

Illinois SCHOOL BOARD Newsbulletin

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State offers guidance on weather emergency days

Each school district is required to schedule at least five emergency days in their school calendar to be used at the discretion of the district. But state officials say the used days must be made up prior to the end of the school year.

The harsh winter of 2013-2014 is hardly over, and already many districts have used five days or more. In the 400,000-student Chicago Public Schools, where school is rarely canceled, for example, four of the six snow days declared within the past decade were announced this winter. And that was just through the end of January.

Grundy County Regional Superintendent of Schools Chris Mehochko notes that the Illinois State Board of Education's mandate that schools build



Winter weather that closes schools due to hazardous conditions is the focus of new guidance.

five emergency dates into their school calendar is down from the 10 such days that were required in the past.

Any unused emergency days must be removed prior to submitting the final school calendar. The Illinois State

Board of Education has a guidance document on the approval process for public school calendars posted at: http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/ps_guidelines.pdf.

But what happens after a district uses all of its five proposed emergency days and administrators must close the district due to a weather emergency or other condition beyond the control of the district? If the situation poses a hazardous threat to the health and safety of students, they may request approval for an Act of God day or modify their calendar to schedule additional days at the end of the school year.

An Act of God Day must be approved by the appropriate Region-

See **WEATHER** on page 4

Illinois district honored for boosting AP access, positive results

An Illinois school district is being honored for increasing access and performance, particularly for traditionally underrepresented minority students.



Nicholas Polyak

Leyden CHSD 212, Franklin Park (West Cook Division), has been named the College Board Advanced Placement® Equity and Excellence Dis-

trict of the Year for being the nation's leader, among small school districts, in simultaneously expanding access to Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) courses and improving AP Exam performance.

Leyden's students, teachers, district and school administrators, local public officials, and College Board leaders celebrated these achievements during an award ceremony Jan. 27.

"The College Board is proud to recognize the students, faculty, and administrators of Leyden High School District 212 for their innovation and

commitment to setting high standards for student achievement," said College Board President David Coleman.

But the district is not the only public school system to be honored by AP. In November 2013, District 212 was one of 477 school districts across the U.S. and Canada, including 30 from Illinois, that achieved placement on the Annual AP District Honor Roll.

Other Illinois districts on that honor roll were: **Aurora West USD 129; Ball Chatham CUSD 5; Barring-**

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School discipline guidance

Federal officials released a school discipline guidance package Jan. 8 to assist districts and schools in developing practices and strategies to enhance school climate and boost school compliance with federal law. Although school violence has decreased overall, officials noted, some still struggle to create positive, safe environments. To view the documents, visit <http://www.ed.gov/school-discipline>.

FY 2015 funding proposal

ISBE approved a Fiscal Year 2015 budget recommendation on Jan. 23 that seeks a \$1.08 billion increase over the current year, which would meet the statutory minimum General State Aid Foundation Level. The plan provides for a Foundation Level commitment of \$6,119 per student. Higher funding is sought in line items such as early childhood education (up \$25 million) and bilingual education (up \$12.3 million), and an additional \$450 million in capital funding to upgrade technology. Last year, GSA received a statewide proration of 88.7 percent, amounting to a \$562 million shortfall in GSA payments to schools.

Legislative update shared

ISBE legislative staff recently reported to the board on some of the agency's legislative initiatives. One new issue discussed was charter school legislation: it was suggested that if charters are denied by a local board then perhaps the question should go to a local referendum vote. A second dealt with property tax exemptions, and a third with improving school funding. The board also talked about last year's legislation on district interventions, clarifying that the Center for School Improvement will be involved in this by looking at the districts in the lowest five percent of state achievement scores.

5Essentials survey to return for second year March 17 to April 25

Educators and students across Illinois have an opportunity this spring to participate in the second annual Illinois "5Essentials" Survey. This state learning climate survey, a tool developed by university researchers, is designed to provide detailed data on leading indicators for school improvement.

The survey grew from research conducted by the University of Chicago about what makes a school successful. The work identified five indicators that lead to important student outcomes, including improved attendance and larger test score gains.

All district schools, including alternative schools that fall under the district's domain, now are required by law to participate at least every other year. This year, all districts participating in the federal "Race to the Top" grant program and those that did not participate last year will be required to participate.

All other districts still have the option to participate and are strongly encouraged to do so, according to State Superintendent Chris Koch.

