

Illinois SCHOOL BOARD Newsbulletin

March 2012 / Issue No. 717

Eddy chosen as new IASB executive director

Hutsonville leader will take over post on July 1

The Illinois Association of School Boards will have a new executive director later this year. Roger Eddy of Hutsonville was chosen by the Association board of directors at their quarterly meeting Feb. 26.

Eddy, 53, will assume the position July 1. He will replace Michael D. Johnson, who is retiring June 30 after nearly 12 years as the Association's CEO.

"This has been a very long, but very productive process," said IASB Past President Joseph Alesandrini,

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Greeting IASB Executive Director-Select Roger Eddy are, l-r: Vice President Karen Fisher, **Ottawa THSD 140**; President Carolyne Brooks, **West Richland CUSD 2**; Eddy; and Immediate Past President Joseph Alesandrini, **Pekin CHSD 303**. The IASB Board of Directors chose Eddy on Feb.26 after an extensive search. Eddy will replace Michael D. Johnson, who is retiring June 30.

Union county consolidation proposal aimed to go on March ballots

Voters in Union County may finally get to decide March 20 whether four local school districts should consolidate.

The ballot issue comes from a lengthy grassroots campaign to weigh consolidation, two feasibility studies, a regional superintendent's ruling that denied placing the question on the

ballot, and the state superintendent overruling that determination.

Union County, located just south of Carbondale, is the first in the state to put a hybrid merger question on the ballot.

It allows eight possible scenarios to consolidate **Lick Creek District 16**; **Anna CCSD 37**, **Jonesboro CCSD 43**,

and **Anna-Jonesboro High School District 81** in various combinations into a new unit district.

But the move is also causing some confusion.

For one, the ballot question is complicated. In order to be part of the consolidation, each district must

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Those Who Excel awards

Nominations are being sought for the 2012-2013 awards, which will be presented at the Those Who Excel banquet on Oct. 20, in Normal. The nomination deadline is June 8. For nominator convenience, the nomination packets are grouped in three areas with specific criteria identified for each one. The groupings are: Nomination packet A: student support personnel; educational service personnel; school board member/community volunteer; Nomination packet B: classroom teacher; school administrator, or early career educator; and Nomination packet C: teams. School leaders can now download the packets online at: http://isbe.net/pdf/those_who_excel.pdf. For answers to questions about the Those Who Excel program, contact ISBE Public Information at 217/782-4648.

AP exams are popular

More high school students in Illinois took Advanced Placement (AP) exams last year than ever before. In all, 29 percent of high school seniors took at least one AP exam, which was twice the rate of 2001. The rise was particularly evident among Latino students, and the participation of Latinos in AP classes has quadrupled over the past decade. The portion of students passing the tests is up, as well — by 7.5 percent, according to ISBE.

State aid 'glitch'

There was a delay for some districts in a recent general state aid (GSA) payment, ISBE reported Feb. 21. The Comptroller's Office said there was a glitch in their transferring of funds and that for a quarter of all GSA recipients the payment, which normally would have been released Feb. 10, was delayed until the following business day.

Governor's budget contains \$260 million shortfall in GSA funding for public schools

As expected, Governor Pat Quinn's budget address Feb. 22 was presented in broad terms, short on details, making it difficult to gauge the impact on local school districts. However, his spending priorities outlined for Fiscal Year 2013 would maintain level funding for education and cuts in most other areas.

According to the governor's operating budget document, funding for general state aid would remain essentially unchanged from last year's appropriations level of \$4.4 billion. But because of changing EAV, student enrollments and poverty concentration, this amount would require a proration of general state aid in FY 2013. It would take approximately \$260 million in additional GSA funding alone to maintain the \$6,119 per pupil foundation level.

The governor proposed to increase funding for K-12 and higher education by about \$90 million. But fully \$50 million of that would be earmarked for additional investment in the Monetary Assistance Program (MAP) for college scholarships for students with financial need.

Meanwhile \$20 million would be targeted for an addition to the early childhood education budget line item. The remainder would likely fall in line with some of the requests in the budget submitted by the Illinois State Board of Education for increases in bilingual programs and programs designed to implement the recent education reform legislation.

The state board had sought a \$265 million increase for K-12 education.

The big what-if that remains unresolved is pension reform and district contributions to the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS).

Though no specifics were discussed, the governor reiterated his desire to join House Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President John Cullerton to shift part of the state's pension obligation to local school dis-

tricts.

According to the governor, \$5.2 billion must come from the state's General Revenue Fund (GRF) in FY '13 for the state's pension payments. This now represents 15 percent of the entire general revenue pool and that percentage continues to grow annually.

Quinn said that although he wants pension reform that is "meaningful, constitutional, and fair," he also said that "everything has to be on the table." That "everything" apparently would include historical funding practices, employer contributions, employee contributions, the retirement age, and the cost of living adjustment.

Speaker Madigan has stated that any pension reform bill would likely include: a school district contribution, the elimination or amending of the compounding cost of living adjustment, and the raising of the retirement age. These changes would apply to current participants of TRS.

Discussions on the pension reform issue, of which the Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance has been

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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**

Gov. Quinn touts \$623 million capital plan for schools

Gives funding approval for 31 school districts

Governor Pat Quinn announced on Feb. 16 that school districts statewide will receive a total of \$623 million in capital funding to construct new buildings or expand or update existing ones.

Grant agreements will be sent to 31 districts statewide sometime in the next couple of weeks, said David Blanchette, spokesman for the Illinois Capital Development Board.

While many of the grants awarded were for projects that have since been completed in the nearly 10 years since the money was first pledged, school districts will have an opportunity to be reimbursed and may even plan for more changes in the future.

Each of the districts receiving money was officially approved for the funding this fiscal year after their projects were certified by ISBE and the Illinois Capital Development Board. The districts had submitted proposed projects to those two state agencies, which signed off on their plans and the funding for the projects.

The money is coming to schools through Illinois Jobs Now – an initiative designed to create an estimated 4,000 construction jobs throughout the state – and is provided through funding separate from the general revenue funds. The capital funding, combined with local dollars, will allow the 31 school districts to complete projects totaling more than \$1.2 billion.

The single largest share of the money, or \$114 million, will go to **Chicago District 299**. The second-largest share, \$56.62 million, will go to **Marion Community Unit School District 2**. The remaining funds will be distributed to more than a dozen suburban school districts and other districts around the state.

Peoria SD 150, which is to receive, \$34.6 million, has a five-part plan that includes using the money to pay off about \$5 million in existing capital



Gov. Patrick Quinn approves the construction funding in a Feb. 16 announcement ceremony at **Hazel Crest SD 152.5**, surrounded by school children.

fund debt from projects completed since the grant was first promised. It will be used to fund mandatory health, life and safety work; to pay for future capital funds projects, which may include adding air conditioning to the schools; to speed up construction work on Peoria High School; and to stabilize the property tax for at least the next three years.

The reason it took so long to provide the grant money was because state legislators had refused to pass a capital funds bill for many years. Before the passage of the Illinois Jobs Now capital construction program, the state had not had a major capital construction program in more than a decade.

But Peoria District 150 comptroller David Kinney noted there is no guarantee when the district will receive the grant, particularly considering the state's poor financial health. "If and when we receive this, it's a real shot in the arm for potential construction projects we'd like to consider," Kinney said.

