

Illinois SCHOOL BOARD Newsbulletin

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Conference panels reviewed

A group of local board members gathered at IASB's Springfield office on March 1 to screen 80 "Share the Success" panel proposals submitted for the 2013 Conference. Judging was also done in Lombard. IASB will notify districts in mid-April if their panels were selected.

Bill would allow for unlimited takeovers of local school districts

In February, Senator Heather Steans (D-Chicago), on behalf of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), introduced a bill to allow for state take-over of local school districts. The bill would also give ISBE authority to remove the elected school board members and indefinitely remove the ability of the local community to hold school board elections.

Advocates for local control of

See **TAKEOVERS** on page 3

State undertaking KIDS school readiness assessment process

The Illinois State Board of Education is implementing an evaluation process called the "Kindergarten Individual Development Survey" (KIDS) to assess kindergarten readiness.

The evaluation process was launched with the following goals and priorities:

- Promote the success of every child by providing key adults — family members and teachers alike — with a clear picture of a child's developing strengths across five main domains: cognitive, physical, devel-

opmental, social and emotional.

- Guide professional development for teachers from early childhood through third grade.
- Support proper alignment of early childhood and elementary school systems.
- Inform policy and resource decisions regarding class size, instructional time and curricula.

"This assessment process offers a comprehensive and developmentally appropriate approach that will

See **KIDS** on page 5



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Strike trend continues

Page 14

5Essentials survey

After the first two weeks of a state learning-climate survey, the Illinois 5Essentials Survey, 115,000 students, or 14 percent, and almost 43,000 teachers, about 51 percent, had responded. A school must have at least a 50 percent response rate for each group (but 30% of parents) to get a report. In just two weeks, nearly 30 percent of all schools had met that threshold for either students or teachers, or both. The survey, set to provide a portrait from an organizational perspective and guide improvement efforts, will remain open through March. All certified teachers, and students in grades 6 through 12, have been asked to participate in the 15-minute learning-climate survey online at: <https://illinois.5-essentials.org>.

ESEA waiver sought

Illinois' request for a waiver from some aspects of the NCLB Act has not yet been approved due to concern about the timeline for implementation of the new evaluation systems for student growth. The federal timeline requires districts to implement the evaluation systems by the 2015-16 school year. Under state law implementation of the system is to be phased in, with all districts in compliance by 2016-17. ISBE is surveying districts. If most are voluntarily implementing in 2015-16, federal education officials may grant the waiver.

Support system auditing

A needs assessment of the Illinois Statewide System of Support (SSOS) is now under way. The assessment, titled SSOS Audit, will engage educators and SSOS partners to identify strengths and gaps in the current system. For information, visit <http://www.illinoisCSI.org>.

2012 School District Financial Profile

	Financial Profile (Original Calculation)	Financial Profile (Adjusted for Delayed Payments)
Recognition	699	670
Review	124	143
Early Warning	30	37
Watch	14	17

Districts show improvement in financial profiles, leaders do good job managing funding reductions

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has released its annual financial profile of the state's public schools through Fiscal Year 2012.

While some districts are falling behind, an increasing number are living within their means, even when state data is revised to take into account that most districts have not received anywhere near their full state funding.

The latest profile shows that 670 districts, or 77.3 percent of the state's 867 public school districts, are doing a sound job of managing their finances. That compares to 72 percent achieving the same "Financial Recognition" status just three years earlier.

The latest Financial Profile is based on data from Fiscal Year 2012, which ended June 30, 2012. The data has been revised to eliminate the impact of payment delays for mandated categoricals such as pupil transportation, special education and other expenditures due to the state and national economic downturn. The school code was amended, effective August 2009, to specifically ensure that districts are not designated as being in financial difficulty solely due to delayed state payments.

It is important to note that the state profile is a "point in time" picture, meaning that it is likely the financial condition of districts has changed in the nearly eight months since the end of the last fiscal year. Currently, the state has a backlog of bills total-

ing more than \$7.8 billion, of which more than \$800 million are owed to schools.

Pending vouchers date back six months, to the end of August 2012.

The 2012 report also shows that fewer districts are in distress; decreasing from 29 districts, or 3 percent, on the "Financial Watch" list three years earlier to 17 districts, or 2 percent, in 2012.

The Financial Profile is created by using five indicators of financial performance:

- Fund balance to revenue ratio
- Expenditures to revenues ratio
- Days cash on hand

See **PROFILES** on page 5

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**

NSBA allies draft bill in Congress to ensure local control of schools

The National School Boards Association has drafted legislation and is looking for sponsors of a local-control bill titled, the “Local Educational Agency Governance, Flexibility and Efficiency Act of 2013.” The legislation would recognize the vital role and responsibilities of local school board governance and local school district decision-making in designing, developing and delivering high-quality educational services for our nation’s school children.

