010-2011 Illinois Teacher of the Year? If the answer is yes then you need to nominate him or her for the annual Those Who Excel awards program.

Nomination forms can be found online at http://www.isbe.net/pdf/those_who_excel.pdf

Nominations are due by Wednesday, May 26.


Contact Ann Muraro-Lacopo, ISBE Public Information, at 217/782-4648.

Illinois
SCHOOL BOARD
Newsbulletin

Illinois Association of School Boards

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ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

Budget proposal calls for \$1 billion more from state sources

Facing what is traditionally the first shot in the state budget battle over school funding, State Superintendent Christopher Koch presented his FY11 budget on Jan. 12 and 13. He recommended a “flat budget,” meaning no increase in the foundation level, which currently stands at \$6,119 per pupil.

The Illinois State Board of Education’s final budget recommendation calls for appropriations for the foundation level in the General State Aid formula to be funded at \$4.64 billion in FY11. This is the amount necessary to fund the foundation level the same as last year, ISBE said, but it represents a \$43.4 million increase over FY10 appropriations.

Throughout the agency’s budget discussions over the past two months, and during a two-day ISBE finance committee meeting, it was repeatedly cautioned that, “‘Auntie ARRA’ is no longer with us.” That reference was to the federal stimulus program known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which will not be

expected to contribute any new or additional monies to the FY 11 state budget. Lacking such extraordinary federal support, a flat budget for the coming year would actually represent an increase in funding from state sources of approximately \$1 billion.

Three premises surround this scenario, however, namely: 1) a plan for dollars to follow the student; 2) mandated categorical spending to be fully funded; and 3) a belief that the strategic plan of the State Board will drive student performance.

“For even this scenario to work, the state board says there will need to be cuts in the budget,” said Cynthia Woods, IASB director of advocacy.

The state superintendent’s main recommendation regarding spending reductions is to continue the GSA Hold Harmless phase out (a \$7.8 million decrease) and the Poverty Hold Harmless phase out. But Koch also recommends a 25% reduction in the Chicago Block Grant, elimination of the writing assessment and the con-

sumer-education assessment, no funding for textbook loans, and some line-item reductions (for the Classroom Cubed, and Grow Your Own programs, for example).

Enhanced state fees for teacher certification were proposed as well. Specifically, ISBE wants to revise Article 21 of the School Code regarding how certification is done. This would overhaul the certification system to be more consistent and streamlined, and raise fees for certification.

Illinois charges a \$30 application fee for teacher certifications, which is less than fees charged by neighboring states. In recent years, ISBE has processed a volume of approximately 47,000 applications annually and the present \$30 application fee generates \$1.4 million in revenue. ISBE is developing legislation that would allow certification fees to be set by rules and is examining the possibility of raising the application fee to \$65 and raising other certification

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on her local Board of Education in Barrington Community Unit School District 220 for nearly 40 years. She said she was leaving the board because of her earlier appointment to the P-20 (pre-school through graduate school) Council, a key advisory panel that will make recommendations to the governor about strengthening the state’s educational system and play a role in Illinois’ quest to win approximately \$400 million in federal RTTT funds.

Other members who left the board recently, thereby creating vacancies, are businessman Dean Clark and former IASA staff member Brenda Holmes.

New state board member James Baumann was most recently president and chief executive officer of American Recreation Products and spent 15 years with Follett Higher Education Group, serving six years as president and CEO. He was vice pres-

ident of his local school board, **Lake Bluff Elementary District 65**, from 1995 to 1999 and was president of the District 65 education foundation from 1989 to 1992. In addition, he chaired and served on several other education foundations.

Steven Gilford is the head of the Chicago office of the law firm Proskauer Rose, where he is a senior partner in the litigation and dispute resolution department and is also co-head of the insurance recovery and counseling group. He was a member of the **Evanston Township District 202** Board of Education from 1993 to 2005, including a term as president. Since 2005, he has served on the board of directors of his local YMCA and the Metropolitan Family Services.

Melinda LaBarre has spent more than 40 years in education, beginning as a teacher in **Springfield District 186**. During her career she also served

as a principal at two Springfield schools and later as a consultant for the Ball Education Foundation. She was also a member of the District 186 Board of Education from 2003 to 2009. She has had numerous honors and distinctions during her career, including being named as Horace Mann Educator of the Year in Springfield in 1989, and receiving the Bob Goldman Friend of Education Award from the Springfield Education Association in 2009.

“They bring a great deal of additional expertise to our board and I look forward to working with them,” said Koch.

The remaining members of the current state board include Jesse H. Ruiz, Board Chair, Chicago; Christopher J. Ward, Vice Chair, Lockport; Vinni M. Hall, Board Secretary, Chicago; Andrea S. Brown, Marion; David L. Fields, Danville; Lanita J. Koster, Chicago.