The school districts that are slated to receive funding include:

- **Chicago District 299**, \$114.67 million
- **St. Charles CUSD 303**, \$7.66 million
- **Wheaton CUSD 200**, \$14.46 million
- **Harvard CUSD 50**, \$13.81 million
- **Peoria District 150**, \$34.61 million
- **Huntley Consolidated School District 158**, \$39.41 million
- **Orland District 135**, Orland Park, \$5.33 million
- **Brookfield-LaGrange Park District 95**,

\$3.11 million

- **Crete-Monee CUSD 201-U**, \$23.28 million
- **Millstadt CCSD 160**, \$4.29 million
- **Knoxville CUSD 202**, \$20.22 million
- **Wilmington CUSD 209-U**, \$9.28 million
- **Berwyn North Elementary District 98**, \$7.59 million
- **Wesclin CUSD 3, Trenton**, \$18.87 million
- **Stark County CUSD 100**, \$3.69 million
- **Virginia CUSD 64**, \$12.26 million
- **Skokie District 69**, \$1.32 million
- **Burbank District 111**, \$9.87 million
- **Shawnee CUSD 84**, Union County, \$2.04 million
- **Manhattan District 114**, \$5.84 million
- **Paris Cooperative High School**, \$24.22 million
- **Homer CCSD 33-C**, Homer Glen, \$4.54 million
- **Warren THSD 121**, Gurnee, \$11.53 million
- **Panhandle CUSD 2**, Raymond, \$3.86 million
- **Spring Valley Elementary 99**, \$12.23 million
- **Rochelle CCSD 231**, \$12.32 million
- **Ramsey CUSD 204**, \$3.92 million
- **Mt. Vernon Township High School District 201**, \$47.62 million
- **Hazel Crest School District 152.5**,

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a part, have been ongoing in the Capitol. The governor stated in his address that his pension working group will be meeting regularly and that he wants a pension reform plan submitted by the group by April 17.

A copy of the governor's budget can be found on the website of the governor's Office of Management and Budget at: <http://www.state.il.us/budget/>. The text of the governor's budget speech can be accessed at: <http://www2.illinois.gov/budget/Documents/Budget%20Book/FY%202013/FINAL%20FY13%20BUDGET%20SPEECH.pdf>.

Illinois not yet among 10 states freed from 'No Child' mandates

State agrees to its own federally required plan

The Illinois State Board of Education has applied to opt out of parts of the federal No Child Left Behind law in favor of its own plans for education accountability. Illinois is among 28 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico that applied for NCLB waivers by the Feb. 28 deadline.

The latest battle in Washington over how to revise the law occurred on Feb. 9 when the administration allowed 10 other states to opt out of the law's requirements.

"Under this waiver, Illinois will move forward with a comprehensive accountability system that uses multiple measures of gauging student performance to ensure college and career readiness," said State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch. "This new system will emphasize student progress over time to better drive instruction and track educational effectiveness."

Illinois is among the majority of states that applied in the second round of waivers. ISBE approved a comprehensive waiver application on Feb. 21, proposing to use multiple measures to evaluate the nearly 4,000 public schools in Illinois.

The goal is to cut in half achievement gaps and the percent of students not making progress by 2018. The board's plan replaces the previous approach of NCLB with a system that stresses high expectations of students and schools, and statewide support.

The plan calls for the use of a Multiple Measures Index based on four broad categories;

- Outcomes, including graduation rates;
- Achievement in math, reading and science;
- Student progress, including growth and English language proficiency and;
- Educational context, such as school

climate and course offerings, will be used as a bonus category.

Upon calculation of the index, schools and districts will be categorized into a five-star rating system that will align with various rewards, supports and interventions.

To increase the agency's capacity to meet the needs of all schools and districts in need of improvement, Illinois' plan calls for establishing the Center for School Improvement to provide coordination and coherence to school improvement services. Districts and schools will undergo a comprehensive audit to identify areas for improvement and develop a strong intervention plan. Identified interventions will be based on the needs identified, rather than a "one-size-fits-all" mandated intervention.

ISBE spokesman Matt Vanover said the agency doesn't know how long it will take to get an answer to the state's waiver request. The group of 10 states, which includes neighboring Indiana and Kentucky that were granted waivers in February, had been told they would know in January, but they did not find out until Feb. 9.

The U.S. Department of Education has said waiver applications submitted in the February window can expect a peer review in spring.

Information on Illinois' waiver request, which would add more tests to the state assessment system, is available on the state board's website, http://www.isbe.state.il.us/board/meetings/2012/feb/esea_waiver.pdf. Excerpts from the executive summary of the state's waiver request are reproduced on page 5 (see Waiver Summary).

The request for NCLB waiver applications was announced last September when President Barack Obama said states that agreed to certain reforms could opt out of portions of the law.

Critics have long complained the law requires schools to hit ever-increasing testing benchmarks in math and reading among all student subgroups each year or face serious sanctions.

The government's action in approving the first 10 waivers on Feb. 9 was called a tacit admission that the federal law's main goal of getting all students up to speed in reading and math by 2014 is not within reach.

The states granted waivers will no longer have to meet that deadline. Instead, they have had to put forward plans showing they will prepare children for college and careers, set new targets for improving achievement among all students, reward the best performing schools and focus help on the ones getting the worst test results.

The NCLB law has been up for renewal since 2007. But lawmakers have been stymied for years by competing priorities and disagreements.

The law requires annual testing, and districts were forced to keep a closer eye on how students of all races were performing — not just relying on collective averages. Schools that didn't meet requirements for two years or longer faced increasingly harsher consequences, including busing children to higher-performing schools, offering tutoring and replacing staff.

Over the years, the law has become increasingly unpopular, itself blamed for many ills in schools. A common complaint was that the main deadline was simply unrealistic in mandating that all students and subgroups must be 100 percent proficient by the 2013-14 school year.

As the deadline approaches, more schools and districts are falling short of requirements under the law, with nearly half doing so last year, according to the Center on Education Policy. Center officials said that's because some states today have harder tests or have high numbers of immigrant and low-income children, but it's also because the law requires states to raise the bar each year for how many children must pass NCLB tests.

ISBE posted a draft of the flexibility waiver on the state agency website for public comment, which can be accessed at http://www.isbe.net/nclb_waivers/default.htm.

How state's waiver plan aims to give school leaders help in reform

Principle 1: College and career-ready expectations for all students

Illinois' plan for transitioning to college- and career-ready standards no later than 2013-2014 is driven by the following principles:

- A culture of high expectations for all students is fundamental
- The state's approach to college and career readiness must address content knowledge and academic skills, as well as employability skills based on student career interests
- Teachers and school leaders need high-quality, sustained supports to improve instruction in response to the Common Core State Standards and the state's definition of college and career readiness
- State assessments must provide accurate and clear information to educators and parents on whether all students are on track to be college- and career-ready

Based on these principles, the Illinois State Board of Education said it is aggressively moving forward with a three-phase plan to transition to college and career ready standards, which includes:

- Phase I: Adoption of college and career ready standards
- Phase II: Design of implementation system and supports
- Phase III: Realignment of state assessments

The adoption of the Common Core standards and the array of initiatives to implement them are elevating the curriculum in each classroom in Illinois towards higher content in English Language Arts and Math. This includes classrooms instructing English language learners (ELLs) and students with special needs. ISBE said it believes that the comprehensive alignment of systems, tools, and resources will ensure that all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, gain access to and learn the content aligned

to college and career state standards.