The legislation also would ensure that the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) fulfills its role as a policy implementer rather than a policy-maker, and performs that role with proper recognition of local governance. Illinois Congressman Aaron Schock has agreed to be the primary

...“The proposed federal legislation has a good chance of adoption in Congress to stem the tide,”

— Susan Hilton

sponsor, but co-sponsors are being sought, and bi-partisan sponsorship is a goal.

“Illinois has a longstanding commitment to maintaining local control of its schools, but the threats to local control are mounting,” explains IASB governmental relations director Susan Hilton.

At a meeting of the National School Boards Association in Washington recently, Illinois school board

members joined with their peers from around the country in pushing for a federal law that would restrain the ability to impose new regulations on local school boards.

“I believe we are reaching a point where state and federal legislation controls a lot of what boards do,” said Hilton. “But I think the proposed federal legislation has a good chance of adoption in Congress to stem the tide,” she said.

The Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance is seeking local board members interested in contacting their own congressmen and encouraging them to consider signing on as co-sponsors. The bill text may be viewed at: <http://www.nsba.org/Advocacy/Key-Issues/NSBA-Bill/NSBA-Draft-Bill-Text.pdf>.

TAKEOVERS *from page 1*

school governance, including IASB, immediately opposed the measure. “The association is continuing discussions with State Superintendent Chris Koch about its opposition to the bill as drafted,” according to Ben Schwarm, IASB deputy executive director. “Koch has indicated the ISBE will work with IASB to make substantial changes to remove its opposition,” Schwarm said.

The bill contains no stated criteria that would be used by ISBE to warrant removal of school board members nor any standards or criteria for a community to reestablish an elected school board, noted Schwarm.

The bill number is SB 2340, and the text can be found at: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/Bill-Status.asp?DocNum=2340&GAID=12&DocTypeID=SB&LegID=73948&SessionID=85&GA=98>

Schwarm added a few key points about the bill:

- There is no criteria in the legisla-

tion as to what makes a school board eligible for takeover – the ISBE would define this administratively

- There is no criteria in the legislation as to what a school district must do to regain an elected school board – the ISBE would define this administratively
- An unelected Independent Authority, a panel of five appointed by the state superintendent, would take over all authority, powers, and responsibilities of the locally elected school board
- The Independent Authority would also assume taxing authority once held by the board elected by the voters and taxpayers of the community
- The voting rights of the citizens of the district are removed and elections suspended once an Independent Authority is established
- There would be no school board elections until the Independent Authority is abolished, but there

are no criteria as to what must happen to trigger an abolishment or how long this might take.

“This legislation is a fundamental assault on the principles not only of local control of schools, but of democratically elected school boards, and as such IASB opposes it and will work with the Illinois Statewide School Administrative Alliance to defeat it,” Schwarm added.

The bill has been assigned to the Senate Education committee for a hearing. Countering this legislation is a federal bill supporting local control which is now in the works (see story that follows).

The state board voted to oust school boards in East St. Louis, and North Chicago last June. Illinois law already allows for the takeover of individual schools and school districts in very limited circumstances, as well as for reconstitution of a district. Specifically, 105 ILCS 5/2-3.25f describes existing state intervention powers.

State's Advanced Placement gains closing achievement gap

AP low-income and minorities improving

Low-income and minority performance continues to show gains in Advanced Placement (AP) testing, moving Illinois closer to AP equity and college readiness among all students.

The number of Illinois graduates who take AP exams during high school has more than doubled in the last decade, with low-income and minority students continuing to close the achievement gap on these rigorous tests.

In 2012, more than 26,400 graduates scored a 3 or higher on an AP exam, with 17.6 percent of these students coming from low-income backgrounds, according to the 9th Annual AP Report to the Nation. The highest score possible is a 5.

"The AP program complements our state's focus on college and career readiness by giving students the opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school and acquire the knowledge and problem-solving skills necessary to succeed in challenging postsecondary course work," said State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch. "Increasing participation and significant achievement gains by students of all backgrounds show that our efforts are paying off."

