

Illinois SCHOOL BOARD Newsbulletin

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NSBA executive Anne L. Bryant, second from left, praised Park Forest Chicago Heights S.D. 163 leaders for increasing student learning. She posed with Board Member Melvin Pumphrey, left, Superintendent Joyce Carmine, second from right and District 163 Vice President Margaret McDannel. Bryant spoke at IASB's 'Rally' on Feb. 27 in Lombard.

Governor's plan for \$300 million budget hike faces uphill climb

Lawmakers wary of stability of proposed new revenue sources

To no one's surprise, Governor Rod Blagojevich has called for a \$300 million boost in school spending — \$260 million less than last year's increase — for Fiscal Year 2009. That amount matches the level of new spending on schools suggested by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), which is largely under the governor's control.

Blagojevich also proposed new initiatives when he delivered his combined State of the State and budget address on Feb. 20. The initiative ranged from tax rebate checks for families with children to a business tax cut, contingent on selling off the Illinois Lottery and getting legislative support for other financial maneuvers.

The governor also reintroduced several of his own earlier suggestions. His proposal, for example, to privatize the state lottery to try to shore up state pension funds was rejected by lawmakers last year. But the sale

NSBA official urges Illinois school leaders to keep schooling relevant

Anne L. Bryant, executive director of the National School Boards Association (NSBA), told an audience at IASB's Rally for Public Education in Lombard on Feb. 27 that today's education system, increasingly driven by federal requirements, faces irrelevance unless leaders bridge the gap between how students live and how they learn.

The Rally drew 237 school board members, superintendents and other school leaders. Other speakers at the event included Michael D. Johnson, IASB executive director, and Mark C. Metzger, IASB president.

Johnson pointed to the strong historical ties between IASB and NSBA. He reported, for example, that Illinois association executives played a central role in the creation of NSBA. "In February 1940 [when] the first national association for school board members was formed, Illinois was a founding state. In 1945 they were reorganized and Robert M. Cole, the first full-time executive of IASB was the secretary. In 1948 the organization became NSBA and was housed at Northwestern University until moving to

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NEWS FROM ISBE

Making ISAT test changes could impact district scores

Schools and school districts with many students with limited English proficiency could see lower standardized test scores this year because of a federally required change in state testing policy. Students in grades three through eight took the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) in March. That exam is given annually to track student achievement and determine compliance with the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law.

In past years, however, students with limited knowledge of English took an alternate test called IMAGE. (Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English). In 2008 those students began taking the same ISAT as their English-speaking counterparts.

More than 360,000 students go online to prepare for ISAT

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) announced on March 3 that more than 360,000 interactive Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) practice tests had been accessed online as students got ready for statewide testing. The ISAT tests were administered during the next few weeks in schools throughout Illinois and the interactive tests to prepare students were available online at <http://metacat2.com/iltestlinks.html>.

“The interactive tests provide parents and students with an idea of the type of questions to expect on the ISAT, which will, hopefully, relieve some test anxiety and help students to be more confident as they prepare to take the tests,” said State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch. “I think the amount of interest in the website demonstrates the emphasis No Child Left Behind has placed on state testing,” Koch said.

State Board seeking nominations by May 16 for Those Who Excel awards

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has announced that nominations must be postmarked by May 16 to suggest worthy award recipients to be singled out in the 35th annual Those Who Excel/Teacher of the Year competition. Outstanding teachers, administrators, student support personnel, educational service personnel and community members will be honored by ISBE. One highlight of an awards banquet in October will be the announcement of Illinois' Teacher of the Year for 2008-2009.

Candidates are nominated by their local schools and people in their communities. The nomination must include a brief biography of the nominee, his or her philosophy of education, professional development and community involvement, and opinions of the state's most pressing educational needs. Letters of recommendation are also required.

A committee of peers chooses the award winners. The committee represents statewide education organizations and includes former award winners.

The categories for recognition are:

- Classroom teacher
- School administrator/principal
- Student support personnel (certificated)
- Educational service personnel (non-certificated)
- School board member and/or community volunteer (only one may be nominated per district—either a school board member or volunteer)
- Teams, which recognizes groups of teachers and administrators; citizen committees; civic organizations; parent organizations; school boards; booster clubs and others that have a significant impact on teaching and learning in a school or district
- Early career educator, for teachers in their 2nd-5th years of teaching



Awards are presented at three levels of excellence. Last year all levels of awards were presented at the banquet. In 2007 there were:

- 38 recipients of the highest award level, Excellence
- 55 recipients of the Award of Merit
- 70 recipients of the Award of Recognition

Teacher of the Year finalists comprise all teachers given the Award of Excellence. Finalists sit for a videotaped interview as part of the selection process. The Teacher of the Year serves as the state's ambassador for teaching and represents Illinois in the National Teacher of the Year programs sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers, and ING.

For more information about the program, contact ISBE's Public Information office at 217/782-4648.

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Illinois Association of School Boards

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'Coffee' topics planned for Sunday a.m. at Conference

Planning is well under way for the 2008 Joint Annual Conference, to be held Nov. 21-23 in Chicago. Last year several hundred board members, superintendents and other interested school leaders attended Sunday morning "Coffee and Conversation Sessions" at the Conference to share ideas.