Principle 2: State developed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support

ISBE also plans to implement a "holistic and comprehensive differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system to better serve the districts, schools, parents, and the students" of the state. Here are the steps the agency said will ensure that its continuous system of assessments align to college and career ready benchmarks:

- Adjust the Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT) cut score to raise the academic achievement standard to align with college and career ready standards
- Augment current assessments by adding Common Core items to the ISAT
- Add ACT's third Work Keys assessment (currently part of the PSAT Exam) for high school students (Locating Information), which will allow students to obtain a National Career Readiness Certificate
- Require ACT's EXPLORE (at grades 8 and 9) and PLAN (at grade 10) assessments in order to provide schools and districts a complete picture of student progress from grades 3-11, while also allowing for the calculation of student growth

Illinois officials said they are confident that by ... [these measures] the rigor of Illinois' current assessments will "increase and our continuous system of assessments will align to college and career standards." Throughout this transition period, the agency said it is committed to its participation in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), new ELL assessments through World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA), a new alternate assessment for students with a disability aligned to the Common Core, and the Next Generation Science Standards.

ISBE claims the accountability component of this new system will be phased in over two years and yet the agency also maintains that full implementation is scheduled to occur in the 2012-13 school year. The centerpiece of the new accountability system includes a Multiple Measures Index comprised of four categories:

- Student outcomes, including graduation rates
- Student achievement in reading/language arts, mathematics and science
- Student progress over time, including growth and English language proficiency
- Context, including school climate, course offerings, and additional indicators

ISBE will continue to report on all of the traditional No Child Left Behind student subgroups and for accountability purposes will focus on closing achievement gaps. For most schools and districts, achievement gaps in math, reading and science will be calculated based on four groupings of students. For each grouping, a subgroup size of 30 students must be met (this is reduced from the current size of 45). The four groups include: racial/ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged, ELL, and students with disabilities.

Upon conducting an analysis using 2011 data, five percent of Illinois schools, or 197 schools, and 2.4 percent of districts, or 21 districts, do not have a subgroup size of 30 for any of the above comparison groups. To address this, the state agency will create a "high-needs" subgroup that includes: black, Hispanic, Native American, low income, ELL, and students with a disability. Only those schools and districts that do not qualify for at least one of the four comparison groups above will be held accountable for reducing the achievement gap for a high-needs subgroup.

See **WAIVERS** on page 7



IASB President Carolyne Brooks represents the Association at NSBA's policy and resolutions committee meeting. The event was held in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with the Federal Relations Network conference. Six Illinois school board members and IASB staff attended the annual conference.

School board lobbying group urges Congress to support local control, protect IDEA funds

The Federal Relations Network (FRN) conference, held in Washington, D.C., Feb. 5-7, included six school board members from Illinois, namely: Carolyne Brooks (President, **West Richland CUSD 2**, Noble), Karen Fisher (Vice President, **Ottawa THSD 140**), Joe Alesandrini (Past President, **Pekin CHSD 303**), John Jekot (**East Maine SD 63**, Des Plaines), Mike Kelly (**Plainfield CCSD 202**), and Pelleg Graupe (**Aptakisic-Tripp CCSD 102**, Buffalo Grove).

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.

"FRN gives me an opportunity to voice my local needs on behalf of the children in my district," said Jekot. "I am able to communicate my needs 'first hand' and to tell my story regarding how federal mandates impact the students of my district. FRN continues to be a great resource to learn and share about current federal issues."

On Feb. 7, the FRN delegates visited their congressional offices to discuss reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) also known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, protecting funding for

Title I and IDEA, and maintaining local control. The Illinois FRN delegates met with Congressmen Aaron Schock (R-18, Peoria), Robert Dold (R-10, Northbrook), and Adam Kinzinger (R-11, Manteno). They also met with staff members from the offices of Senators Mark Kirk and Dick Durbin, and with congressional Representatives John Shimkus (R-19, Collinsville) and Jan Schakowsky (D-9, Evanston).

"All of the legislators agree that ESEA must be reauthorized as soon as possible, but very few legislators think it will happen before the election in November," said Susan Hilton, IASB director of governmental relations, who attended the meetings with lawmakers.

Hilton said the FRN delegates expressed to legislators that although they are appreciative of the new waiver opportunity, it is a short-term solution and the sooner the federal government reauthorizes ESEA the sooner school districts can focus resources towards the more permanent regulations.

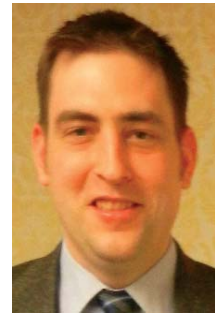
"The FRN delegates also expressed concern over the increase in competitive grant programs the past few years supported by President Obama

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Illinois educator honored by NSBA: one of '20 to watch'

An educator from Illinois was among the winners of the National School Boards Association's 6th annual "20 to Watch" recognition program recognizing leaders in education technology. The winner from Illinois is James Roodhouse, technology director for **Geneseo CUSD 228**.

Since arriving in 2007, Roodhouse has completely re-framed the district's infrastructure, led a push to unify its platform, facilitated a new digital web presence



James Roodhouse

that enabled the district to earn two national awards as a "Digital School," and provided amazing support to teachers and administrators through development of classroom walk-through and observation apps for iPhone and iPad. The apps enable teachers and administrators to focus on "best practices," including use of technology that can be monitored and then immediately communicated to the classroom teacher to help improve teaching performance. The aim of these apps is greater student achievement.

Twenty winners were recognized by NSBA's Technology Leadership Network for championing technology initiatives that make a difference for students, teachers, districts, and the education technology community. An annual national search identifies individuals who show the creativity and collaboration that embraces technology to enhance learning for students, inspire colleagues, transform operations, and engage communities.

This year's "20" were honored March 5 at the Consortium of Social Networking Annual Conference in Washington, and will be recognized at NSBA's Annual Conference in Boston on April 22.

Additionally, ISBE says it wants to ensure that schools and districts are continuing to make progress for ELLs after the students exit from English language education programs. Tracking the continued progress of those children at length, even beyond re-classification, requires a classification of “exited” or “former” ELLs. This will allow the tracking of a variety of outcomes for ELLs.

ISBE also said it will set new ambitious, but achievable, annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for reading/language arts, mathematics, and science for the state and all districts, schools, and subgroups.

Specifically, the agency will set unique targets for each school, district, and subgroup with the goal of reducing by one-half the percentage of students who are not proficient within six years. Illinois will use 2011 assessment data as a base level of proficiency and set AMOs for the next six years. Schools, districts and subgroups that are further behind must make greater rates of annual progress.

Upon calculation of the Multiple Measures Index, schools and districts will be categorized into levels. These levels will align with various rewards, supports and interventions.

To increase the agency’s capacity to meet the needs of all schools and districts in need of improvement, Illinois will establish a Center for School Improvement as the nexus of its statewide system of support (SSOS) to provide coordination and coherence to all of the state’s regional delivery systems.

A primary responsibility of the center will be to hire and train a turnaround specialist and “rapid response teams” to work with districts with priority schools. Additionally, the state’s support for focus schools will occur through district-level interventions.

ISBE will also establish a unit for “district accountability and oversight” (DAO) within the Center for School Improvement to focus and coordinate state takeovers within chronically

underperforming districts.

Principle 3: Supporting effective instruction and leadership

The agency is also preparing to overhaul the teacher and principal evaluation processes that accurately recognize both excellence and deficiencies in individual educators. The foundation for the state’s guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support is the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) [Public Act 096-0861].