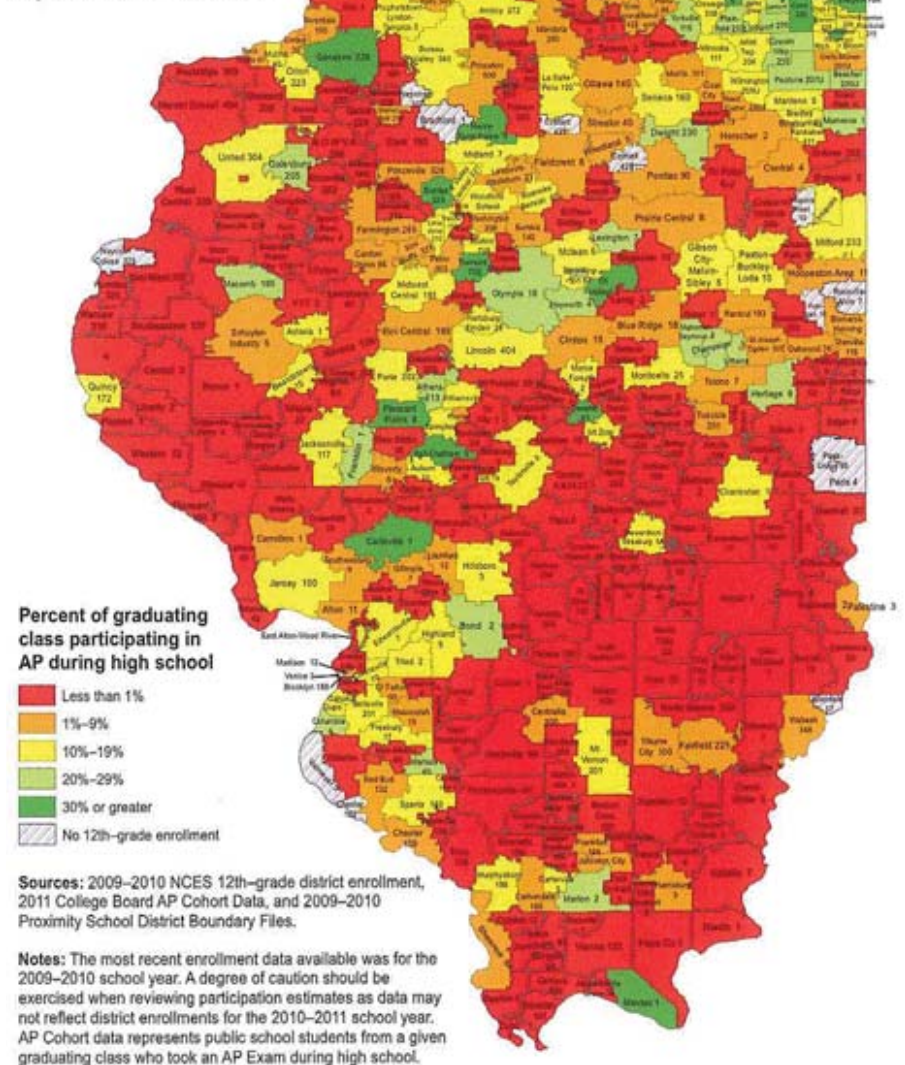
AP exams measure a student's content mastery of college-level studies in specific academic disciplines. A total of 40,653 graduates took at least one AP exam during high school in 2012 compared to 18,833 just ten years earlier.

Illinois ranks 16th in the nation for the percentage of 2012 graduates – 19.9 percent – who scored at least a 3 on an AP exam during their high school career. The national average is 19.5 percent.

Additionally, the percentage of Illinois graduates who reached that benchmark grew by 8.2 percentage points from 11.7 percent in 2002, putting Illinois among the top 20 states

Illinois Public Schools

AP® Participation by District: High School Class of 2011



that had a larger percentage point change over time than the national average.

The College Board and the American Council on Education (ACE) recommend that colleges and universities award credit for AP scores of 3 and higher on any AP exam. However, not all universities accept AP scores for college credit.

Low-income students comprised 28.9 percent of Illinois graduates who took an AP exam during high school in 2012, compared to only 17.6 per-

cent in 2007.

Meanwhile, the number of low-income graduates scoring a 3 or higher nearly tripled from 1,719, or 9.1 percent in 2007, to 4,645, or 17.6 percent in 2012.

According to ISBE, research shows minority and low-income students who earn at least a 3 on an AP exam are more likely than their peers to earn higher degrees in college and a college degree within five years of enrolling.

See AP on page 5

State board may lift limit on 70/30 rule class size in special ed classrooms

At the urging of State Superintendent Christopher Koch, the Illinois State Board of Education voted Feb. 20 to consider eliminating the unfunded mandate that currently imposes strict special education class size limits, commonly known as the 70/30 ratio or 70/30 rule.

Based on the state action, there will be a 45-day public comment period, and then state board members will make a decision on whether to send to the state legislature's Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) language necessary to remove the mandate.

Noting Illinois no longer is under the federal court settlement agreement from the "Corey H." case, Koch recently said he would bring the issue before the state board, because he believes class size should be a local decision.

Agency staff now believe that restrictions on placement decisions set forth in rule can now be eliminated, and school districts, through the IEP process, should determine locally the accommodations and modifications necessary to place students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

IASB Executive Director Roger Eddy was among those testifying before

the state board on behalf of the Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance in favor of eliminating the mandate.