IASB will be offering attendees at the 2008 conference this same opportunity for discussion around important school leadership concerns on Sunday morning. Although the fol-

lowing list of topics may change slightly, it offers some idea of the kind of discussion planned (note that this list just covers broad topic areas, not specific titles or content):

- Legal Issues
- Policy Issues
- Rural District Issues
- Student Learning Issues
- Board Members/Parent Issues
- Board Presidents
- Aspiring Superintendent

In addition, all "Share the Success" panel session ideas for the 2008 Joint Annual Conference were evaluated on March 7 in Springfield and Lombard and 20 to 30 winning proposals are currently being chosen. Associate Executive Director of Board Development Angela Peifer notes that 114 panels were submitted, up from 75 last year.

IASB Co-Chairs for the 2008 Conference are Directors Felton Jose, of **Salem SD 111**; and Joanne Osmond, of **Lake Villa CCSD 41**.

RALLY from page 1

Washington, D.C. in 1975," Johnson noted.

Bryant spoke to the state of public education, discussing the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act, in particular, and NSBA's recommendations for changing the federal law, acknowledging that changes in education are necessary. "Teaching both basic skills and 21st century skills are essential and, when done concurrently, they reinforce one another," she said, adding that is why preparing children to succeed must become the driving force behind school district programs and budgets.

"Our students are not just about the three R's anymore, and nor should our schools be. We need to create an entrepreneurial spirit in our students that will propel them into the future as the world continues to grow and change," Bryant said.

While NCLB has made schools increasingly test oriented, the law has also shifted the focus of schools toward data-driven decision making, and that is a good thing, she argued.

"Unfortunately, the problem comes when that data is skewed, unsupported, and my biggest issue – insufficient, which it is often under NCLB. We are measuring too little and too narrowly and basing an entire accountability system around it," Bryant said.

Research shows NCLB reduces

class time spent on subjects other than reading and math, according to NSBA's top executive. Studies show, she said, that 71 percent of the nation's 15,000 school districts have reduced their hours of instructional time spent on history, music and other subjects in order to open up more time for reading and math, and Bryant said this practice must end.

NSBA is pushing for "much-needed changes" to NCLB and Bryant listed what her organization believes is wrong with the federal law. "First, funding levels are far from what Congress and the Bush Administration promised. Second, we have an accountability system that over-relies on narrow tests, causing the mislabeling of even our best schools as 'failing' or the proverbial 'needs improvement,' even though they are making progress. And, three, we have a one-size-fits-all approach that doesn't work for our nation's 48 million diverse students," she said.

NSBA is supporting Congressional bill H.R. 648, introduced by Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska), with 28 Republican and Democratic sponsors. The bill includes more than 40 recommendations for "common-sense improvements" that Bryant believes address many of the unintended consequences of the law.

H.R. 648 is consistent with the recommendations developed by NSBA,

and according to Bryant: "It grants greater flexibility to states and local school districts and promotes the use of growth models for school districts to use instead of a one-size-fits-all proficiency model dictated in NCLB. It allows schools and school districts to target resources to those students who need the most attention instead of labeling the entire school as 'needing improvement' because one small subgroup of children failed to meet AYP."

Bryant urged those in attendance at the rally, a joint meeting of IASB divisions located in the Chicago-land area, to get involved by working together to improve NCLB. Among her suggestions were joining one of the advocacy networks of NSBA, such as the National Affiliate Advocacy Network.

"Becoming a part of these networks will help you stay informed and inspire you to act. And perhaps most important, keep the conversation going in your communities, because public opinion does matter.

"We must be the ones to shape public opinion," Bryant added.

More information about the Rally is available online, including: more coverage of Bryant's remarks; and Illinois success stories she cited; as well as Distinguished Service Awards given by IASB at the event.

SAM project helps principals focus on instruction

McLean County Unit District 5 needs to add 20 new instruction-oriented building administrators over the next five years, administrators say, in order to fill jobs at schools to be built, and to replace retirees. The district would like to “grow” those school administrators from the ranks of current teachers, so it is turning to a program called SAM.

SAM, short for “School Administration Manager,” is part of a system that trains current teachers over two years to be administrators. The trainees also help with building management duties, giving administrators more time to work in the classrooms to improve achievement, according to Superintendent Gary Niehaus.

With a trained School Administration Manager (SAM) assigned to handle the organizational overflow, the principal also can achieve another program goal. That goal is getting into every classroom at least once a week to observe teachers and interact with students, a necessity in today’s NCLB environment.

Getting principals out of the office and into classrooms is not a new approach, of course. Many school reform efforts in the past two decades have emphasized the importance of redefining the principal’s default role as supervisor of “transportation, budgets, and attendance” to the school’s chief of instruction. What the SAM initiative does is systematize the process by showing principals exactly how they spend their time and how they can use it better. It encourages changes in professional practices driven by coaching and data.

Based on a study conducted in a district in Kentucky, the SAM project includes three key components. The first is hiring a business manager or reallocating the duties of an existing building administrator to focus on school operations. The second is routinely and accurately tracking the principal’s time to ensure that she or he does, in turn, emphasize instruc-

tion and learning. The third is coaching the principal to become a more effective and reflective leader.

The last aspect may be the most important, because if a principal doesn’t use the reallocated time well, then the effort will be wasted. An outside coach visits each principal monthly to provide support.

“This is not something you can just do. It’s something you practice,” said Mark Shelling, a former principal and superintendent who serves as the national expansion coordinator for the project. Shelling, a former principal and the national SAMs expansion coordinator, said the initiative began in 2002 with a study of more than 20 principals in Jefferson County, which includes the city of Louisville, Kentucky.

With support from The Wallace Foundation, principals and SAMs in nine states now receive extensive professional development and mentoring to help with the transitions. Participating districts agree to pay for the SAM positions over several years, and the foundation pays for training and data collection.