Article 24A of the Illinois School Code, as amended by PERA, includes a number of requirements that directly address local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems including:

- Inclusion of student growth as a significant factor in the evaluation
- Development of a local evaluation plan through a process involving the establishment of a joint committee that includes equal representation from the district’s teachers and administrators
- Use of four rating categories, including “excellent,” “proficient,” “needs improvement,” and “unsatisfactory”
- Conducting frequent evaluations for principals, assistant principals, non-tenured teacher and tenured teachers
- Providing professional development for teachers needing improvement: Teachers who receive an overall performance rating of “needs improvement” must receive professional development supports directed at areas of need
- Remediation for teachers rated unsatisfactory: Tenured teachers who receive an overall performance rating of “unsatisfactory” must successfully complete a remediation plan

In addition, Senate Bill 7, signed into law as Public Act 97-8 by the governor last June, ties significant teacher employment decisions to performance evaluations by:

- Allowing the state superintendent to initiate certificate/license action against an educator for incompetency based on performance evaluations
- Streamlining the tenured teacher dismissal process based on an unsatisfactory performance evaluation rating
- Placing a greater emphasis on performance evaluations in key decisions such as the filling of new and vacant positions, awarding tenure, and determining the order of dismissal in a reduction in force

ISBE said it is attempting to move aggressively to establish the training programs and technical assistance system to support the adoption, piloting, and implementation of redesigned teacher and principal evaluation systems during the 2012-2013 school year and beyond.

The agency intends to use part of its Race to the Top (RTTT) funds to broaden technical support for local evaluation systems that incorporate student growth and to support the development of assessment frameworks and items that can be used to measure student growth across the curriculum.

According to the agency, “the flexibility offered through this waiver will support current reform initiatives and streamline efforts to promote academic achievement for all students, support highly effective teachers and leaders, and continue to support our lowest performing schools.

“Additionally, flexibility will provide districts and schools with additional measures to demonstrate the strengths of their schools, teachers, and students. Above all, Illinois understands that a culture of high expectations for all students is fundamental to creating and supporting environments that serve the best interest of children.”

Source: http://www.isbe.state.il.us/board/meetings/2012/feb/esea_waiver.pdf.

Association staff spread lessons new and true at AASA event

Superintendents focus on basics of interviewing

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) held its annual conference Feb. 16-19 in Houston. Participants could choose among 12 round robin presentations, five thought-provoking leader sessions, four general sessions, exhibits and other daily activities that focused on board/superintendent relations, management, executive leadership, student achievement, and other education-related topics.

According to AASA, representatives from more than 20 Illinois districts attended the conference.

One IASB member district presenting at this year's conference was led by Superintendent Quintin Shepherd, **Skokie SD 69**. Shepherd presented strategies for sustaining local partnerships to improve youth outcomes across a range of measures. Superintendent Shepherd presented the story of a partnership's success in Skokie in implementing the so-called Ready by 21 framework.

IASB Executive Director Emeritus Michael D. Johnson, and IASB staff members Donna Johnson, director of executive searches, and Thomas Leahy, search consultant, presented a panel on "Increasing My Chances of Getting the Job I Want."

They discussed how interviewing mistakes happen on a regular basis, and noted that assuming the wrong things about the process is also too

common. The IASB staff said both can be prevented with the right information and the right attitude. This session also focused on the fundamentals of job interviewing.

Johnson, Leahy, along with search consultant Dawn Miller, also worked at AASA's Job Central, and talked at length with numerous candidates from various states for potential school administrator jobs. This annual job fair event provides existing school administrators with a chance to meet front line recruiters and prepare in advance for career advancement.

Among the general session speakers at the conference was Rick DuFour, former superintendent of **Adlai E. Stevenson HSD 125**, Lincolnshire, now a leading consultant on professional learning communities. He explored the complexities of negotiating systemic change and charged attendees with the task of "doing what is right," in the face of student achievement gaps that have deepened between rich and poor.

Conventional wisdom about American schools and reality are at odds, according to DuFour. Among the positives are that despite what people may think and what talk shows report, parental satisfaction is at the highest levels ever, every racial subgroup has improved scores on the SAT reading and math, and AP participation has exploded.

"The polls on parent satisfaction with their own public schools show a 90 percent approval rating, or nine times higher than what the parents

think of Congress," DuFour said, a comparison that drew a chuckle from the general session crowd.

Professional learning communities are built through hard work and involve fundamental changes about the way work is done. A team works collectively on analyzing whether student learning is happening, and intervenes early and often when students are struggling. Or, if students have mastered the material, it provides for enrichment.

AASA's governing board adopted new position statements on bullying and students' citizenship status. The board, with more than 100 delegates representing seven regions, also ratified a legislative agenda and decided to hold the line on membership dues in 2012-13.

The board amended a few statements, including one on receiving full financial support for unfunded federal mandates. They expanded the language to cover state mandates, as well. The ruling body also reaffirmed stances on public education as the cornerstone to democracy, vouchers and tuition tax credits, public school choice and charter schools.

The conference was also where Heath Morrison, superintendent of Washoe County School District, Reno, Nev., was named the 2012 AASA National Superintendent of the Year.

Daily coverage and an archives of materials presented at the 2012 conference can be found online at: http://resources.aasa.org/ConferenceDaily/?page_id=180.

Illinois school administrators and colleagues to gather in Springfield next month at IASA

Leadership Matters will be the theme of the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) Annual Conference, April 25-27, in Springfield.

The yearly event typically draws more than 650 school administrators to Springfield to confer on school leadership concerns. Attendees will include school superintendents, assistant

superintendents, state agency staff, and college professors of educational administration.

General session speakers include: Preston Swincher, who will review the generational divide in education; Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon, who will provide an update on the Classrooms First Commission; Diane Lewis, who will promote the value of

"virtual" schools; and Jim Warford, who will explain the connection between Common Core Standards and job skills.

Questions about the conference can be directed to IASA by phone at 217/753-2213. A conference overview is available online at: <http://www.iasa-edu.org/images/stories/Conference%20Highlights%20booklet-final2.pdf>.



2012 Conference Panels

Local school board members from across the state volunteered March 2 to review and rate 120 panel proposals at IASB's Springfield and Lombard offices. After the results are tabulated, IASB staff will confirm the selections with the districts. A list of the panels to be presented at the 2012 Joint Annual Conference will be published in the Conference Preview by early September.

LeaderShop Academy Symposium set for June 16

The fourth biennial School Board LeaderShop Academy Invitational Symposium will focus on "How You as a Leader Can Thrive in Adversity." This event is set for June 16 in Lombard.

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 membership in the Academy.

One of the benefits of Academy membership includes an invitation to attend the symposium. The event program this year features Diane Reed, co-director and associate professor of the Graduate Leadership Department at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York. A former school district superintendent and an author, Reed has timely ideas on leading schools in hard times.

Tuition for the one-day symposium is \$200 per person and includes materials, continental breakfast and lunch. The event will be held at the Westin Lombard Yorktown Center, a hotel located at an outdoor shop-

ping and recreation center in Lombard.

Invitation is limited to current Academy members and their superintendents. Admission to the Academy requires completion of three School Board LeaderShop programs. At least two of these programs must be from the "core" curriculum relating to effective school district governance, and one of those must be the school district governance overview. The third program may be either a core or an "elective" offering focusing on additional board and board member skills that promote effective school district leadership.