Last year, all certified teachers, and students in grades 6 through 12, were asked to participate in the online survey. Parent participation was optional at the discretion of the district. Respondent identities and individual responses were kept completely confidential, according to state officials, an act that drew criticism from some school critics.

Surveys were completed last year by 85 percent of students and 81.5 percent of teachers in grades six through 12 across the state.

This year's survey will be open March 17 to April 25 and results will be released in June to principals and superintendents. A summary of the 5Essential results will be reported publicly on the State School Report Card website at <http://illinoisreportcard.com>.

ISBE is also soliciting principal and superintendent feedback on the



5Essentials and other statewide initiatives, Koch added.

"Last year, Superintendent Koch's decision to support the use of the data gathered during the first Five Essentials Survey on school improvement efforts and collaboration, rather than to compare districts and create winners and losers, was very much appreciated by local school districts," said IASB Executive Director Roger Eddy.

"We are hopeful that the intended value of this survey, which is to promote continued school improvement planning is the focus again this year," said Eddy.

For more on this 5Essentials survey from ISBE and the University of Chicago, visit <http://illinois.5-essentials.org> or contact ISBE via email at 5essentials@uchicago.edu or by phone at (866)440-1874.

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.

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**ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

IASB leaders contribute to long-term Vision 20/20 project conceptualizing future of public education

At a Jan. 23 meeting, IASB officers and staff joined three working groups organized by the Illinois Association of School Administrators to develop recommendations for IASA's "Vision 20/20" initiative.

The project, whose name refers not only to the time frame of the year 2020 but also to providing a clear focus on the mission of public education, has joined many stakeholders from throughout the state.

Participants at the January meeting submitted their recommendations and will be working at their next meeting April 24 to refine their proposals in anticipation of a June deadline for the final report.

"That is a very ambitious schedule, but an important one, given the fact that we will elect a governor in November," said IASA Executive Director Brent Clark.



Brent Clark

The IASA Board of Directors in November overwhelmingly supported the proposal to move forward with the visioning process to develop a long-range blueprint for improving public education in Illinois.

"The mountain educators in Illinois have to climb is high and getting much steeper, with more and more unfunded mandates, a litany of reform measures that have limited or no proven



record of success, and the raising of federal and state standards," Clark said. "All of this is converging at the same time budgets are being slashed and teachers are being laid off, resulting in larger class sizes and less individualized instruction.

"It's easy to say those things are wrong, but just being anti-something doesn't really help solve problems. We need to offer a better plan, and the visioning initiative will help us accomplish that goal."

The initiative is intended to be student centered, which has led IASA to ask each district superintendent to interview students and record and share responses to the question: "What would the perfect school look like in your mind?"

The ultimate objectives for the Vision 20/20 initiative are:

- Unite the Illinois education community around a vision to improve education in Illinois
- Document the consensus among Illinois educators for creating a desired future vision of education in Illinois

- Provide a common voice from the Illinois education community to guide state policy

Six subcommittees will eventually provide expertise around functional areas of the initiative and serve as regional representation from the statewide educational community.

IASB is represented on the subcommittees, along with the Illinois Principals' Association (IPA), the Illinois Association of School Business Officials (IASBO), the Superintendents' Commission for the Study of Demographics and Diversity (SCSDD), and the Illinois Association of Regional School Superintendents (IARSS).

"IASB officers and staff have been actively contributing in workgroups to discussions on governance and finance, digital learning and assessment and accountability, and leadership and organizational transformation," said Deputy Executive Director Ben Schwarm.

The subcommittees also are to include superintendents representing each of IASA's 21 regions.

Illinois Virtual School to host seminar for online, blended learning

The Illinois Virtual School will host a "Planning for Online and Blended Learning Symposium" for school boards, district superintendents, and staff on Feb. 26 in Lisle. The symposium is in partnership with the new Illinois CoSN chapter, Education Technology Council of Illinois, Kane County Regional Office of Education and the Illinois Association of School Business Officials (Illinois ASBO).

The symposium is designed to assist superintendents, staff and school boards in planning fully online or blended learning solutions for students. John Watson, founder of the Evergreen Education Group, will be the keynote speaker, sharing data and trends regarding online learning.