The SAM program is relatively new in Illinois. Normal’s Unit 5 is one of only three school districts the state — the others are the public school systems in Chicago and Springfield — to try out the program. The Wallace Foundation, which does research to develop educational leaders and resources, pays \$2,000 per principal for a time-use study as part of the process.

The statistical review is multi-dimensional. Principals, SAMs, and their mentors analyze both daily and longitudinal patterns to see how the administrators are spending their time and what adjustments they may need to make. As part of the process, trained outside observers spend a full week each year shadowing the principals and coding their work in five-minute increments to develop an accurate portrait of their management and instructional roles. The research shows

“We know a principal is making progress when he or she begins asking teachers to help.”

that most principals initially spend only about 30 percent of their time on activities that are directly related to learning. The majority of their work involves school operations, everything from cafeteria supervision to playground patrol.

The ratios usually reverse after just a year in the SAM program. A pilot study in Kentucky also found that the rate of student achievement gains doubled during the same period.

The concept isn’t new, according to Paul D. Houston, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). He said the challenge is in getting school boards to accept any extra expense, and in encouraging principals to let go of managerial tasks that are familiar.

Insiders say the SAM program focuses on a handful of components. Principals must have an in-depth analysis conducted on the way they’re spending their time. They must agree to meet daily with their SAM, and keep daily records of their tasks and the time they spend on them. Principals and SAMs also meet monthly with an outside coach, who works with both on ways to increase the time principals spend on instruction. Research has long indicated that this is the best role for principals.

Critics of the program sometimes express the concern that freeing up the principal’s time to engage in activities one would expect from an instructional leader will not automatically make the principal an instructional leader. But national program leaders are taking steps to address that con-

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IASB's School Board LeaderShop Academy set for June symposium

In June, members of the IASB School Board LeaderShop Academy will have the opportunity to attend a special bi-annual Academy Symposium designed especially for them. The event, held in even-numbered years, is scheduled to be held on June 21 at The Westin, Lombard.

The School Board LeaderShop Academy is designed to promote and recognize board members' efforts toward continuous learning and professional development. According to IASB Associate Executive Director Angela Peifer, who directs the association's School Board Development department, programs in both continuous learning and professional development are offered at regular intervals in four-year cycles. Those cycles coincide with the typical four-year term of office of school board members.

As board members work their way through the School Board LeaderShop curriculum, they earn and maintain membership in the Academy. Admission to Academy membership requires completion of three School Board LeaderShop programs.

At least two of these programs must be from the core curriculum and one of those must be the school district governance overview, the third program may be either a core or an elective offering.

Academy membership is maintained by completing at least one additional program (either core or elective) over a two-year period.

To learn more about IASB board training, including upcoming events and available resources and materials, visit the Association's Web site at: <http://www.iasb.com/training/>.

2008 economic interest statements due by May 1

State law requires school board members, certificated administrators and some non-administrative school district employees to file annual economic interest statements by May 1 with the clerk of the county where they reside. Such statements must be filed by May 1 unless the individuals required to file have already done so this calendar year.

Local school district superintendents are generally required to file, as well as school business officials and certificated administrators. Others required to file include: department heads responsible for large contracts (\$1,000 or more), those who have authority to issue or promulgate school district rules, and employees who have supervisory authority for 20 or more employees.

Individuals who have not received economic interest forms by mail should contact their county clerk to obtain the forms or additional information.

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cern about SAM.

Shellinger explains that principals must work with their coaches to determine how to improve their instructional leadership skills. "We know a principal is making progress when he or she begins asking teachers to help. We've found when a principal opens up and risks asking teachers how he or she can be a better instructional leader, good things begin to happen.

"Most principals in the project share their time data with staff and ask the question: 'How can I be better at this?'" The coach urges this kind of discussion with individual teachers and leadership teams," Shellinger says.

The coach also identifies resources to help the principal further develop his or her skills. This is really pretty powerful as the principal is modeling the kind of professional learning community behavior we'd all like to see in schools.

And Shellinger adds: "We do a lot

of readiness work with principals and schools prior to collecting data. We need to be sure the principal really wants to be an instructional leader and has the requisite skills to work collaboratively with staff, students and parents. We never allow a district to force a principal to have a SAM. It has to be the principal's desire followed by permission from the school community."

Shellinger is investigating whether school administration managers can be effective at the middle and high school levels. The schools are also adopting different models of managers, from hiring new personnel to adding tasks to a position that previously existed, which is what Normal is doing by adding manager tasks for teachers.

For more information on the SAM program, visit the Wallace Foundation Web site at: Wallace Foundation Web site's SAM program area:

<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/>.

School library support offered via sets of books

The endowment fund of the Illinois School Library Media Association/Library Book Selection Service (ISLMA/LBSS) will issue its first set of annual grants in 2008. Public and private school libraries, as well as public libraries registered in any of the children's choice reading awards programs, are eligible to apply.

Grant recipients will be awarded one set of books for the 2009 reading campaign for the children's book award the library indicated on their application, including the Monarch, Abraham Lincoln or Rebecca Caudill awards.

Information about the grant is available at the ISLMA/LBSS Endowment Fund website at <http://www.lbssfund.org>. The application form is available on the website.

All applications must be post-marked by May 15, 2008. Questions may be sent to info@lbssfund.org or by phone to 309/649-0916.

State revenue picture cloudy, financial report says

Revenue \$600 million short, investment drops

A recent disheartening financial report indicates that state revenue may fall \$600 million short this year, and that investment income is dropping, while the state is unprepared for a recession that may already be gripping the nation. The new report left little doubt why some top state officials are uneasy about the governor's budget suggestions.