NSBA Delegate Assembly weighs ideas on federal intervention

National School Boards Association policy is determined by the national association's 150-member Delegate Assembly. The assembly, which this year meets on April 9 at the Chicago Hilton Hotel during NSBA's Annual Conference, will act on resolutions submitted by numerous school boards from throughout the United States.

Proposed policy-setting resolutions are submitted to the Delegate Assembly for consideration by the NSBA policies and resolutions committee. IASB past president Mark C. Metzger currently subchairs that committee for the NSBA Delegate Assembly.

Illinois representatives to the 2010 NSBA delegates/alternates were recently chosen by and from the IASB Board of Directors. Delegates are: Joe Alessandrini, Carlyne Brooks, Tariq Butt, and Joanne Osmond. Alternates are: Felton Jose, Jr., and Karen Fisher.

Delegates will consider, debate, and vote on several resolutions to serve as marching orders for NSBA's advocacy efforts over the coming year. Here are all of the resolutions and their rationale:

- *Urge Congress to require under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that parents work with school districts in a collaborative manner through the act's Individualized Education Program (IEP) process before obtaining eligibility for private placement reimbursement.* Sponsors of this resolution note the U.S. Supreme Court has declared there is no categorical bar in IDEA to eligibility for tuition reimbursement, even where students have not received special education services or related services from their local district before their parents unilaterally placed them in a private educational setting. But sponsors say this interpretation of legislative intent places an unlimited financial burden on school districts nationwide. NSBA wants new statutory language to

clearly state that parents are required to work in a collaborative manner with school districts, for the provision of a free appropriate public education for each student qualifying under the IDEA, through the IEP process, and that private placement by a parent for a student prior to this is not reimbursable by the school district.

NSBA offers one-day registration to conference

NSBA is generously offering a one-day registration to their conference for those who cannot be away for more than a day. Full registration for national affiliate districts is \$720 and \$895 per person for all others. The one-day registration fee is \$440.

The registration for one day cannot be completed online. Applicants need to print the form and send it by fax or regular mail and make sure to indicate that they are attending one day only, as well as what particular day they like to attend.

- *Support an accurate and complete census count in 2010, including the Census in Schools project and any other civic campaigns to help inform the public on the importance of the census count.* The rationale behind this resolution notes that full participation in the census might yield more accurate information, which would be used to better fund schools. Supporters say the Census in Schools project, meanwhile, offers instructional tools for teachers to help America's youth understand the importance of the information provided by the census.
- *Support the involvement of school board trustees on a regional metropolitan planning organization (MPO) or a regional transportation authority.* Advocates of the proposal note that, under a 2005

federal law, a metropolitan planning organization must be appointed for each urban area with a population of more than 50,000. Each MPO that serves an area designated as a transportation management area under the Federal Public Transportation Act of 2005 must include (a) local elected officials; (b) officials of public agencies that administer or operate major modes of transportation in the metropolitan area; and (c) appropriate state officials. Yet school board trustees are often left off of MPOs. If the planning of a transportation project is going to affect the current location of a school campus, however, or affect the future sites of school campuses, then the presence of a school board trustee on such planning organizations is necessary.

- *Support the distribution of funding through the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in a way that respects the authority of locally elected school boards.* The problem is, resolution advocates say, some state legislators and governors are using the opportunity created by the ARRA and the lure of federal dollars to extend their state's authority and the authority of local teachers' unions at the expense of locally elected school boards. In Wisconsin, for example, legislation has been introduced to: allow the mayor of Milwaukee to take over the Milwaukee Public Schools; and allow state assessment data to be used in the evaluation of teachers only if school boards collectively bargain over all aspects of the teacher evaluation plan and do not use the evaluations to discharge or suspend a teacher.
- *Support a measure to ensure that the federal government assists local school districts in meeting their costs for development and maintenance of state longitudinal data*

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systems that track students' performance on assessments throughout their school years. Due to the dire economic circumstances surrounding many schools, a rationale notes, federal ARRA funding has mainly been used to fill budget gaps rather than fuel reform. Further, ARRA dollars are one-time money, and districts have been cautioned not to use it for expenditures that will not be sustainable without ARRA funding. At the same time, it appears many federal reform proposals likely will impose new, continuing costs on local school districts. Among these reform initiatives is the development of "robust longitudinal data systems." Thus, advocates say school boards should act to ensure that longitudinal data system requirements do not become yet another unfunded federal mandate at the local level.