The symposium's agenda will include:

- Leadership and policy panel to discuss online learning

- Status of Charter School Commission Report on Virtual Schooling
- Remote Education Act
- Tools and strategies to begin a local online/blended program

Cost of the event is \$50, which includes lunch. Online registration is available through Illinois ASBO at: https://www.iasbo.org/exweb/DynamicPage.aspx?Site=IASBO&WebCode=EventDetail&ext_key=f79b3552-7b82-4f53-89d3-e2e1d087d63c

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ton CUSD 220; Batavia Unit School District 101; Central Community Unit School District 301, Burlington; Chicago District 299; Community High School District 94, West Chicago; CHSD 128, Vernon Hills; CHSD 155, Crystal Lake; Community Unit School District 95; Community Unit School District 200; Consolidated School District 158, Huntley; Crete-Monee Community School District 201U, Crete; Dunlap CUSD 323, Peoria; Elmhurst CUSD 205; Geneseo CUSD 228; Geneva CUSD 304; Grant CHSD 124, Fox Lake; Indian Prairie CUSD 204, Naperville; Kankakee SD 111; Lake Park CHSD 108, Roselle; Lisle CUSD 202; Mahomet-Seymour CUSD 3; Niles THSD 219; St. Charles CUSD 303; THSD 214, Arlington Heights; Urbana SD 116; Valley View CUSD 365U; and Warren THSD 121, Gurnee.

From this list, the Leyden district was eventually chosen. Among the distinguishing accomplishments for District 212 was the fact that from 2010 to 2013, Leyden:

- Increased student participation in AP by 17 percent annually;
- Increased the percentage of AP students earning a 3 or higher on at least one AP Exam by 7 percent annually, with 64 percent of AP students scoring 3 or higher in 2013; and



AP classrooms are crowded at Leyden CHSD 212, including this one.

- Increased the percentage of traditionally underserved minority AP students earning a 3 or higher on at least one AP Exam by 16 percent annually — an increase of 50 students last year.

Increasing access to AP course work while simultaneously increasing the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher is the ideal scenario for a district's AP program, national AP program representatives said. They explained that this indicates the district is successfully preparing a larger array of its students for the rigor of AP and college studies.

Leyden High School District 212 fosters academic achievement in several different ways. In 2005, the district launched A Caring Community Ensuring Student Success (ACCESS) program, which involves over 50 staff members and 200 upperclassmen mentors who provide all high school

freshmen with a smooth introduction and support while in high school. Leyden also began a literacy initiative in 2009.

“This award is a validation of the countless hours of preparation students and teachers pour into Advanced Placement classes,” said Leyden Superintendent Nicholas Polyak. “We consider this a community-wide award, for a successful score on an Advanced Placement test is not a one-year achievement. This represents a culmination of the knowledge and skills developed over a student’s K–12 academic career.”

Polyak noted that Leyden students are provided with a wireless Chromebook laptop that allows them to connect, communicate, and collaborate. The combination of effective literacy strategies and instructional technology has become the focus of the district’s professional development model. Leyden also bestows its Excellence Award upon students who meet criteria in eight different areas — including taking at least one AP course — during their high school career.

Leyden High School District 212 is the small-sized district, defined as fewer than 8,000 students, selected to receive this year’s College Board Award. All three winning districts will be honored during the AP Annual Conference this July in Philadelphia.

Excel awards for 2014 will recognize leadership at banquet set for October

The Illinois State Board of Education has a program to recognize outstanding school board members, administrators, staff members, and teachers. “Those Who Excel” is a statewide program that annually recognizes contributions to public and nonpublic elementary and secondary education.

Nomination forms for the program were recently mailed out to

school districts and they also can be found online at http://www.isbe.net/pdf/those_who_excel.pdf.

Nominations are due by June 8. The 2014-2015 awards will be presented at the 40th annual Those Who Excel banquet at the Bloomington-Normal Marriott next October.

Information is available from ISBE’s Ann Muraro-Lacopo, at 217/782-4648 or by e-mail at amuraro@isbe.net.

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al Superintendent and the State Superintendent of Education. Act of God Days reduce the required number of student attendance days in the school calendar, but do not negatively impact General State Aid.

For more information about completing official school calendars, school leaders may contact Marj Beck in ISBE’s Funding and Disbursement Division at mbeck@isbe.net or by calling (217) 782-5256.

NSBA's April conference to feature IASB staff presentations

Aims to offer broad national perspective, focus on key concerns

The National School Boards Association's 74th Annual Conference to be held April 5-7 in New Orleans will focus on transforming and inspiring school leaders in order to advance the education of America's children. Sessions are organized into focus areas such as governance, innovations in district management, legal and legislative advocacy, professional development, student achievement, and more.