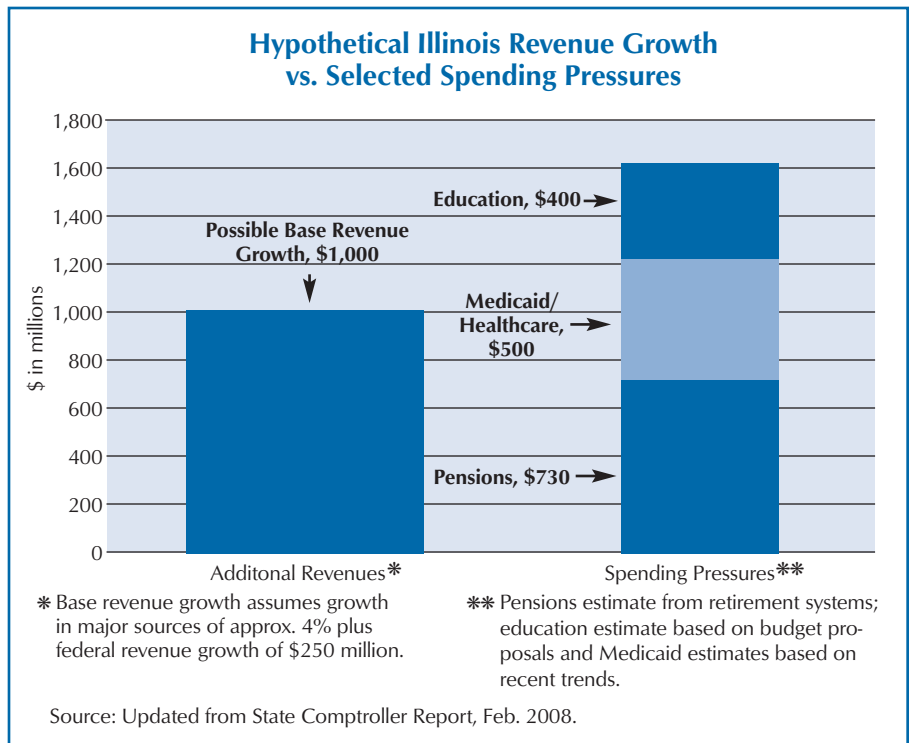
"He needs to be straight with us," said Comptroller Dan Hynes. "He needs to give a true reflection of where state finances are. How do you ask people to make tough decisions and deal with a problem you are not even admitting exists?"

The concern, Hynes said in a recent report, is that the state's budget isn't balanced, and the state is actually falling deeper into a "structural deficit" that Illinois comptrollers of both parties have warned state policymakers about for years.

Illinois law allows certain bills, primarily those for Medicaid, to be shunted off from one fiscal year to the next. In the 2003 budget year, those bills stood at \$1.8 billion, the comptroller's report said. At the end of the last budget year on June 30 they stood at \$3.3 billion.

Meanwhile, the Illinois treasurer said in a recent letter to fellow state officials and lawmakers that money from state investments is declining. By next year, Treasurer Alexis Giannoulis is concerned that the amount of interest produced by the \$16 billion state portfolio could drop by more than \$200 million, leaving lawmakers with a budget crunch.

Giannoulis said the slowdown is due to unstable credit and housing markets and a consumer spending lull. He said his office will work to enhance the investments but he urged lawmakers and Gov. Rod Blagojevich to be responsible financially. Even if investment yields rebound more



quickly than expected, it likely won't fully recover for "quite some time," Giannoulis said.

The state comptroller, meanwhile, had his own warning: "Each and every year, the governor has made his budget presentation and declared that the deficit has been eliminated," Hynes said. "Each and every year, that has proven to be untrue when the final numbers come out. There's a multi-billion structural deficit."

That is only the Medicaid portion of the deficit, he said. The state also owes billions to public pension systems because – thanks to a practice in existence long before Blagojevich took office – money to fully fund the pensions has been diverted for other expenses.

Since Blagojevich took office in 2003, Hynes said, tax collections for the state's general account have increased \$5.6 billion, or an average of \$1.4 billion a year. The trouble is the state has not been investing this money in paying down liabilities, Hynes said. Instead, all that money has been expended on programs and services, such as providing additional funding for education.

But there will be a consequence if the economy slows down. And the Illinois and U.S. economies are slowing, with early predictions suggesting the state will not come close to seeing the same kind of growth to support the Fiscal 2009 budget.

"Are we ready for the economic recession we appear to be in? The answer is no, we are not," Hynes said. "While we have made some investments in education and health care, we did not shore up our fiscal foundation to prepare for this economic downturn."

The Blagojevich administration does not agree that the deficit is as bad as portrayed by Hynes, in part because Medicaid costs are not just borne by the state. Federal reimbursements pay part of the bill.

The administration says the current budget has a \$750 million hole because lawmakers were overly optimistic about tax collections. Thus the governor again is urging the legislature to end some business tax breaks and allow the administration to tap into restricted state funds to plug the gap. [See story on the governor's plan on page 1.]

of the lottery is the funding mechanism for a proposed \$12 billion state investment in school and other construction, for which many lawmakers have been clamoring.

“I am convinced we can find common ground — that old options and new approaches can and should be put on the table,” Blagojevich told lawmakers. The governor’s plan — designed to enact broad new state spending initiatives without a tax increase — involves selling off possibly 80 percent of lottery sales for the next 30 years in exchange for billions now.