Academy membership is maintained by completing at least one additional program (either core or elective) over a two-year period. Upon the completion of seven core and five elective programs, members are also recognized as Academy Fellows.

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.

To register for the symposium, contact: Judy Williams, phone 217/528-9688, ext. 1103.

Division surveys

School board members and district superintendents attending IASB division dinner meetings this spring will have the opportunity to provide feedback on their experience. All attendees will receive an electronic survey via email shortly after each dinner meeting. This "six quick questions" survey will invite attendees to comment on the convenience of the meeting location and whether the meeting met their expectations. The survey also invites suggestions for future meeting locations and programming. Field Services directors will use the survey responses to guide them as they work with the division leadership in each of IASB's 21 divisions to plan next fall's division dinner meetings.

Conference exhibits

Here is a reminder that application forms and instructions are online this year for the first time for contracts and housing of all exhibitors at the Joint Annual Conference. Except for a little of the exhibit space that has been reclaimed by firms wishing to keep their same booth space as last year, all remaining booths are to be assigned on first-paid/first-received contract basis. Instructions and forms are posted online at <http://www.iasb.com/jac12/exhibitor.cfm>. Questions about exhibitions, forms or procedures should be directed to IASB Meetings Management at 217/528-9688, ext. 1115.

Service Associates member

An Illinois financial services firm, Wintrust, of Lake Forest, has been invited to join IASB's Service Associates, a group of 73 businesses offering school products and services. All members have earned favorable reputations for quality and integrity. A listing of the firms can be found at: <https://www.iasb.com/associates/>.

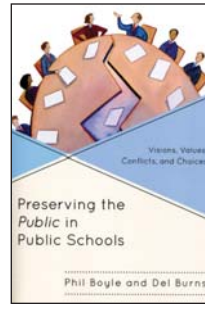
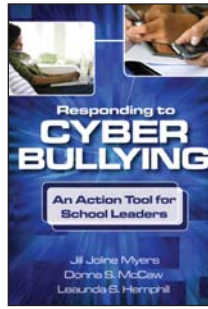
Books on controversy, leadership, bullying offered online

A newly published book, *Preserving the Public in Public Schools*, by Phil Boyle and Del Burns, one of three books now available at the IASB bookstore, reviews the purposes of public schools, the competing visions and public values with which school leaders must contend.

The book may be a useful primer for boards that want to come to grips with the causes of controversy in school governance, and what to do about handling such conflicts with due respect for opinions for all sides.

The 209-page book includes discussion of what it is that drives our nation's common purpose in educating children and at the same time divides us so passionately about how to educate them. The author says that public schools sometimes have little to do with children. Schools are political and ideological institutions in which each generation battles among itself for supremacy in determining the purposes, goals and direction of public education.

From battles over school lunch to school dress to school prayer, each generation reinterprets and recapitulates the political and ideological arguments that date back to the found-

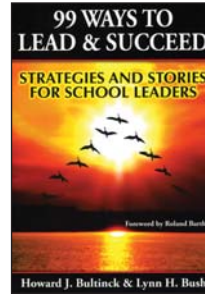


ing of our nation. More than two centuries after the American Revolution, public schools serve as political battlefields for debates about religious freedom and whether students should be allowed to wear U.S. flag T-shirts.

Preserving the Public in Public Schools may be purchased for \$24.95 through the Association's online bookstore at: <http://iasb.com/shop/>. It is in soft cover and was first published in 2012 by Rowman & Littlefield.

Two other newly available books offered by the online bookstore are:

- *99 Ways to Lead & Succeed; Strategies and Stories for School Leaders*, by Howard J. Bultinck and Lynn H. Bush, price: \$34.95. In this book,



veteran educators Bultinck and Bush draw from their own experiences as principals and teachers to offer school leaders lessons on effective school leadership. It includes insights on the daily life of a school leader, how to handle stress, communication tips, moral and ethical approaches, and more. Published 2009 by Eye On Education, Inc., soft cover, 161 pp.

- *Responding to Cyber Bullying: An Action Tool for School Leaders*, by Jill Joline Myers, Donna S. McCaw, and Leanda S. Hemphill, price: \$36.95. This manual offers data-driven solutions for managing cyber bullying incidents. Tools include timely case studies, rules for addressing cyber bullying, strategies for documenting aggressive cyber situations, user-friendly legal tests for differentiating netiquette violations from First Amendment-protected expressions, and a rubric that provides guidelines for determining appropriate responses. This book was published in 2011 by Corwin, soft cover, 195 pp.

All three books are available through the Association's online bookstore at: <http://iasb.com/shop/>.

March-April Journal takes close look at future of writing in the curriculum

With ISAT dropping its writing section and cursive being downplayed in favor of keyboarding, freelance writer Alice Armstrong takes a close look at the future of writing in the March/April issue of *The Illinois School Board Journal*. As with the last issue, readers will find board-level questions that may warrant discussion as board mem-



bers align their goals for students with changes to the Common Core State Standards.

Elsewhere in this issue of *The Journal*, IASB's Executive Director Emeritus Michael D. Johnson explains what it means to be on the Association's board of directors and how it differs from school board work, two IASB staff members write about harnessing the power of conflict at the board table and a director of board services from Indiana seeks to answer the question: "Why board governance?"

The magazine was mailed to all members in the last week of February.



"Sorry son, but you haven't been approved by the Department of Homeland Security."

West Chicago and Collinsville schools receive grant to help with data

Collinsville CUSD 10 and Community HSD 94, West Chicago, are two of 16 school districts in the nation chosen by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to participate in new “Closing the Gap” school improvement project grants.



Supt. Bob Green

The project is headed by American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the Consortium for School Networking and essentially provides funding to focus on using school data to improve student achievement.

Specifically, the project is aimed at understanding how members of the K-12 education community can use the data available in Student Information Systems (SIS) and Learning Management Systems (LMS) to improve classroom instruction.

The grant does not provide a specific dollar amount, but it does cover expenses for three school administrators from each participating district to attend the consortium’s national education

conference in February and will cover the cost of participation in collaborative meetings among all of the 16 districts.

Collinsville District 10 Superintendent Bob Green explained the grant will help his district identify different types of assessment methods and also software on how to manage those assessments.

“It will let us take the results and see how the individual did, the class did and the district did. We can see if there is a particular weakness in our curriculum or instructional strategies and make adjustments. It’s just a way of looking at the information you’ve got and finding ways to improve it,” he said.

Green said that he and assistant superintendents Julie Brown and Susan Homes attended the National Conference on Education in February. Brown oversees curriculum and Homes is in charge of human resources for the Collinsville district. Green said the three administrators will share what they learn from the conference in discussions with school leaders and teachers.

Principals and teachers will be partners in the ongoing project and will be learning together and making

decisions together.

The project will:

- Provide school and district leaders with increased understanding of the current market, capabilities of available systems, and teachers’ classroom needs for meaningful data.
- Cultivate stronger teacher-student data linkages and leverage post-secondary outcomes data against richer information on the student experience.
- Establish an appropriate selection, procurement and implementation of SIS and LMS systems.
- Empower teachers and school system leaders to analyze their students’ experiences, and to collaborate and innovate to support and engage students.

District leadership participants are expected to access and contribute to the project for at least 12 months. Each district leadership team will respond to the project reports and resources. They will also share challenges and best practices.