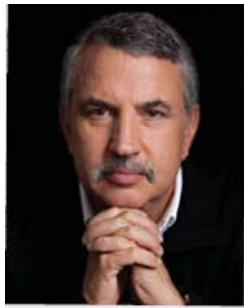
Sponsors say attendees will find it simple to align their conference sessions with the specific content that fosters growth and supports school leaders, staff and students

IASB will be active at the conference. Among the participants will be: Donna Johnson, director of executive searches; Thomas Leahy, executive searches consultant; Jennifer Feld, associate executive director and chief financial officer; Patrick Rice, director of field services; and Heath Hendren, assistant director of communications.

Cathy Talbert, associate executive director, field services and policy services will be attending the NSBA National Council of School Attorneys State Association Counsel Meeting and School Law Seminar immediately prior to the conference.

Ben Schwarm, deputy executive director and head of the IASB Governmental Relations Department, will be presenting in a half-day interactive seminar on local control for school districts and those issues which threaten that standard. He will be joined in the presentation by his legislative counterparts from the New York, North Carolina, and Arizona school boards associations.

The first session will be a presentation by the panelists while the second session will be moderating small group discussions on establishing a strategic plan to address those challenges.



Saturday, April 5
Thomas L. Friedman



Sunday, April 6
Sir Ken Robinson



Monday, April 7
Simon T. Bailey



Other staff members scheduled to make presentations at the conference include: Sandra Kwasa, director of board development, and Nesa Brauer, a consultant on board development. They will offer a pre-conference, half-day workshop on The Data Made Me Do It! Using Data to Make Difficult Decisions in Difficult Times on Friday, April 4. Brauer will also present a brief session on Data-Driven Decision Making as part of the New Board Member Boot Camp on Saturday. Kwasa will also join a presentation for urban school boards that same day.

The Association will also be represented at the NSBA Delegate Assembly. Illinois delegates will include: President Karen Fisher, Vice President Phil Pritzker, Immediate Past PresidentCarolyn Brooks, and Treasurer Dale Hansen. Alternates are directors Rosemary Swanson, DuPage Division, and Jackie Mickley, Blackhawk Division.

More than 350 Illinois school district representatives are registered to attend the NSBA conference so far,

including nearly 250 board members, 46 board presidents, and 38 superintendents.

An immediate highlight for many school leaders at NSBA's 2014 Conference will be a reception scheduled on Friday, April 4. All Illinois and other Midwest-region attendees are invited to participate, along with their family/guest.

This year's general session speakers include newspaper columnist and author Thomas L. Friedman, speaker and creativity expert Sir Ken Robinson, and leadership author Simon T. Bailey.

Details regarding registration, housing, speakers, seminars, and tours and attractions are available from the NSBA Annual Conference home page at <http://annualconference.nsba.org/>.



"My family buys a lot of school supplies."

NSBA honors Culler for 50 years of excellence at IASB

Patricia Culler, IASB's assistant to the executive director for meetings management, has received the 2014 Thomas Shannon Award for Excellence from the National School Boards Association (NSBA). Culler was honored at NSBA's Leadership Conference in Washington on Feb. 2.



Patricia Culler

Culler began working at IASB in 1964, when the organization had five employees. Today it has more than 70.

"In her remarkable career, Pat has become an extremely valuable asset to our Illinois affiliate," said NSBA Executive Director Thomas J. Gentzel. "Her work and the relationships she has cultivated over the past 50 years have helped build the organization, which in turn improves public schools for the children in Illinois."

The Shannon Award, established in 1997 in honor of former NSBA Executive Director Thomas A. Shannon, is given annually to recognize extraordinary efforts performed on behalf of

NSBA, local school board constituencies and school communities.

IASB Executive Director Roger Eddy echoed Gentzel's praises.

"Pat Culler has demonstrated that one person can make a difference, not only to one state school board association, but to a national mission," he said. "When she started, IASB was a small organization working out of a few offices. Now, largely due to Pat's efforts over the years, it is among the national leaders in fulfilling the mission of excellence in local school governance in support of quality public education. She is retiring after 50 years of dedicated service to IASB and this award is a fitting capstone to an amazing career."