- Urge Congress, and state and local governments, to provide funding for state and local school boards, to improve the educational progress and status of all students, particularly African American, Hispanic, and Native American male and female students, by understanding and coping with gender-specific needs. A rationale that accompanies this resolution states that prevailing data indicates that the achievement gap has widened in a period where the opportunities for a quality education have increased. A number of barriers impacting gender specific needs must be more adequately addressed, supporters say.
- Urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service to develop a formal system to deliver notice to school districts

when federal agencies, including the Food and Drug Administration, are investigating food-safety concerns or foodborne illness outbreaks that could lead to recalls of federally purchased food products for school lunch and breakfast programs or after-school snack programs. Also support new policies and guidelines to improve communications with states and schools to ensure that tainted food products are quickly removed from school cafeterias and eliminated from delivery systems. According to an audit conducted by Congress' Government Accountability office, many federal agencies that supply food for 31 million schoolchildren fail to ensure that tainted products are pulled quickly from cafeterias, increasing the risk of children being made ill by contaminated food.

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value of the taxable property in the school district for levy year 2009.

If this referendum had failed, the next cuts were going to be in the classroom, which referendum supporters said would mean the district was likely to lose teachers.

Tax propositions were defeated in four districts: **Lemont-Bromberek Combined SD 113A**, in Cook County; **Lick Creek Community Consolidated School District 16**, Buncombe, in Union County; **Mokena District 159**, in Will County; and **Pontiac CCSD 429**, in Livingston County.

Building bond issues were approved in: **Brimfield CUSD 309** in Peoria County (\$13.9 million); **Eastland CUSD 308**, Lanark, in Carroll, Ogle and Stephenson counties (\$7 million); **Lebanon CUSD 9**, in St. Clair County (\$7.5 million); **Ottawa ESD 141**, in LaSalle County (\$18.5 million); **Rockdale SD 84**, in Will County (\$1.5 million); and **West Washington County CUSD 10**, Okawville (\$32.2 million).

Building bond issues were defeat-

ed in: **Hillsboro CUSD 3**, in Bond and Montgomery counties; **Freeburg Community High School District 77**, in St. Clair and Washington counties; **Marengo-Union Elementary Consolidated District 165**, in McHenry County; **New Trier Township High School District 203**, New Trier, in Cook County; **Pontiac Township High School District 90**, in Livingston County; and **Union District 81**, Joliet, in Will County.

The approval rates for tax and bond issues were not only below par for school finance referenda held in primaries in even-numbered years (historically a likely time to pass a referendum), but for all school finance referenda held since 1990. Historically, 36 percent of tax questions and 59 percent of building bond issues have been adopted at all elections since 1990.

For a more detailed historical look at tax and bond issue outcomes over the past two decades visit <http://www.iasb.com/elections>.

Clarification from Dec.

In the December 2009 issue of the Illinois School Board Newsbulletin, the summary of the resolution adopted regarding school counselors and social workers should have read as follows: IASB encourages its members to increase their awareness of the Mental Health Code, which supports developments and implementation of a plan to incorporate social and emotional standards as part of the Illinois Learning Standards.



"Have I mentioned that my mom is president of the school board?"



Kids Count leaders eye trends to diversity, funding/achievement gaps

For Illinois' students to have success in school and beyond they will need effective educators and administrators equipped with adequate resources and opportunities for professional development. This will require a comprehensive approach to schooling that meets their needs inside and outside of the classroom, from birth onward, as well as parent and community involvement, according to educators, advocates and community leaders brought together by Voices for Illinois Children at its Kids Count Symposium on education, in Springfield.

Key trends in Illinois education show dramatic increases in student diversity, significant funding disparities among districts and dramatic achievement gaps among students, according to Voices president Kathy Ryg. Her information is based on the newest Illinois Kids Count Databook due out in late February.

"Diversity demands flexibility and innovation in order to meet our students' very different, but very real, needs," Ryg said. "It underscores the importance of taking a comprehensive approach to education that recognizes the 'whole child.' From birth on, we must invest in our children's social-emotional development, their physical health, and other factors that play a role in their overall well-being."

Other speakers at the day-long event included Joe Fatheree, an Effingham High School teacher and board member of Advance Illinois, an independent education advocacy group. "Students are entering our classrooms with complex problems we've never seen before," Fatheree said, "but we're not training our teachers and administrators to handle them, and we're not giving schools adequate resources to grapple with them."

Faith Sanderson, homeless coordinator for Sangamon County's Regional Office of Education, shared stories of homeless students and the extraordinary measures students and teachers take to keep academic careers on track under extremely difficult circumstances. She noted that the homeless-student population is growing, and that youth homelessness is a more common occurrence than most people recognize.

"Education is the key to ending the cycle of homelessness," Sanderson said.