The governor also again suggested selling off the rights to the annual settlement checks from a lucrative state lawsuit against cigarette makers. The funds provided upfront from that court settlement could cover the \$1.2 billion needed for child rebate checks and business tax cuts.

Blagojevich’s budget would boost general fund spending to \$49.7 billion, an increase of 3.9 percent. Meanwhile, proposed new capital needs expenditures would bring the total bill for state spending to about \$58 billion, the governor said.

The biggest surprise of Blagojevich’s budget speech was a proposed \$1.2 billion economic stimulus package that would feature a one-time credit of \$300 per child for about 1.3 million families. This credit follows up on federally approved tax rebate checks families are in line for this spring — and the governor’s plan also would give businesses that pay state corporate income taxes a 20 percent credit.

But some lawmakers were not moved by the governor’s new and renewed proposals.

“Is it realistic to float another idea packaged a different way that’s really the old idea that went nowhere?” asked House Republican leader Tom Cross of Oswego. “That doesn’t accomplish a whole lot.”

The proposed \$300 million education funding boost would come from a return to higher gambling taxes, only two years after lowering them

amid economic concerns. The governor’s budget also counts on the opening of a long-dormant authorization for a 10th casino once destined for Rosemont. Critics say both of these revenue enhancement schemes represent unstable revenue sources.

But Senate President Emil Jones, D-Chicago, indicated that the governor’s proposed \$300 million increase for schools could grow significantly if lawmakers would support a long-debated idea to increase state income taxes — a proposal Blagojevich opposes.

The governor also reprised his previous suggestion of imposing a 3 percent tax on businesses that do not spend at least 4 percent of their payroll on health care. The money — \$417 million — would go into a special trust fund to pay for Blagojevich’s health care expansion plans.

Key portions of the governor’s spending plan include:

- \$1.2 billion, as mentioned previously, for child rebates and business tax cuts paid for by selling off rights to tobacco settlement payments or other state revenue
- \$11 billion state investment in roads, bridges and schools financed by selling off rights to the Illinois Lottery
- \$16 billion in borrowing to shore up the pension deficit and take advantage of current lower interest rates

House Speaker Michael Madigan, a Chicago Democrat and the governor’s chief rival in last year’s protracted budget battles, has since announced and held a series of budget hearings across the state. He has served notice, meanwhile, that he intends to work swiftly to reach consensus on the budget.

“The people of our state simply will not tolerate another prolonged, acrimonious encore of last year,” Madigan said.

Statewide hearings on the budget were held at locations across the state. They were held, Madigan said, for the purpose of gathering testimony from citizens regarding state funding for Fiscal Year 2009. The first such meetings were on March 10 in Decatur and Marion, with others held in various locations through March 27.

Meanwhile, state revenue forecasts now look increasingly grim. In a report dated the first week of March, Illinois’ Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability estimated the state would bring in \$630 million in new revenue in the fiscal year that begins July 1. That is far less than the average of \$1.4 billion annual increase the state has seen in new revenue since Blagojevich took office in 2003.

The nation’s current economic downturn can only make the state’s revenue outlook bleaker.

State attendees at AASA event focus on advocacy for schools

The 2008 National Conference of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) was held Feb. 15-17 in Tampa, Fla. Participants conferred about best practices in leadership, curriculum, governance, and more.

“The conference sessions addressed myriad issues, like student achievement, career management, and the global influences that are shaping the future of education. It

also opened a dialogue about advocacy for public education,” according to Sarah D. Jerome, President of AASA. Jerome is the superintendent of **Arlington Heights District 25**.

More than 6,000 participants attended the three-day event.

Staff participants were Field Services Director Dawn E. Miller, Senior Director Douglas P. Blair, Executive Searches Director Donna Johnson, and IASB Executive Director Michael D. Johnson.

Thomas Jefferson's viewpoints welcomed by top IASB leaders

Leadership conferees share city school tour, workshops

Patrick Lee, an actor and historian portraying Thomas Jefferson in full 18th Century garb, was the featured speaker at IASB's Leadership Conference in Chicago on Feb. 29, sharing some "sage of Monticello" viewpoints, many of which are still relevant to today's education issues and school board concerns.

Despite wearing a tri-cornered hat, Mr. Jefferson's views seemed to strike squarely at home with a modern audience of IASB leaders.

How does the school board of today, for example, fit into the landscape of American democracy that Mr. Jefferson and his associates envisioned? Lee explained that Jefferson would find it fits well with his own vision, mainly because such local control is close to the people, and Jefferson believed that government closest to the people is the most to be trusted.

What is the role of public opinion? The "Sage" recalled the little-known preface to a famous Jefferson quote, which said the whole basis of our government is the opinion of the people. In the more famous portion of that quote, Jefferson added that if he were left to decide "whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I would not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

Earlier in the day, IASB leaders took a school bus tour to the Ruben Salazar Bilingual Education Center.



IASB Directors and other division leaders and staff of the Association boarded a Chicago District 299 school bus bright and early on Feb. 29 to tour an exemplary city school.



IASB President Mark C. Metzger introduced 'President Jefferson,' portrayed by actor and historian Patrick Lee. Lee had a few sage words of support for IASB Leadership Conference attendees.



The bus tour took IASB Leadership Conference attendees to a school on Chicago's near north side, a primary dual language center called Ruben Salazar. The warm welcome they extended began with the sign out front.

There, the sign out front read "Bienvenidos Miembros de la Asociacion de las Mesas Directivas Escolares," which roughly translates to "Welcome members of the Association of School Boards."