Culler is responsible for managing the logistics for IASB's annual conference, which draws more than 10,000 attendees, and other organization events. She also works closely with IASB's executive director and board of directors to facilitate information and communications.

In accepting the Shannon Award, Pat Culler said she was humbled to receive the honor.

"To me, the people that deserve this award are the local board members who take time out of their lives,

at their own expense and at the expense of their family, to serve the kids. They are the ones that this award really represents," Culler said.

"The people who came before us and built this organization (IASB) really deserve the credit," Culler continued. "I wouldn't want to do anything else. Everyday has been a joy since I've been here at IASB."

IASB is one of the oldest state school board associations in the country, having celebrated its 100-year anniversary in December 2013. The mission of the Illinois Association of School Boards is "excellence in local school governance in support of quality public education."

More information about NSBA's 2014 Leadership Conference can be found at <http://www.nsba.org/leadership/>.

Founded in 1940, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) is a not-for-profit organization representing state associations of school boards and their more than 90,000 local school board members throughout the U.S. Working with and through the state associations, NSBA advocates for equity and excellence in public education through school board leadership.

NSBA Advocacy Institute draws good reviews in federal lobbying

The 2014 National School Boards Association's (NSBA) Advocacy Institute, formerly the Federal Relations Network (FRN) Conference, was a great success, according to attendees from Illinois.

The Illinois delegation included seven school board members and a superintendent. The delegates attended two days of informational sessions on a wide variety of national education issues, and then had a long and productive day lobbying on Capitol Hill.

On Feb. 4, the Advocacy Institute delegates visited their congressional offices to discuss reauthorizing the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) also known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), protecting formula funding for Title I and IDEA in lieu of competitive grant programs that only benefit a few, and maintaining local control.

The FRN delegates met with Congressmen Davis, Duckworth, Schneider and Senator Kirk; and staff from



U.S. Senator Mark Kirk greets the Illinois Delegation at his office in Washington, DC. The visitors included IASB President Karen Fisher, and Vice President Phil Pritzker.

the offices of Congressmen Kinzinger, Roskam, Shimkus and Senator Durbin.

None of the officials expressed any hope that ESEA would be reauthorized this year.

NEWS HEADLINES

Champaign (Jan. 15, *Champaign News-Gazette*) The Champaign Unit 4 Schools and Urbana District 116 schools recently honored the people guiding the next generation as part of National Mentoring Month. To celebrate, the school districts held a luncheon for those who take a child under their wing as a mentee. The Champaign-Urbana One-to-One Mentoring program, for example, pairs adults with students to help. But it's not just the mentees that benefit. Mentors say they learn a lot from the experience.

Chatham (Jan. 23, *WICS Channel 20*) A school bus camera safety option may be too costly for some school districts. A new law may help cut down on drivers breaking the law and endangering students as school districts now have the option to install a camera on the outside of the bus. The aim would be to catch drivers who don't stop when the bus is stopped and kids are getting on or off. But the problem is the cost: about \$10,000 for four cameras. That's money that's not in the budget, or most school districts' budgets, and money that's not coming from the state.

Decatur (Jan. 29, *Herald & Review*) Decatur schools have decided to put classroom breakfast in all their K-8 classrooms over the next two years. During a Jan. 28 board meeting, board members heard a pro-

posal to expand Breakfast in the Classroom, now in six of the elementary buildings, to all the K-8 buildings and to make breakfast free to all students, whether they are eligible for free meals or not. Todd Covault, director of business affairs, said that the district receives reimbursement of \$1.94 for each child eligible for free breakfast, and pays Aramark Corp. \$1.58 for each breakfast. The 36 cents generated for each free breakfast, plus the 28-cent reimbursement for students who pay full price is adequate to offset costs. The plan is to add two schools this year, four next year and four the following year.

Georgetown (Jan. 15, *Champaign News-Gazette*) Georgetown-Ridge Farm CUSD 2 recently agreed to launch a school reorganization survey on the district's website. School board members from the district and from Westville CUSD 2 have been meeting since the fall about a possible merger. Georgetown-Ridge Farm Superintendent Jean Neal said officials from the two districts developed a survey to gauge what the community thinks about the state of their school district, what steps respondents think would improve their district, and whether they think the two school boards should continue to exploring a merger. The survey contains questions about school governance, finances, curriculum, extracurricular activities and facili-

ties.