To find out more about the Closing the Gap project, contact Vera Turner at vturner@aasa.org.

Grants available to aid all public schools with energy, operational improvements

Energy grants are now available to assist public K-12 schools with energy operational improvements, with the help of the Illinois County Board Members Association. That group has also received an Illinois Energy Now (IEN) grant from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) to provide application assistance to public bodies that otherwise would not have the technical resources to apply.

The energy grants can be used to help schools upgrade to new T8 and T5 lighting or to tune up boilers.

DCEO director Warren Ribley said, “Through this program, we are

helping to lower the energy bills of schools ... while creating green sector jobs.”

The program offers a portfolio of electric and natural gas efficiency programs to achieve targeted annual energy savings. Local governments, including public K-12 schools, receive financial incentives for installing energy efficient products. Incentives can range from 15 to 75 percent of energy improvement costs.

Public schools around the state in grades K-12 are eligible for financial incentives to upgrade to more energy efficient lighting prior to a phase out for certain kinds of fluorescent lamps. The older, less efficient

T12 fluorescent lamps will be phased out of production by July.

Schools can also qualify for grant funds to help pay for electric efficiency measures that include lighting equipment, HVAC equipment, motors and drives, LED traffic signals, and refrigeration equipment. Natural gas measures covered include: gas furnaces, boilers and condensing boilers, water heaters, kitchen steam cookers and low-flow spray valves.

To learn more about the IEN program grants, visit www.illinoisenergy.org. For application assistance or to schedule a meeting with a school district, contact Carol Kulek at 217/741-2489, kulek79@aol.com.

EDDY *from page 1*

who led the board's search committee.

"We had many qualified candidates and we are confident that we made the right choice to lead the Association and its member school districts," he continued. "The transition will be completed over the next four months, which should give the executive director-select, board of directors, staff, and members adequate time to prepare and adjust to the change in leadership."

Eddy has spent the last 15 years as superintendent of Hutsonville CUSD 1. His career includes 31 years in education, as a superintendent, principal and teacher. Since 2003, Eddy has also served five terms as a State Representative in the Illinois General Assembly.

"I am very honored to be chosen to represent IASB," Eddy said. "This is a great opportunity and challenge. This is a great association and I look forward to serving in this capacity."

Eddy is married to Rebecca Eddy. The couple has five children and two grandchildren.

The executive director-select was reared in Newark and attended Newark public schools. He graduated from Northern Illinois University in 1981 and earned his master's degree in 1986 and specialist's degree in 1996 from Eastern Illinois University.

As executive director, Eddy will lead a staff of 75 full- and part-time staff members in the Association's Springfield and Lombard offices. He will be responsible for all Association operations and represent its positions in state and national public school management policy on behalf of 852 member districts and nearly 6,000

elected Illinois school board members.

The transition process will begin soon, according to Alesandrini.

"Roger will get to know our board and staff and eventually all of our member districts. I know that Dr. Johnson will be of great assistance in that process," he said.

During Johnson's tenure at IASB, the Association has seen its staff more than double, its membership increase to all-time highs and the completion of several capital construction programs. Alesandrini also credited Johnson for his entrepreneurial fundraising ability and for developing state and national partnerships.

Johnson, who plans to work with Ronald McDonald House Charities in his retirement, has worked with Eddy often over the past 12 years.

"I have known Roger for many years and he has been a champion for public education as a state legislator. I know as executive director he will be a champion for the Association and its member school boards," Johnson said.

As executive director-select, Eddy will be the Association's sixth full-time CEO since 1943. Past executives include Robert M. Cole (1943-1968), B.B. Burgess (1969-1973), Harold P. Seamon (1973-1989), Wayne L. Sampson (1989-2000), and Johnson (2000-current).

Search process

The IASB board of directors launched a national search for the position in February 2011, after Johnson formally notified the board of his intentions. Applications were accepted until Sep. 30 and, according to Alesandrini, there were many inquiries and applications received from across the U.S.

Criteria for choosing an executive director were developed in part from surveys taken of IASB staff and the Association board of directors, division officers, local board presidents, and the Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance partners.

The criteria indicated that candidates should have "the appropriate education and experience in organizational leadership, working with a volunteer board, knowledge of major issues facing public education, strong communication skills, and the ability to work with diverse cultures of rural, suburban and urban constituents."

The search committee, chaired by Alesandrini, included the following directors and officers: current president Carolyn Brooks, then-treasurer Dane Tippett, Southwestern division; Ben Anderson, Northwest; current vice president Karen Fisher, Starved Rock; Tom Neeley, Central Illinois Valley; Roger Pfister, Shawnee; Dale Hansen, Three Rivers; Joanne Osmond, Lake; Rosemary Swanson, DuPage; and Joanne Zendol, West Cook.

Alesandrini said the search committee screened internal and external candidates separately and narrowed the list for potential interviews. Those took place in December and January. The two finalist candidates were interviewed by the board of directors on Feb. 25 in Chicago.

"We are very pleased to successfully conclude this process," Alesandrini said. "We believe that the broad representation and diversity of membership on our board of directors assures that we have made the best decision possible on behalf of our entire membership."

2012 bi-annual Leadership Conference draws division officers, directors

resentations by general counsel, policy services, field services, communications, and a new IASB-sponsored vendor were heard at the 2012 bi-annual Leadership Conference in Chicago.

The event, held Feb. 24-25 at the

Hyatt Regency, was attended by 68 division officers, including directors, chairs and vice chairs, resolutions chairs, and others. All 21 Association divisions were represented.

The conference this year was designed to help IASB leaders under-

stand how Association staff determines what services to offer to members considering the role of the school board as set forth in the IASB Foundational Principles of Effective Gov-

See **CONFERENCE** on page 13

§623 MILLION *from page 3*

§32.22 million

- **Calumet Public SD 132**, Calumet Park, §12.36 million
- **Marion CUSD 2**, §56.62 million.

Governor Quinn also announced that the state is making available \$50 million in School Maintenance Grant Program grants. The dollar-for-dollar state matching grant program provides up to \$50,000 in matching funds for the maintenance or upkeep of buildings or structures for educational purposes. The grant applications for districts will be available soon.

LOBBYING *from page 6*

and support for fully funding IDEA at 40 percent and funding for Title I,” Hilton stated.

On Feb. 6, delegates attended two NSBA sessions: Education Funding, and ESEA Reauthorization. Additionally, during the day attendees heard from several congressmen including Congresswoman Judy Biggert (R-IL 13), a former school board member.

Delegates also heard political analyst Norman Ornstein’s views on Congress. He predicted the primary election will make it hard to compromise and

there will be political gridlock until after the November election.

Following Ornstein, a panel discussed “State Trends Traveling across the Nation.” The panelists talked about budget difficulties, teacher effectiveness changes, school choice (vouchers and charter schools), and the influence of big business money.

More information from the Federal Relations Network event can be found at <http://schoolboardnews.nsba.org/category/frn-conference-12/>.

CONFERENCE *from page 12*

ernance, member suggestions and requests and the IASB Board of Directors Results Policies. The goal was to enable division leaders to share this information with member school boards in their divisions.

General Counsel Melinda Selbee began the conference with a presentation on the distinctions between IASB directors and local boards of education. She polled the audience with Turning Point® software that presentation participants appeared to find both fun and informative.