The 2010 Kids Count data book reveals the heavy toll of the recession on Illinois' children and families. Illinois Kids Count is a project of Voices for Illinois Children and is part of a nationwide network of state-level projects supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

AASA conference draws Illinois leaders and superintendents

Several Illinois representatives attended the the American Association of School Administrators' annual conference held Feb. 11-13 in Phoenix.

Participating from IASB were: Executive Director Emeritus Michael D. Johnson, Donna Johnson, Director, Executive Searches, search consultants Dawn Miller and Thomas Leahy, and Field Services Director Dean Langdon.

Miller, Leahy and Johnson facilitated several panel sessions on the executive search process. School boards associations from other states were also represented on these panels to explain how the search process varies from state to state.

IASB district leaders appeared on the agenda as well, including one Saturday panel session led by Superintendent Larry Weber, **Germantown SD 60**, which covered "RtI — The New Interview Buzzword: Hints for Answers to Implementation Questions."

Weber discussed what happens when an interview question focuses on the chief district administrator's knowledge regarding implementation of the Response to Intervention (RtI) initiative.

Also on the program at the AASA national conference was Robert Gillum, superintendent of **Ball Chatham Community Unit School District 5**, Chatham. Gillum addressed a Friday general session in support of his candidacy for president of AASA.

AASA general session speakers included Geoffrey Canada, president and chief executive officer for the Harlem Children's Zone, who spoke about saving the world — "one child at a time," and Malcolm Gladwell, a staff writer with *The New Yorker* magazine, and best-selling author, who discussed leadership and how to provide it.

AASA national conference sessions also examined how public schools can thrive amid the many challenges of a recession.

Page views at IASB website topped 1 million for first time during 2009

The popularity and use of the Association website was evident in 2009, as the number of page views topped 1 million for the first time.

Page views, which are generated each time a visitor views a page on the website, regardless of how many “hits” are generated, totaled 1,006,724 for the year and averaged 83,894 each month. That compares to a 2008 total of 999,959 page views, or a monthly average of 83,300.

The site’s 142,244 “unique visitors” averaged 11,854 monthly and made 382,813 site visits in 2009. That was 22 percent higher than the 313,509 site visits recorded in 2009.

The data is compiled monthly and used by staff to help determine what content and features are accessed, how they are accessed, and ultimately, what improvements or updates can

be made to the site.

In terms of navigation, the home page is the most popular (148,570 views), followed by the member directory (59,728). IASB posts many PDF documents on its site for free downloading. Among the most commonly used are the Joint Annual Conference preview (5,651 downloads), and a brochure explaining use of state lottery monies for education (1,838).

The IASB website, which was launched in 1996 and redesigned in 2008, has more than 1,700 pages online. It is available to the public, and used by board members, administrators, secretaries, attorneys, professors, media and parents, among others.

IASB also maintains a members-only site and an internal staff website.

Online Learning Center to become even more affordable during March and April

For a limited time, fees have been reduced for three online courses available from the IASB LeaderShop Online Learning Center.

Anyone registering in March or April can take advantage of a 20 percent discount. The reduced price is applicable to the following courses:

- School District Labor Relations: What Illinois Law Requires (\$80 in March and April)
- Superintendent Evaluation (\$80)
- Media Relations (\$60)

Remember that participants will earn both LeaderShop Academy credits and Master Board Member points for every course completed and passed.

For information about course content, how online learning works, or to register, visit the LeaderShop Online Learning Center at: <https://www.iasb.com/training/onlinelearning.cfm>.

For questions about IASB’s online learning program, email onlinelearning@iasb.com, or call Sandra Kwasa, IASB board development consultant, at ext. 1213.

NEWS FROM IASB

Board secretary award to honor the late Holly Jack

Beginning with the 2009 Joint Annual Conference, IASB began presentation of the “Holly Jack Outstanding Service Award” to a school district employee who does the work of the board secretary. Long-time IASB employee Holly Jack, who passed away in October 2008, was instrumental in promoting and developing the secretaries’ program.

The first winner of the award for school district secretaries was recognized at the 2009 Joint Annual Conference in November.

Watch for information in the mail and on the IASB website this spring. Nominations will be due in IASB’s offices by Aug. 1.

IASB will not have a job fair this year

Due to the economic conditions facing school districts, the Illinois Association of School Boards has decided not to host a Job Fair for 2010. Please check the Association’s website, <http://www.iasb.com>, for future job fairs.

IASB staff member announces retirement

IASB policy department staff member Terry Mugnaini has announced plans to retire from her position in the Lombard office. After 20 years with the association, Mugnaini will retire on March 1.

“Terry always gives 120 percent and sincerely cares about our members and the work we do to serve them. Her attention to the details and insistence on quality and excellence has been an example to us all. We’ll miss Terry” said Cathy A. Talbert, Associate Executive Director.