Statewide (Jan. 22, *Chicago Tribune*) School breakfast participation is on the rise in Illinois. A new national report finds that nearly 46 low-income children in Illinois ate school breakfast for every 100 who received free or reduced-price lunch during the 2012–2013 school year, an increase from the previous school year. The report finds that on an average school day in 2012-2013, 10.8 million low-income children participated in school breakfast, an increase of 311,000 from the previous year. For the second consecutive year, over half of all low-income students who participated in school lunch also received school breakfast. Ten states – including Illinois – experienced more than five percent increases from the previous year.

Warrensburg (Jan. 27, *ISBE Superintendent's Weekly Message*) Rebecca Wattleworth, a math and science teacher at Warrensburg-Latham CUSD 11 in Warrensburg, has been selected as a national teacher fellow by the Hope Street Group. She is one of only 13 educators nationwide to be invited to participate in this fellowship program and is this year's representative from Illinois. All the fellows attended an intensive orientation and training program in Washington, DC, in mid-January, to learn how to best engage and amplify the voices of their peers in solving the toughest issues.

Intent-to-strike notices not rare this school year

As of Feb. 4, a total of eight Illinois school districts have received active intent-to-strike notices for this school year, with only one strike having been staged.

Another recent settlement was obtained Jan. 13 in **Mendota CCSD 289**, where a walkout by about 60 teachers had been set for that day.

The most recent new intent-to-strike notice was filed on Jan. 30 in **Mount Prospect SD 57**, where 160 teachers are without a contract. School districts also face intent-to-strike notices in at least seven other districts: : **Central School District 104, O'Fallon; McHenry CHSD 156; Teutopolis CUSD 50; Sherrard CUSD 200; Anna-Jonesboro CHSD 81; Dixon CUSD 170**; and

Macomb CUSD 185.

Up to date information about the status of these notices and other new actions can be found at the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board website: www2.illinois.gov/elrb/. After accessing the website, the proposals are available by clicking a link on the left side of the page entitled "impasse final offers."

Latest lawsuit seeks to overturn landmark pension changes

Public employee unions file lawsuit aimed at pension reform law

A group of Illinois' largest public employee unions filed a lawsuit in late January to overturn the state's new pension law. While others have already filed challenges to the pension changes, the "We Are One Illinois" coalition represents the largest group of current and retired public employees, with over 600,000 retirees and workers covered by the state pension systems.

The We Are One plaintiffs include members of the Illinois AFL-CIO, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the Illinois Education Association (IEA), the Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Illinois Fraternal Order of Police State Lodge and other public employee unions.

The pension legislation, Senate



Bill 1, was passed by the General Assembly and signed by the governor in December 2013. Lawmakers approved the measure with the goal of reducing the state's \$100 billion unfunded pension liability.

The bill achieves savings largely by cutting retirement benefits. Under the legislation, retirees and current employees enrolled in the state retirement systems will see a reduction in their annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA); a suspension of the COLA in varying degrees for current employees upon their retirement; a raise in the retirement age for current employees under the age of 46; and a pensionable salary cap for Tier

I employees that is the same as that of Tier II employees (those hired after Jan. 1, 2011).

The We Are One Illinois lawsuit cites the Illinois Constitution as reason why the pension changes should be tossed out by the court.

The strongly worded lawsuit refers to the benefit changes made by the General Assembly and governor as "pension theft" which should be ruled unconstitutional. The We Are One coalition argues that public employee workers and retirees have held up their end of the bargain when it comes to contributing their portion of retirement savings, but continues, "the same cannot be said of the state."

Supporters of the legislation have contended components included in the bill would help the pension modifications survive a court challenge by giving pension system members "consideration." When the General

See **PENSION** on page 10

Referendum on March ballot is 'do or die' for one school district

In addition to 16 counties that have placed sales tax questions for school facilities on the March primary ballot, at least one district is facing a "do or die" proposition.

Grant CCSD 110, Fairview Heights (Southwestern Division), has a property tax increase proposal that, in

effect, is an 85-cent tax rate hike, bringing the rate from \$1.42 to \$2.27 per \$100 of assessed valuation. However, since the district plans to pay off a series of bonds, the actual impact will be much lower than that, about 40 cents of increase per \$100 of equalized assessed valuation.

The net effect will cost owners of a \$100,000 home about \$8.25 more per month, according to Superintendent Matt Stines. The referendum would raise \$700,000 a year.