The Leadership Conference continued on Saturday with an interactive diversity and inclusion awareness workshop, presented by Board Development Consultants Nesa Brauer and Sandra Kwasa. Brauer and Kwasa presented a short version of the Leader-

Ship board training they have recently begun offering to IASB member districts, adapted from an approach pioneered by Kaleidoscope, Inc.

Next up for those IASB leaders and staff members in attendance was a presentation on Making Meetings Matter, which covered everything from identifying the good and bad ingredients in board meetings to developing agendas that reflect the board's real work. There followed a routine meeting of IASB's board of directors.



"No one ever learned much from the teacher they call 'The Course Whisperer.'"

Bills on state board autonomy, AEDs at athletic fields move in legislature

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee approved a bill in early March to reconstitute the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). The sponsor of the bill, HB 4232, Representative Lou Lang (D-Skokie), charged that ISBE is today operating under the direct control of the governor, and that more autonomy is needed for the board to act in the best interests of Illinois school districts and students.

The bill was approved on a vote of 21-0, with one member voting “present.” It was sent to the House floor for consideration. The amended bill would:

- end the term of each current member of the ISBE and provide for newly appointed members to take office (current board members could be reappointed);
- establish a nomination panel to provide a list of 27 nominees to the governor for appointment to the board (the governor could only appoint from this list of nominees). The members of the nomination panel must be appointed by the following appointing authorities: the governor, the attorney general, and the secretary of state. If the governor does not select all appointees within a certain timeframe, the nomination panel may appoint those members not yet selected for appointment by the governor;
- require that the nomination panel be comprised of seven members: two former school superintendents, one former elementary school teacher, one former high school teacher, two former state legislators with experience and involvement in the education appropriation process, and a member of a non-profit agency committed to education reform;
- provide that the state board may remove for incompetence, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office any member of the state board by a two-thirds vote in favor of removal;

- create an ISBE advisory board; and
- further define ISBE duties and responsibilities.

Many other bills have begun moving through the legislative process, as lawmakers took action on numerous bills in early March. Unless otherwise noted, the following bills were approved in committee and sent to the floor of their house of origin:

- **HB 1279 (Burke, D-Chicago)**, a bill from last year that was held up by an amendatory veto from the governor, will require all school districts to provide Automated External Defibrillators, known as AEDs, at all outdoor athletic facilities. The Senate accepted the amendatory veto and the bill will become law.
- **HB 4226 (Eddy, R-Hutsonville)** allows the ISBE calculation for State reimbursement for transportation costs to include the number of pupils enrolled in early education programs and those students attending summer school. The bill, supported by the Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance, was approved by the House and sent to the Senate for consideration.
- **HB 4387 (D’Amico, D-Chicago)** as amended, requires that all vehicles used for driver’s ed must be American made.
- **HB 4437 (Flowers, D-Chicago)** requires students who participate in an interscholastic athletic program to undergo an EKG test. The bill, opposed by the Alliance, failed in Committee.
- **HB 4457 (Eddy)** allows school districts to accept and open sealed bids at a public bid opening conducted by an electronic process for communicating, accepting, and opening competitive bids. The bill, supported by the Alliance, was approved by the House and was sent to the Senate.
- **HB 4527 (Lang)** increases the amount of certain grants from the

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NEWS FROM IASB

IASB to conduct vital survey of membership

All Illinois school board members and district superintendents are being asked to take part in a survey designed to help IASB better understand who those individuals are, how they perform their duties, and what they think about the association and its services. The survey is being conducted jointly by IASB and Western Illinois University.

Survey findings are expected to give IASB a more up-to-date view of its membership and school leaders’ needs. The last such survey was conducted in 2003, and surveys have typically followed roughly every five years. Questionnaires will be mailed in April.

IASB welcomes three new Service Associates

Three firms have recently been invited to join IASB’s Service Associates, a group of businesses that offer school-related products and services and which have earned favorable reputations for quality and integrity. Prospective members are screened by the Service Associates Executive Committee who then decide to recommend membership to the IASB Board.

The three newest additions and their specialty, are: **Security Alarm Corporation** (environmental services firm specializing in security systems and fire alarm systems); **Baysinger Design Group** (architects and engineers specializing in the same thing); and **DLR Group, Inc.** (architects and engineers specializing in educational facility design). Service Associates also has replaced the group’s retired chairman. The new chairman is Bob Bergland, of Hutchinson, Shockey, Erley and Co., a financial services firm in Chicago.

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state to public and school libraries.