Mugnaini said she plans to “spend more time at the family cabin in Wisconsin.”



As a nation, the report showed 13 states with above-average scores, two states and the District of Columbia below average and the remainder with average scores. Maryland had the highest score with 87.5 percent, while Washington D.C. school systems scored the lowest at 68.3 percent.

The 14th annual edition of *Education Week's Quality Counts* report was built, as in past years, on twin foundations: the detailed data collection and analysis of the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, which mines its annual policy survey to provide comprehensive, state-by-state grading in key areas of state policy and performance; and the rigorous investigation of a timely issue in education policy by the *Education Week* reporting staff.

This year's new theme—an examination of the national debate over common academic standards—is informed by extensive information on each state's curriculum resources, assessments, and academic standards, drawn from research in a state-by-state survey.

The report reviews the origins of the standards movement and presents new reporting and analysis that highlight the challenges that current initiatives pose for administrators, educators, and state and local officials.

Christopher Swanson, vice president of Editorial Projects in Education, which publishes *Education Week*, said the report's emphasis on standards and accountability is supported by evidence that states that have pursued more aggressive reform agendas have seen greater academic gains over time.

"One of the larger contexts in which this is playing out is concerns over the levels of achievement by American students," Swanson said.

The new report is downcast in its evaluation of schools on those grounds. Illinois and the nation as a whole earned a D+ for kindergarten through 12th-grade achievement, the lowest grade among the six graded categories in the report.

The report's evaluation for the achievement area was largely based on reading and math results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the only standardized test given uniformly to students in every state.

Illinois grades

The state received a C- when graded across the six distinct areas of policy and performance tracked by Quality Counts, the most comprehensive ongoing assessment of the status of American education.

Illinois' highest grading was chance for success, at 81.2 percent. Its lowest grade came in transitions and alignment, at 67.9 percent. Here is how the research center scored the state:

Overall Grade: C-

Chance for Success: B-

Early foundations: B

School years: C+

Adult outcomes: B

K-12 Achievement: D+

Status: D

Change: D+

Equity: B-

School Finance: C-

Equity: B-

Spending: F

Standards, Assessments, &

Accountability: C

Standards: F

Assessments: B+

School accountability: B-

Transitions & Alignment: D+

Early-childhood education: B-

College readiness: D-

Economy & workforce: D

The Teaching Profession: D+

Accountability for quality: C

Incentives & allocation: C+

Building & supporting capacity: F

An original 50-state survey finds evidence of solid foundations that may facilitate a more unified approach toward defining common academic standards. When crafting and revising their academic standards, a large majority of states already look beyond

their own borders for guidance, according to the report. The work of national subject-matter organizations has influenced English/language arts or mathematics standards in more than 40 states, the reports adds, while just over half of those have examined the frameworks of other states to inform their own standards.

Fewer states (16) have engaged in the type of international comparisons or benchmarking that has received considerable attention in recent policy discussions. What is more, a num-

"the most important finding to take from the report is that no state performs at a consistently high level across the board in all the areas studied."

ber of states have reported challenges—ranging from the political to the practical—that they believe may complicate efforts to adopt common-core standards. The leading concerns, each raised by at least 15 states, include: securing a high level of input and support from stakeholders; possible disruptions to the state's own policy efforts; and misalignments between state expectations and the common standards.

Swanson said the most important finding to take from the report is that no state performs at a consistently high level across the board in all the areas studied.

"We know people are interested in rankings and they serve a certain purpose," Swanson said. "What we try to do with Quality Counts is take a very broad perspective on a number of policy issues and outcomes as a way to assess the health and standing of the nation's schools."

The executive summary of the Quality Counts report is available online at:

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/01/14/17execsum.h29.html?ntc=ml>

NEWS HEADLINES

Benton (Jan. 22, *The Southern Illinoisan*) The Benton CCSD 47 Board of Education is weighing a proposal to offer a promotion ceremony in place of the district's eighth-grade graduation ceremony. The proposed promotion ceremony would take place during the day at school, rather than during the evening at the Benton Civic Center, and would incorporate the annual awards program currently conducted at the school at the end of the school year, said Jamie Neal, Benton Grade School principal for grades five through eight. Board members previously asked Neal to research alternatives to the annual graduation ceremony, which now includes traditional caps and gowns.

Carpentersville (Jan. 12, *Northwest Herald*) Carpentersville District 300 officials on Jan. 11 recommended deep budget cuts for the 2010-11 fiscal year. Facing a state backlog of \$6 million in payments, the district eyed cuts estimated to save \$6.4 million. The main problem stems from a lack of categorical payments from the state for special education, transportation, and English as a second language programs. The last time the district received a categorical payment was July 2009. If the state maintains the status quo, the district could be facing a 50 percent reduction in funding in the coming year.