If the referendum doesn't pass, Stines said the district cannot continue to operate.

Survey of small and rural school districts raises concerns on Common Core

A new survey of school administrators in small and rural Illinois schools shows their top concerns were class sizes, course offerings and Common Core standards. Small and rural schools were defined as having fewer than 2,500 students and being located more than 10 miles from cities of 50,000 people.

The survey of 105 rural Illinois schools in 2012 and 66 in 2013 also shows there is still work to be done before the new Common Core standards can be in full use in the state.

"Our overarching goal is to lend

a voice to rural schools, to show how important they are and continue to be," said **Delavan CUSD 703** Superintendent Mary Parker, who conducted the survey in concert with **Pekin CHSD 303** Superintendent Gary Depatis, and **Beecher CUSD 200U** Superintendent Tami Roskamp.

The three administrators recently shared their observations with Lt. Gov. Sheila Simon. They also were among the speakers at the Joint Annual Conference in November.

Among the surprises they uncovered: only a few districts are expect-

ing to consolidate within the next five years and most rural teachers continue to teach primarily in their areas of expertise.

In sharing information about Common Core, respondents said part of their concern with the new standards is that testing will be done with computers yet many rural districts don't have bandwidth to accommodate it. Some rural and small school leaders indicated they may need additional technology and infrastructure to meet the guidelines, Depatis said.

The survey is not yet available.

IASB LeaderShop Academy members urged to 'save the date' for symposium

The sixth biennial School Board LeaderShop Academy Invitational Symposium will focus on "The Talk, the Truth, the Crucial Conversations about America's Schools" This event is set for June 21 at the Westin Hotel in Itasca.

The School Board LeaderShop Academy promotes and recognizes board members' efforts toward continuous learning and professional development. As board members work their way through IASB's School Board LeaderShop curriculum, they earn and maintain academy membership.

One of the benefits of Academy membership includes an invitation to attend the symposium. The event program this year features guest speaker and facilitator John Draper, consultant to the National School Public Relations Association and CEO of the Educational Research Service in Washington, D.C. A former school district superintendent and an author, Draper's key message is that public

schools are better than ever.

Registration details will be available in late February.

Invitation is limited to current LeaderShop Academy members and their superintendents. There are more than 1,215 Illinois school board members who qualify for membership.

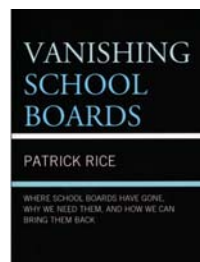
Admission to the Academy requires completion of three School Board LeaderShop workshops. At least two of these workshops must be from the "core" curriculum relating to effective school district governance, and one of those must be the school district governance basics. The third workshop may be either a core or an "elective" offering focusing on additional board and board member skills that promote effective school district leadership.

To learn more about School Board LeaderShop, curriculum offerings or the Academy, visit the IASB website at http://www.iasb.com/training/leadershop_info.cfm.

New book by IASB staff member Rice tells why boards are vital yet endangered

In a new book, *Vanishing School Boards*, author and IASB staff member Patrick Rice describes efforts to marginalize boards. He also lists reasons why school boards are vital and essential, and discusses the importance of board training and how the superintendent can assist the board in the mission of delivering a quality education to all students.

Rice argues that ever since the release of *A Nation at Risk*, and the subsequent pursuit of NCLB and Race to the Top, the institution of school boards has been under attack. Increasingly, boards are disappearing from national discussions about promoting student achievement, and the board role as school decision-maker has significantly declined in some



Patrick Rice

quarters, he writes.

What is more, the aims of public education are increasingly being federalized and privatized, Rice states, thereby undermining the local control of public schools that school boards have long practiced and championed.

Vanishing School Boards (298 pages, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013) is available from IASB online bookstore, <http://www.iasb.com/shop/>.

NEWS FROM IASB

New member district

IASB recently added a new member school district: **Ohio CCSD 17**, which is located in IASB's Starved Rock Division. IASB currently has 850 member districts, leaving just nine non-member school districts in the state. That total translates to a 99 percent membership ratio, the highest in the history of the Association.

Conference handouts

Handouts from 56 of the panels presented at the 2013 Joint Annual Conference are still available to view and download from IASB's Members-Only website. Handouts will be available through Sep. 1 and they can be accessed by logging into the IASB Members-Only website at: <http://members.iasb.com>. For more information on the Members-Only website, please see: <http://www.iasb.com/press/memonly.cfm>. Handouts have been downloaded more than 3,500 times since November.