- **HB 4702 (Osmond, R-Antioch)** states that for payment for students attending a residential program designed to correct alcohol or other drug dependencies, the cost of the educational services shall be paid by the district of the student's residence (instead of providing that the cost of educational services shall be paid by the district in which the student resides in an amount equal to the cost of providing educational services in a treatment facility). This would apply to all Illinois students. The bill was approved by the House of Representatives and was sent to the Senate.
- **HB 4705 (Currie, D-Chicago)** allows for the continuation of the distribution of funds by the ISBE to achieve a goal of "preschool for all children" by removing certain provisions that limit this distribution to a time period from July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2008.
- **HB 4822 (Coulson, R-Glenview)** provides when a student turns age 14 and one-half (or younger if determined appropriate), an individualized plan of education must include measurable postsecondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments and other relevant information available regarding the student, as well as any transition services deemed needed.
- **HB 5338 (Lindner, R-Sugar Grove)** requires the ISBE to develop and make available to each school board guidelines for the management of students with life-threatening food allergies. It requires each school board to implement a plan based on the guidelines.
- **HB 5367 (Chapa LaVia, D-Aurora)** allows school boards to award high school diplomas to honorably discharged veterans who served in the armed forces during the Vietnam Conflict. It was approved in committee and sent to the House floor.
- **HB 5493 (Watson, R-Jacksonville)** encourages school boards to implement American Sign Language (ASL) courses into school foreign language curriculum in a manner deemed appropriate by the ISBE.
- **HB 5611 (Jefferson, D-Rockford)** requires the ISBE to establish and administer a program that provides stipends (\$20,000 over five years) to teachers (with at least 4 years of experience) who choose to teach at hard-to-staff public schools.
- **HB 5717 (Coulson)**, a School Management Alliance initiative, clarifies that any child who received a health examination before entering the fifth grade for the 2007-2008 school year is not required to receive an additional health exam before entering 6th grade in the 2008-2009 school year.
- **SB 1997 (DeLeo, D-Chicago)** prevents the IHSA from allowing exclusive coverage of any sporting events, which will most likely result in school districts having to pay dues to participate in IHSA events.
- **SB 2002 (Haine, D-Alton)** allows school districts to opt into the State Local Government Health Insurance Pool with an enrollment of less than 100% of employees, provided those not enrolled are covered under the Act's plan or another plan.
- **SB 2352 (Wilhelmi, D-Crest Hill)** provides that when calculating the state reimbursement for transportation costs, ISBE may not deduct the number of pupils enrolled in early education programs from the number of pupils eligible for reimbursement if all the pupils are transported at the same time.
- **SB 2387 (Collins, D-Chicago)** adds the processes of homeownership as part of the financial literacy component of consumer education.
- **SB 2487 (Forby, D-Benton)**, an ISBE initiative, clarifies and corrects the newly created Article 11E for school district reorganizations.
- **SB 2500 (Demuzio, D-Carlinville)**, an Alliance initiative, creates the new superintendent mentoring program, established by the ISBE.
- **SB 2575 (Syverson, R-Rockford)** is one of the many bills attempting to deal with teacher misconduct and school districts reporting that misconduct. Negotiations are ongoing with this issue.
- **SB 2638 (Harmon, D-Oak Park)**, for school energy savings contracts, provides that requests for proposals must be announced in each volume of the Illinois Procurement Bulletin, instead of just one.
- **SB 2820 (Bond, R-Grayslake)** requires each assessor (excluding Cook County) to provide to each residential taxpayer a Homestead Assessment Disclosure Document that contains certain disclosures concerning the assessed valuation of homestead property. Disclosures to be included reflect deviations in current and past year assessed value, deviations from like properties in the neighborhood, and so forth. The Department of Revenue is required to annually review the disclosures to ensure that they are accurate and proper.
- **SB 2858 (Trotter, D-Chicago)** requires the ISBE to adopt rules for the elimination of foods containing trans fats in public school cafeterias.
- **SB 2864 (Cullerton, D-Chicago)** is an ISBE initiative that eliminates the use of 11-15 passenger vans for interscholastic or other school sponsored non-curriculum related activities. The bill adds language to allow the use of the federally approved multifunction activity bus as a safer alternative.
- **SB 2892 (Clayborne, D-Belleville)** implements a "sales tax holiday" from the first Friday in August for nine days to the following Sunday for school supplies, including any article of clothing or footwear or a computer sold at or below certain selling prices. The cost of the program to the General Revenue Fund would be between \$33 million and \$43 million.
- **SB 2907 (Demuzio)** allows the regional superintendent of schools to increase fees for providing courses of instruction for school bus drivers.

NEWS HEADLINES

Carol Stream (Feb. 22, *The Daily Herald*) Carol Stream Elementary District 93 recently expressed opposition to the state's plan for giving tests to kids still learning English. The board is considering other options on grounds it is unfair to administer mandatory state exams to students who haven't yet mastered English.

Carpentersville (Jan. 29, *The Daily Herald*) Despite a late round of objections, the Carpentersville CUSD 300 Board of Education voted on Jan. 28 to approve new attendance boundaries for the district's middle and high schools. The board ratified the consensus, selecting a proposal for high school boundaries by a 4-3 vote and a proposal for middle school boundaries unanimously.

Charleston (Feb. 20, *Charleston Times-Courier*) School board members heard a pitch on Feb. 20 for adding a "numeracy" coach to help with Charleston High School's state test math scores. Principal Diane Hutchins urged the board to approve the new position. Interim Superintendent Bill Hill said the board will get a specific recommendation on the position next month.

Chicago (Feb. 26, *Chicago Tribune*) Many Chicago parents push and plot to get their kids into the best magnet schools in the city – kindergartens included. Statistically, it is now more difficult to get into Drummond Montessori, a public magnet school, than it is to get into Harvard University. About 995 children applied for the 36 openings at Drummond next school year, a 4 percent acceptance rate. Harvard accepts about 9 percent of its applicants.

Galesburg (Jan. 29, *The Register-Mail*) Galesburg District 205 officials were informed recently that the Knox County Regional Superintendent of Schools has disapproved demolition of an old, free-standing gymnasium at one school. The dis-

trict had been awaiting Harris' reply in order to proceed with that demolition and construction of a new locker annex to the middle school. The gym has been condemned by both the local health and the fire departments, but the district needed the regional superintendent's letter of condemnation in order to forward the application to the state for approval to use life-safety funding for the project.