Champaign (Jan. 24, *Champaign News-Gazette*) As state deficits continue to impact payments for mandated "categoricals" such as transportation and special education, officials worry about local funding shortfalls, and concern grows that major program and staffing cuts will have to follow. Some area students now will have to forgo field trips this semester and make do with old textbooks instead of getting new ones. Some teachers may have to miss out on training seminars that are out of town. "It's a crisis," said Champaign

Superintendent Arthur Culver. And as a result, schools may soon be forced to make decisions based on the bottom line, not what is best for students.

Edwardsville (Jan. 13, *Belleville News-Democrat*) Edwardsville CUSD 7 expects to slash \$3.1 million from its district budget for next year, anticipating cuts in state funding. Superintendent Ed Hightower presented a list of proposed budget cuts at the school board meeting on Jan. 11. One of the primary goals, Hightower said, was to maintain the district's property tax rate, currently \$3.9594 per \$100 of assessed valuation. The state owes District 7 approximately \$4.2 million, and Hightower said the district hopes to receive that money at some point this year. But with a \$13 billion deficit expected at the state level, he said, funding may be low next year. What is more, local property values dropped from a 3.5 percent growth rate to no growth, meaning a \$1.2 million drop in anticipated property tax revenue.

McHenry (Jan. 27, *Northwest Herald*) Finance Committee members set a goal on Jan. 26 to trim McHenry Community High School District 156 spending by \$2.3 million next year. Officials project a \$4 million deficit by the end of the year. Just where the district will make cuts isn't clear, but administrators said staff cuts are on the horizon. The district still has fund balances, which could be used to cover future deficits, but committee members said they want to prepare for reductions. When it comes to cuts, Board President Bob Glascott said everything is on the table.

Marion (Jan. 20, *The Southern Illinoisan*) The Williamson County Board is being asked to review a tax protest filed recently by Marion CUSD 2 regarding property valuation for Williamson County Pavilion. County board commissioners discussed

the tax protest, but have not reached a consensus on what kind if any action to take. They say the matter will likely go to Illinois Department of Revenue and probably end up in court. Marion's school superintendent, Wade Hudgens, said the protest is identical to one filed by the district in 2009, which is still pending. The pavilion was owned by the city of Marion, which is now leasing it to an events commission that has a private not-for-profit status and is tax exempt, Hudgens said. School leaders are contending that is not right.

O'Fallon (Jan. 13, *Belleville News-Democrat*) A developer appealed to the Central School District 104 school board on Jan. 11 to reconsider its objection to a new tax increment finance (TIF) district. School Board attorney Kurt Schroeder said board leaders turned a deaf ear on the developer because they feel his offer of a "pass-through" was not as lucrative as the public has been led to believe. Schroeder said the pass-through revenue would be divided eight ways by the taxing bodies that cover the district, and District 104 will get only about 5.4 percent of the total revenue the TIF produces. District 104 has threatened to sue to try to block the TIF if O'Fallon gives it final approval.

Peoria (Jan. 20, *Peoria Journal Star*) Peoria District 150 is preparing for the possibility of massive school spending cuts in response to anticipated school spending reductions in Illinois for 2010-11. The problem is the state won't again receive \$1 billion in federal stimulus money to help fund education next year. That stimulus money, however, runs out this year, meaning the state will have to find \$1 billion in funding next year to maintain current spending. District 150 could be looking at pink slipping many more than 200 teachers.

Bad tempers displayed in front of students may equal dismissal



Kimberly A. Small is IASB's assistant general counsel.

One of the greatest Latin poets, Horace, was on to something when he said long ago, “the one who cannot restrain their anger will wish undone, what their temper and irritation prompted them to do.” *Central Community Unit School District No. 4, v. Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board (IELRB)*, 904 N.E. 2d 640 (Ill.App.4th 2009), outlines what can happen to a school district employee who fails to control his temper in front of students. Ultimately the school board terminated his employment as head custodian and school bus driver. Defending against the employee’s grievance, the school district argued that the employee’s bad temper violated the general public policy of protecting the children in the district. Here is a look at what happened.

The employee used profanity several times out of anger in front of students. The profane statements included the “f” word and the “b” word. School officials warned the employee to stop using obscene language in front of the students. The event that finally led to the employee’s dismissal happened while he was driving a school bus. He stopped the bus, confiscated a student’s CD player and headphones and threw them in the trash, breaking the CD player. After this happened, the superintendent recommended that he be demoted from head custodian to custodian instead of being discharged. She informed him that the next step was dismissal, unless he enrolled in and successfully completed an anger management course – a “last chance agreement.” The employee refused the “last chance agreement” and filed a grievance.