Note: Panels are only listed if materials have been submitted. Additional panels and their online materials will be posted as they are received.

Board to meet

IASB's Board of Directors will meet Feb. 21-22 at the Hyatt Regency hotel, in downtown Chicago. Topics on the board meeting agenda will include: committee assignments, an audit committee report, a budget update and FY15 budget assumptions preview, a legislative update, IHSA update, the membership report and a review of the executive director's contract.

Action agenda items will include board monitoring of various aspects of the governance culture and operational expectations, as well as the board's review and approval of the Annual Work Calendar.

Panel ideas in works for 2014 conference

Feb. 14 was the deadline for school districts to submit “Share the Success” panel proposals to IASB for presentation at the 2014 Joint Annual Conference.

A committee of Association members will meet March 7 to evaluate all of the proposals put forward. Districts that submitted proposals will find out in mid-April if they are accepted.

Proposals were made electronically. Panel suggestions were submitted by filling out forms online in any of the following categories: governance/leadership; finance and funding; current issues; community relations and communications; school law; facilities/transportation/technology; best practices; or governmental relations.

The chosen panels will be presented at the Conference, which this year is set for Nov. 21-23 in Chicago.

Member training tools now include videos

The Association has developed a series of videos designed to help viewers understand school boards, and their role and function. Video presenters are current and recent IASB field services directors.

The videos range in length from 13 to 37 minutes and address the following topics:

- Foundational Principles of Effective Governance, which define what IASB believes about the governing role of an effective school board;
- School Board Governance Images;
- School Board Policy;
- District Vision, Focus and Planning, and
- Board-Superintendent Relations

For more information and to access the videos on the IASB website, visit: <http://iasb.com/training/bgvideos.cfm>.

PENSION *from page 8*

Assembly approved changes to the state pension systems, legislative language was written to allow the pension systems to sue if the state fails to pay their allotted portion. Legislators also reduced the amount of required employee contributions by 1 percent. The We Are One lawsuit argues the “consideration” clause is insufficient.

Similar lawsuits have already been filed by other groups seeking to overturn the recent pension changes. The Illinois Retired Teachers Association and the Illinois Association of School Administrators jointly filed a lawsuit in Cook County in late December, while the Retired State Employees Association and Illinois State Employees Association Retirees have proceeded to file suit in Sangamon County. The We Are One Illinois lawsuit was also filed in Sangamon County Circuit Court.

Because of the parallel nature of all the lawsuits, Attorney General Lisa Madigan has asked that they be con-

solidated and heard before a Cook County court. All lawsuits have asked for similar remedies, including attorneys’ fees.

Association leaders have said IASB will not be filing a lawsuit in the matter because the association is not directly impacted by the law.

“Although no one expects a court decision on the merits of the cases to come down any time soon, guidance will be needed before then as to how (or whether) implementation should proceed on June 1,” said Deputy Executive Director Ben Schwarm.

“For example, the law decreases the pension contribution of a school district employee who participates in TRS by 1%. On June 1, what should be collected for TRS, 9.4% or 8.4%? If the law is later overturned by the court, what happens if the contributions collected were not enough (or too much),” Schwarm added.

The TRS perspective is on its website at: <http://trs.illinois.gov/>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 15 – Professional Development Leadership Training & Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PDLT & PERA), Carbondale

February 21-22 – IASB Board of Directors’ Meeting, Chicago

February 22 – Professional Development Leadership Training & Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PDLT & PERA), Chicago Heights

February 25 – Abe Lincoln Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Springfield

February 25 – Shawnee Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Cairo

February 26 – Southwestern Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Alton

February 27 – Illini Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Homer

March 4 – Wabash Valley Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Casey

March 4 – Northwest Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Morrison

March 4 – Three Rivers Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Joliet

March 4 – Kaskaskia Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Vandalia

March 5 – Central Illinois Valley Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Pekin

March 6 – DuPage Division Dinner Meeting, Addison

March 6 – Two Rivers Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Concord

March 6 – Egyptian Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Nashville

March 6 – Blackhawk Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Port Byron

March 12 – Lake Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Wadsworth

March 13 – Starved Rock Division Spring Dinner Meeting, LaSalle

March 13 – Corn Belt Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Streator

For more information about coming events, see the IASB website:

www.iasb.com/calendar