Grundy County (Feb. 26, *Morris Herald*) In the teeth of a winter snowstorm, 133 special education teachers struck all major schools in Grundy County on Feb. 26. The strike by the Grundy County Education Association was said to be the first for the county union, and only the second of its kind in Illinois. Roughly 20 years ago a similar walkout by special education teachers in Southern Illinois lasted only three days. [Note: This strike ended with a contract agreement on Feb. 28.]

Huntley (Jan. 26, *Northwest Herald*) The Huntley Unit District 158 school board voted on Jan. 24 not to release either the minutes or a recording of a closed-session meeting. The meeting in question was the Nov. 13 closed session in which the board decided to appoint former board President Mike Skala to a vacant seat on the board. School boards are not required by law to release closed-session minutes but can do so if they wish.

Mundelein (Feb. 27, *Chicago Sun-Times*) Officials at Diamond Lake School District 76 in Mundelein say their decision to adopt an English-based program five years ago yielded higher test scores. But it could also mean the loss of \$175,000 in state and federal funding this year – enough to force cutbacks in summer school and other programs. So district officials hope to sway state legislators to rewrite the law that requires school

districts to teach non-English speaking students in their native language.

Naperville (Jan. 29, *The Beacon News*) Officials at Indian Prairie District 204, Naperville, entered the latest round of boundary talks for all three high schools with a new plan and a short time table. The plan is to allow several weeks for community input while eliminating any unfriendly exchanges between neighborhoods.

Round Lake (Feb. 28, *The Daily Herald*) A religious club has drawn a church-state conflict objection in Round Lake District 116 after a flier promoting the Good News Club allegedly was handed out in class by a teacher at Indian Hill Elementary School in Round Lake Heights. A complaint was filed by one student's father, who said he wants to make sure Round Lake Area Unit District 116 is keeping religion out of schools as required by law.

Silvis (Feb. 27, *QC Online*) A change in Illinois law that removes the limit on the paid sick leave teachers can use for the birth or adoption of a child may lead to litigation in one Rock Island County district, Silvis SD 34. The law in question was revised in Aug. 2007 to allow paid leave for adoption. When the law was rewritten, however, the limit on the number of paid sick days was excluded.

Springfield (Feb. 28, *State Journal-Register*) Starting next fall, Springfield District 186 expects to require students to maintain at least a 2.0 grade-point average in order to be eligible to play sports and participate in extracurricular activities. The requirement translates to a C average. The new GPA requirement also will apply to middle-school students.

Statewide (March 7, *Chicago Tribune*) A new federal program will provide more than \$8 million to pay for projects that make it easier for Illinois children to bike or walk to school, state officials said on March 6.

National school boards group opposes Bush administration's FY 2009 education budget

In his recent FY 2009 budget address, President Bush proposed modest increases amounting to less than the rate of inflation for most of the nation's major K-12 education programs. Included are Title I grants for disadvantaged students – which are the main funding source for the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) – and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). But the president asked for additional funding for a controversial reading initiative called Reading First while asking to eliminate funding for technical education and education technology.

In a year when many federal programs were targeted for hefty budget cuts, the White House budget proposal sent to Congress on Feb. 4 asked lawmakers to sign off on nearly \$60 billion for education programs. This amount simply matches what is being spent this year, but with no increase to keep pace with inflation.

The Reading First program has received favorable reviews of late from state officials and education experts, although it also has been criticized by federal investigators for mismanagement and conflicts of interest. Federal lawmakers had cut \$600 million from the program's budget last year. But now the president wants to restore that money.

Education Secretary Margaret Spellings said that there were problems with the program initially but that they had been addressed and that reading gains were being made by students served under the initiative.

The administration also is reviving a push for a \$300 million voucher proposal that would allow poor students to transfer to public schools outside their district or to private schools, if their schools have not met benchmarks under the No Child Left Behind act or if they experience low graduation rates.

Opponents of private school vouchers, such as the National School Boards Association, voiced strong objections to this concept. "NSBA remains vehemently opposed to the continuing proposals by this administration to spend taxpayer dollars to fund a privatization scheme that does not impose the same accountability requirements for academic progress as those under NCLB," said NSBA president Anne L. Bryant.

Bryant also expressed NSBA's displeasure with the president's proposed cuts in public school funding: "It is troubling that the proposed budget would eliminate 47 education programs – including career and technical education and education technology – programs that are essential," she said.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 22 – Illini Division Summer Governing Meeting, Tuscan Restaurant, Tuscola, 6 p.m.

April 23-25 – IASA Annual Conference, Springfield - Hilton and Renaissance Hotels

April 29 – Wabash Valley Division Summer Governing Meeting, Trace Inn, Sumner (Red Hill State Park), 6 p.m.

April 29 – Combined West & South Cook Spring Division Dinner Meeting, DoubleTree, Alsip, 6:30 p.m.

May 1 – Shawnee Division Summer Governing Meeting, Bennie's Italian Foods, Marion, 6 p.m.

May 1 – Western Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting, Chandler's Neighborhood Grill, Macomb, 6:30 p.m. - Dinner

May 6 – Abe Lincoln Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting, Beach House, Decatur, 6:30 p.m.

May 6 – Egyptian Division Summer Governing Meeting, Holiday Inn, Mt. Vernon, 6 p.m.

May 6 – Blackhawk Division Summer Governing Meeting, The Cellar, Geneseo, 6:30 p.m. - Dinner

May 7 – Kaskaskia Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting, Mabry's Rest., Greenville, 6:30 p.m.

May 7 – Central Illinois Valley Division Summer Governing Meeting, The Chateau on the Lake, North Pekin, 6:30 p.m. - Dinner



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