DEVELOPMENTS IN SCHOOL LAW

An arbitrator found that the school district lacked “just cause” (required by the collective bargaining agreement) to terminate the employee. The arbitrator’s award reinstated the employee to a full-time custodial position, among other things. The school board voted not to comply with the award and refused to reinstate the employee because it violated the general public policy in favor of protecting children in the district and the School Code.

Then, the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board (IELRB) reviewed the matter. The IELRB held that the school board violated the law when it did not reinstate the employee and agreed with the arbitrator’s award reinstating the employee. The IELRB did not consider the employee’s conduct while driving the school bus in making its decision.

When the fourth district appellate court reviewed the matter, the school district argued that it did not have to reinstate the employee because doing so: (1) violated general public policy in favor of protecting children, and (2) conflicted with the School Code.

The appellate court agreed with the school district. It held that the IELRB not considering the employee’s conduct as a bus driver was arbitrary and capricious (generally meaning that there is no rational connection between the facts found and the choice made) because the safety of school children was at issue. By not considering that conduct, the IELRB review missed the broader and very important public policy consideration of the safety, welfare and protection of school children. The appellate court found support for the general public policy in favor of the safety of school children in 105 ILCS 5/24-24. It places the “teacher, other certificated educational employees, and any other

person, whether or not a certificated employee, providing a related service for or with respect to a student” in the relation of parents and guardians to the [students] in all matters relating to discipline and conduct of the schools. The relationship extends to all activities connected with the school and may be exercised at any time for the safety and supervision of the [students] in the absence of their parents or guardians.

How does this holding apply to school officials?

The success of the school district’s arguments before the fourth district appellate court provides confidence for school officials to take action, and if necessary, dismiss an employee who becomes upset and/or displays intimidating actions that put children at risk physically and/or mentally. School officials should remind all district staff of their duty to protect the safety and welfare of children and that violation of that duty can subject the employee to discharge.

Do not turn a blind eye on incidents that violate the public policy of protecting the safety and welfare of children and take action immediately by: (1) documenting the facts that show how an employee’s actions resulted in jeopardizing the district’s duty to protect the safety and welfare of children, and (2) contacting the board attorney to discuss the issue. Consider including the facts of this case in the curriculum for the new required in-service on educator ethics, teacher-student conduct, and school employee-student conduct for all personnel (105 ILCS 5/10-22.39, amended by P.A. 96-431). See IASB sample PRESS policy 5:120, *Ethics* for further discussion.

Thank you to Larry D. Kuster, Rammelkamp Bradney Attorneys at Law, for consulting with IASB for this article.

IASA conference speakers in April to key in on learning communities

Professional learning communities will be the focus of several keynote speakers at the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) Annual Conference, set for April 14-16 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield.

This event annually draws more than 650 school administrators to Springfield. Attendees will include school superintendents, assistant superintendents, state agency staff and college professors of educational administration.

The IASA welcoming reception on Wednesday evening includes a solicitation to conference participants to invite local legislators to attend.

Conference general session speakers at IASA will include: William Sommers, the Learning Alternatives director and leadership coach for Spring Lake Park District 12 in Spring Lake Park, Minnesota. Sommers, a school admin-

istrator for more than 30 years, will offer advice at Wednesday afternoon's opening session on "Leading Professional Learning Communities."

The second general session speaker will be Ingrid Carney, founder and CEO of Carney for Kids Educational Consulting. Carney for Kids specializes in executive leadership coaching, school and district improvement, and efforts to close achievement gaps. Carney most recently served as deputy superintendent for Boston Public Schools, from 2005-2008, where she was directly responsible for the improvement of teaching and learning in 45 schools in a diverse group of Boston communities serving 17,300 students in grades K-12. Carney will discuss "Building Professional Learning Communities."

The third general session speaker will be Al Bertani, an independent consultant focusing on leadership devel-

opment, organization development, professional learning, large-scale change, and strategic planning. He spent the last third of a 36-year career in education working on urban school reform in Chicago Public Schools. Among his most recent work has been facilitating strategic planning; leading the Alaska School Leadership Institute; designing and facilitating the College Board Leadership Institute for Principals for The College Board in New York City; and serving as a member of the design team for CISCO's Global Education Leaders Program. Bertani will explain how "Professional Learning Communities Help Build Leadership Capacity."

The conference also features exhibits, which will be open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Thursday, April 15.

Questions about the conference can be directed to IASA, phone 217/753-2213; or email cmiddleton@iasaedu.org.