The broad array of policy services was presented by policy director Anna Lovern and policy consultant Nancy Bohl, while field services directors Barbara B. Toney and Larry Dirks updated the members on the essentials of board self-evaluations, the survey tools used to facilitate in-district services. Members were then shown how board self-evaluations can identify board development needs.

James Russell, associate executive director for communications, reported on a new partner, the Illinois Channel. The non-profit public affairs TV network is now broadcasting IASB events and school management content on cable access channels statewide.

Division leaders also heard from Performance Matters, a K-12 data management and assessment consultant.

Woody Dillaha, CEO, explained that the enterprise platform is designed to merge leading and lagging indicators as well as student information systems, so that teaching staff and administrators can quickly and accurately analyze student performance data against state standards in order to differentiate instruction and meet student learning needs.

According to Cathy Talbert, associate executive director for field services and policy services, IASB’s partnership with the firm is a response to member needs expressed by participants in IASB’s Data First workshops.

At the conclusion of presentations on Saturday, former director and current resolutions chair of the Kaskaskia division, Felton Jose Jr., **Salem SD 111**, was honored for his years of service to the Association.

Board of directors meets

In addition to interviewing finalists and naming an executive director-select on Feb. 25, the IASB board of directors on Feb. 26 discussed the outcome of its governance review, heard reports from the executive director emeritus, president, and took action on several matters.

It was decided that rather than adopt new policy interpretations the board will wait until its May meeting.

A year-long governance review concluded recently that the board should develop new interpretations of its policies and develop monitoring reports of Association activities and delivery of services.

Michael D. Johnson, executive director emeritus, also presented his FY 2012 budget assumptions. They included budget implications for changes in personnel, facilities and services.

In other business, the board:

- Agreed to expand the number of representatives on the audit committee to eight
- Agreed to pay for the costs of alternates to the NSBA delegate assembly
- Approved an invitation for membership to Wintrust Financial as an IASB Service Associate
- Approved bylaws for the Shawnee division
- Heard a report from its Illinois High School Association (IHSA) representative and a proposal to offer an umbrella policy for lifetime care of permanently injured student athletes
- Heard a report about the annual Federal Relations Network conference

The board of directors will next meet May 18 and 19 in Springfield.

approve it with a majority vote. So a new unit district could include the high school and from one to three elementary schools.

In addition, the ballot also lists the maximum tax rates the new district could levy. It states the highest tax rate possible in a consolidated district is 5.75 percent if all line items are totaled. But the actual tax rate would be set by a new school board to be elected later.

The ballot proposition reads as follows:

The proposition to establish an optional elementary unit district shall pass if a majority of those voting in the high school district vote in favor of the proposition and a majority of those voting in at least one of the elementary districts vote in favor of the proposition. In that case, all of the territory in the high school district shall be included in the optional elementary unit district for high school purposes. However, only the territory of the elementary districts in which a majority of those voting vote in favor shall be included in the optional elementary unit district for elementary purposes. Shall an optional elementary unit district, with the authority to levy taxes at the maximum rate of: 3.50% for K-8 grade and 9-12 grade and 4.00% for K-12 grade for educational purposes; .55% for K-8 grade and 9-12 grade and .75% for K-12 grade for operational and maintenance purposes; .12% for K-8 grade and 9-12 grade and .20% for K-12 grade for transportation purposes; .40% for K-8 grade and 9-12 grade and .80% for K-12 grade for special education purposes; each upon all of the taxable property of the district at the value thereof, as equalized or assessed by the department of revenue, be established?

Illinois State Superintendent of Education Christopher Koch ruled Dec. 23 that consolidation can proceed. His decision overruled Janet Ulrich, regional superintendent of schools for Alexander, Johnson, Mas-

sac, Pulaski and Union counties, who had denied the petition to consolidate the districts into a new unit district.

At a public hearing Nov. 22 where local citizen petitioners favoring consolidation presented their evidence to Ulrich, three of the four school boards — Lick Creek CCSD 16, Anna CCSD 37, and Jonesboro CCSD 43 — were represented by attorneys who testified in opposition.

This consolidation effort is the first of its kind in Illinois. Authorization for this type of new district, an Optional Elementary District or Hybrid District, was first enacted by the state legislature in 2008.

But the statute also provides that the new district cannot tax at a rate that would exceed the maximums in the prior district...

There are strict provisions in law for establishing such a new district, including:

(1) The petition must specify a maximum annual authorized tax rate for both grade K through 8 educational purposes and grade 9 through 12 educational purposes. The rate for grade K through 8 educational purposes shall not exceed 3.5%. The rate for grade 9 through 12 educational purposes shall not exceed 3.5%. The combined rate for both grade K through 8 and grade 9 through 12 educational purposes shall not exceed 4.0%.

(2) The petition must specify a maximum annual authorized tax rate for both grade K through 8 operations and maintenance purposes and grade 9 through 12 operations and maintenance purposes. The rate for grade K through 8 operations and maintenance purposes shall not exceed 0.55%. The rate for grade 9 through 12 operations and maintenance purposes shall not exceed 0.55%. The combined rate for

both grade K through 8 and grade 9 through 12 operations and maintenance purposes shall not exceed 0.75%.

(3) The petition must specify a maximum annual authorized tax rate for both grade K through 8 special education purposes and grade 9 through 12 special education purposes. The rate for grade K through 8 special education purposes shall not exceed 0.40%. The rate for grade 9 through 12 special education purposes shall not exceed 0.40%.

(4) The petition must specify a maximum annual authorized tax rate for transportation purposes.

But the statute also provides that the new district cannot tax at a rate that would exceed the maximums in the prior district. The statute states that the new tax rate “shall not exceed the highest dual district rate, excluding rates for bond and interest levies, applicable to any territory within the high school district included in the petition in the year immediately preceding the creation of the new district.”

So, by law, there can be no increase in taxing authority in the new district that is greater than the maximum rate established in the prior districts.

The only other school district consolidation question on the March ballot, as listed by the Illinois State Board of Elections, is a proposal to combine three districts located in west central Illinois. Those districts are **Abingdon CUSD 217**, **Avon CUSD 176**, and **Bushnell-Prairie City CUSD 170**, Bushnell.

The proposed new district’s school board would “have authority to levy taxes at the rate of 2.97% for educational purposes, .71% for operations and maintenance purposes, .50% for transportation purposes, and .05% for working cash purposes, each upon the full fair cash value of all taxable property of the district as equalized or assessed by the department of revenue.”

NEWS HEADLINES

Belleville (Feb. 7, *Belleville News-Democrat*) District 201 Superintendent Jeff Dosier plans to propose a new “school within a school” program designed to help underachieving students better make the grade and graduate. “The idea is to take some students who have at-risk factors like behavior and truancy issues and put those students in a smaller setting,” Dosier said. “It’s sort of a school within a school. We want to try to eliminate some of those distractions and put them in a place where the surroundings are more controlled, where they can focus on their course work.”

Carbondale (Feb. 1, *The Southern*) Carbondale ESD 95 will benefit from a \$107,444 grant received by the city to improve pedestrian areas around Thomas School and Carbondale Middle School. The federal grant, made through the Illinois Safe Routes to School Program, is designed to help children walk or bike to school safely. The funding includes \$103,442 to construct, replace and/or repair sidewalks, and \$4,002 to install, enhance and/or repair sidewalks.