Board of Directors places finishing touches on its committee assignments for 2010

At its organizational meeting after the Joint Annual Conference, the IASB Board of Directors assigned various committees for the coming year. The executive committee affirmed the following committee assignments at its Jan. 22 meeting:

- Executive Committee: Roger Edgecombe, Roger Pfister, Karen Fisher, Dale Hansen; in addition to President Joe Alesandrini, Vice President Carolyne Brooks, Immediate Past President Mark C. Metzger, and Treasurer Dane Tippett;
- Nominating Committee: Mark C. Metzger – Chair, Jackie Mickley, Michelle Skinlo, Tom Cunningham, Joanne Zendol – Members. John Metzger and Dave Barton, Alternates;
- 2010 NSBA delegates/alternates: Joe Alesandrini, Carolyne Brooks,

Tariq Butt; and Joanne Osmond. Alternates are: Felton Jose, Jr., and Karen Fisher. Note: By NSBA action, Mark C. Metzger, Immediate Past President is NSBA's Central Region Director;

- Audit Committee: Dane Tippett – Chair; Ben Andersen, Tom Neeley, Rosemary Swanson, Karen Carney, Phil Pritzker, and Tim Blair (the new director of IASB's Wabash Valley Division, and a member and board secretary of the Casey-Westfield CUSD 4C Board of Education);
- Appointed Carolyne Brooks, IASB's Vice President, to chair the resolutions committee in 2010;
- Appointed Dale Hansen and Sue McCance to co-chair the Joint Annual Conference Committee in 2010;
- Appointed Mark Harms as IASB Liaison to the Illinois High School Association (IHSA).

Arlington Heights board president Dussling wins Distinguished Service Award

Township High School District 214, Arlington Heights, board President Bill Dussling has won the Award for Distinguished Service to Public Education from the National School Boards Association.

This recognition is granted to about 1 percent of the 95,000 members of local boards of education throughout the nation for exhibiting the greatest commitment to public education.

Dussling epitomizes a good school board leader, because of his "visibility, interest, knowledge, and passion," Superintendent Dave Schuler told *The Daily Herald*.

Dussling has served on the District 214 board for 12 years, and he is recognized as a Master Board Member by the Illinois Association of School Boards.



Bill Dussling

2010 Joint Annual Conference DVDs sought now to showcase fine arts in public schools

Organizers of the IASB/IASA-IASBO Joint Annual Conference are again looking for schools that want to showcase their fine arts students in music, art, drama or a compilation of programs.

Submissions from one high school and one middle school will be selected for the 2010 conference and can be a single performance or an overview of the arts program in a DVD to be shown prior to the opening of the first

general session. DVDs should be no longer than 10 minutes.

Selection will be based on the performance and DVD production quality.

Districts should submit their entries to IASB, 2921 Baker Drive, Springfield, IL 62703, attention: Dawson/Arts DVD no later than June 4. Districts will be notified by Sep. 15 if they have been selected. All decisions will be final.

More information will be listed on the IASB website, <http://www.iasb.com>.

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fees – particularly those charged to out-of-state residents.

Increasing such fees could generate additional revenue to pay for teacher certification activities and provide some relief to General Funds administrative requirements. The final changes in the certification fees would be made in consultation with the State Teacher Certification Board.

The ISBE budget proposal reflects a major state funds increase of \$1 billion overall, but given the financial condition of the state, that may be seen as optimistic. The lag time in current state payments to schools in some cases dates back to July 2009.

The next major step in the budgeting process is for the governor to submit his own budget recommendation. But insiders say it is likely to be similar to the ISBE's budget proposal because the state superintendent of education is aligned directly under the governor's office, and is no longer independent of the governor.

Meanwhile, school districts have already begun to influence the budget process by testifying at the eight budget hearings held across the state over the past four months, and the process intensified when the legislature began considering budgetary matters in earnest in late February.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**March 10 – Kishwaukee Division
Dinner Meeting**, Hampshire
High School

**March 10 – Blackhawk Division
Spring Dinner Meeting**, Orion
Middle School, Orion CUSD 223

**March 18 – Western Division
Spring Dinner Meeting**, West
Prairie High School, Sciota

**March 31 – South Cook Division
Spring Dinner Meeting**, Double-
Tree Hotel, Alsip

**April 6 – Starved Rock Spring Leg-
islative Dinner Meeting**,
Parkside School ESD 124, Peru

**April 10-12 – NSBA Annual Con-
ference**, Chicago

**April 20 – Wabash Valley Division
Summer Governing Meeting**,
The Holiday, Olney

**April 22 – Illini Division Summer
Governing Meeting**, TBD

**April 27 – West Cook Division
Spring Dinner Meeting**, Elmcrest
Banquets, Elmwood Park

For more information about coming events, see the IASB Web site at www.iasb.com/calendar/.