Champaign (Feb. 27, *The News-Gazette*) The school board of Champaign CUSD 4 voted unanimously Feb. 27 to issue \$14.5 million in working cash bonds, which could raise property taxes about \$25 for the owner of a \$150,000 home. The bond issue would pay for geothermal systems, and energy-efficient lights. It could also pay for a new transportation facility. The board is allowing for a \$14.5 million bond issue, but school officials said they could end up issuing a lesser amount.

Chicago (Feb. 1, *Chicago Tribune*) A survey of parents at Drummond Magnet School shows most parents want a longer school day, but not 7½ hours. In a letter to Chicago Public Schools chief Jean-Claude Brizard, the school’s Local School

Council members released results of their survey and asked for some flexibility on the length of the school day. Increasingly, parents at schools across the city—often better performing schools—are asking that their expanded school day not be 7½ hours long, a schedule that all schools are set to adopt next year.

Chicago (Feb. 13, *Chicago Tribune*) The Chicago Teachers Union and several local school council members have joined in a lawsuit to try to block Chicago District 299 from closing and overhauling 17 of the city’s worst-performing schools. The litigants want a judge to step in. They argue that the planned turnarounds discriminate against minority students because plans “disproportionately target” those students’ schools. In Chicago, 91 percent of public school students come from minority families. Most of the students in the 17 schools slated for turnaround or closing are from minority families. The board agreed to turnarounds — which involve replacing school staff and investing in new programs — at Tilden High School, Chicago Vocational Career Academy and eight elementary schools. The board also approved closing two elementary schools and three-year phase outs at both Crane Technical Prep and Dyett High School.

Decatur (Feb. 24, *Herald and Review*) Students who are college bound say advanced placement courses save them time and money. Decatur SD 61 schools offer 14 advanced placement courses, with the newest one being statistics, and Superintendent Gloria Davis said that’s a tough course that really challenges students. To help students juggle the additional workload, the district also added an advanced placement support class.

Normal (Feb. 24, *The Pantagraph*) Heartland FFA Alumni and

supporters have raised \$20,000 within the past week for agriculture programs at two Normal high schools at a time when funding is more important than ever, said Kevin Enderlin, who teaches agriculture at both schools. This fall Normal Community High School started its own agriculture program and FFA group. “That’s something we’ve been trying to do for 17 years,” said Enderlin. Previously only Normal Community West High School had agriculture classes. Since federal and state money is drying up for local agriculture programs, local fundraising is more important than ever, Enderlin said.

Rockford (Feb. 24, *Register Star*) An estimated 500 students don’t graduate every year from local schools even though the district spends \$7.5 million annually on alternative education programs. Assistant Superintendent Matt Vosberg outlined a plan Feb. 23 for the district’s Education Committee to be more proactive, and it comes with a less than \$5.5 million-a-year price tag. The idea is to serve more students, add social workers, a summer transition program and two elementary classrooms to target students with chronic behavior issues.

Statewide (Feb. 1, *Chicago Tribune*) Gov. Pat Quinn wants a new law to require kids to stay in school until they are 18. Students can legally drop out of school at age 17 now, and he said a change is needed to improve graduation rates. President Barack Obama has since said that he would like to see states raise the legal dropout limit to age 18. But some local educators say the change won’t accomplish much unless the state also provides the money to keep at-risk students in school. Raising the state’s dropout age, officials say, creates vexing problems for school districts already burdened by soaring numbers of truancy cases.

Districts place bond issues and tax increase questions on March ballots

A \$3.2 million bond proposition for **Taft School District 90**, Lockport, is among the school finance questions on the March 20 ballot. The measure seeks to issue a school building bond in order to pay for construction or repair projects in the district, which is located in Will County. The Lockport district's ballot question is one of at least 15 bond propositions on the March primary ballot.

Another bond issue on the ballot is for **Woodlawn CHSD 205**, in Jefferson County. The proposition seeks to issue a bond in the amount of \$575,000 in order to pay for repair costs to the high school's roof. Immediate repairs needed to be made to a section of roof at the high school so this bond would pay for the work that has already been performed.

At least 13 other bond issues and no less than seven tax increase proposals have been placed before voters at the March primary. They include:

School bond issues

- **Blue Ridge CUSD 18**, \$6.5 million in school building bonds.
- **Cahokia CUSD 187**, \$32 million to build a new high school.
- **Clinton CUSD 15**, \$16.7 million in school building bonds.
- **Evanston/Skokie SD 65**, \$48.2 million.
- **Fox Lake Grade SD 114**, \$3.75 million for working cash.
- **Golf SD 67**, Morton Grove, \$9.72 million in school building bonds.
- **Gower SD 62**, Willowbrook, \$9 million in school building bonds.
- **Lincolnwood SD 74**, \$25 million in school building bonds.
- **Opdyke-Belle Rive CCSD 5**, \$400,000 to help construct a new building.
- **Quincy SD 172**, \$6.2 million for working cash.
- **Sandoval CUSD 501**, \$2 million in school building bonds.
- **Sandridge District 172**, Chicago Heights, \$300,000 to issue a working cash fund bond.

- **Taft SD 90**, \$3.2 million for construction of a new school.
- **Valmeyer CUSD 3**, \$1.5 million for working cash.
- **Woodlawn CCSD 205**, \$575,000 for work on the high school.

Tax increase questions

- **Auburn CUSD 10**, raise the debt service extension base under the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) to \$1 million from the current \$136,000.
- **Earlville CUSD 9**, levy increase to a rate of 4 percent from the current 2.6 percent. The additional money would go towards school programs and services.
- **Fox Lake Grade SD 114**, Spring Grove, levy continuation that is set at 25 cents per \$100 of assessed value; the current levy would expire in 2013. The money would pay for current programs and help maintain current class sizes.
- **Golf SD 67**, Morton Grove, levy increase to a rate of 2.401 percent from the current 2.058 percent. The additional money would go towards operational costs and programs.
- **St. Libory Consolidated SD 30**, levy increase to a rate of 2.4508 percent for five years.
- **Valmeyer CUSD 3**, raise the debt service extension base from \$83,695 to \$350,000, with the base to be increased each year by the lesser of 5 percent or the percentage increase in the consumer price index for the previous year.
- **West Northfield SD 31**, Northbrook, levy increase to a rate of 1.888 percent from the present 1.618 percent. The added money would help pay for general needs in the district in order to improve education.

Information on the outcome of school finance referendums in the March general primary election will be reported in next month's newsletter.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 14 – Lake Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Waukegan CUSD 60, Waukegan

March 15 – BoardBook Webinar, <https://boardbook.webex.com/boardbook>

March 21 – North Cook Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Wyndham Glenview Suites, Glenview

March 28 – Blackhawk Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Carbon Cliff-Barstow SD 36, Silvis

April 4 – South Cook Division Dinner Meeting/OMA Pre-Meeting Training, Orland Chateau, Orland Park

April 12 – Three Rivers OMA Board Member Training Meeting, Joliet West High School, Joliet

April 12 – Northwest Division OMA Board Member Training Meeting, Centennial Elementary School, Polo

April 24 – Wabash Valley Summer Governing Meeting, Richards Farm Restaurant, Casey

April 26 – Illini Division Summer Governing Meeting, Houlihans, Champaign

April 30 – West Cook Division Meeting/OMA Pre-Meeting Training, The Elmcrest, Elmwood Park

May 1 – Egyptian Division Summer Governing Meeting, 9th Street Grill, Mt. Vernon

May 1 – Western Division Summer Governing Meeting, Red Ox Restaurant, Macomb

May 1 – DuPage Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Addison Trail High School, Addison