He was joined by Illinois Association of School Business Officials Executive Director Michael Jacoby, Illinois Principals Association Associate Executive Director and General Counsel Brian Schwartz, and other school advocates.

"This was a good first step," added IASA Executive Director Brent Clark, who praised Koch for following through on his promise to bring the matter to the state agency. "Now we have to make sure that our voices are heard during the public comment period," Clark said.

School leaders told the state school board that local districts simply can no longer afford mandates that exceed federal standards, and there are unintended consequences to this particular mandate.

They said one consequence is keeping special education students out of general education classrooms as districts struggle to comply while also facing a historically difficult budget climate.

Here is a link to the complete ISBE summary of its position on the proposal to lift mandates: <http://www.isbe.net/rules/proposed/226websum.htm>.

KIDS from page 1

help every child," said Samuel J. Meisels, President of the Erikson Institute, a Chicago graduate school specializing in child development studies.

Meisels co-chaired the state's Kindergarten Readiness Stakeholder's Committee two years ago that led to the creation of the KIDS assessment.

"It will also help future generations of children. Such an assessment could yield data for guiding instructional decisions, policy making, and resource allocation," Meisels said.

The KIDS assessment is one that is designed to capture early learners' growth and development over time in appropriate ways, according to experts. KIDS is not a one-time "readiness" snapshot of children as they enter kindergarten.

It is more properly called a developmentally appropriate assessment process to yield data that can be used at multiple levels and for multiple varying purposes, including guiding decisions regarding classroom instruction, policy making and resource allocation.

PROFILES from page 2

- Percent of short-term borrowing available
- Percent of long-term debt remaining

The 2012 Financial Profile for all districts in Illinois can be found online at: <http://www.isbe.net/sfms/P/profile.htm>.

AP from page 4

Illinois continues to close the equity gap among minority students, ISBE reported.

More information on Illinois public schools' Advanced Placement performance by district for the high school class of 2012 is available online at: <http://www.isbe.net/news/2013/pdf/ap-success.pdf>.



"Notebook PAPER? What's paper?"

tion.

Several other states, including Maryland and Colorado, have collected similar early childhood data to help identify service gaps for young children, address the development of early learners and better gauge the effectiveness of early childhood programs.

For more information, contact Rhonda Clark, principal consultant, Early Childhood Division, ISBE by phone at 217/524-4835 or by email at rclark@isbe.net.

Schools reexamining policies, procedures on hazing incidents

Authority not limited to school property, hours

A recent incident involving the alleged hazing of student athletes at a Cook County suburban high school has prompted some school officials to reexamine their policies and procedures to try to head off similar incidents.

After the reports surfaced, school officials around the state began looking to bolster district policies against hazing and reiterate orders to staff to provide careful supervision of athletes and of students in general.

Six soccer players were initially charged in Nov. 2012 with misdemeanor battery and hazing in the recent incident, and the county state's attorney reportedly is reviewing the situation to decide whether to file more charges.

IASB includes hazing on a long list of prohibited student actions in its sample policy on student discipline. Many districts have adopted at least a portion of that policy, which is contained in the Policy Reference Education Subscription Service (PRESS) manual, along with other general policies pertaining to student conduct that might apply to hazing. [See sidebar citation to the PRESS

listing.]

While a definition of hazing is difficult for school officials to pin down, Illinois criminal law does contain one. The so-called Hazing Act, 720 ILCS 5/12C-50 new, states:

Sec.12C-50. Hazing. (a) A person commits hazing who knowingly requires the performance of any act by a student or other person in a school, college, university, or other educational institution of this State, for the purpose of induction or admission into any group, organization, or society associated or connected with that institution if:

- (1) the act is not sanctioned or authorized by that educational institution; and
- (2) the act results in bodily harm to any person.

(b) Sentence. Hazing is a Class A misdemeanor, except that hazing that results in death or great bodily harm is a Class 4 felony.

Several school boards have more specific hazing definitions. For example, some districts have definitions in their student handbook spelling out precisely what it is, and listing some kinds of actions that constitute hazing.

Perhaps the most famous incident of this kind occurred in the now-infamous student "powder-puff football" hazing incident that was caught on

videotape in 2003 and replayed countless times on television stations around the world.

More than 30 suburban Chicago high school seniors, most of them females, ultimately were expelled from school for one year for their role in the incident at a forest preserve, an incident that allegedly left five junior girls injured.

Many of the student participants were fortunate not to have been charged with aggravated battery, according to an attorney for the schools in the hazing incident. The one-year expulsions and community service agreements that were ultimately obtained included a provision that the participants could not profit from the hazing or engage in commercial appropriation of the incident.

The biggest lesson to be drawn from this outcome, a school attorney said, was that "schools have authority to govern these rituals," even if they occur away from school property and after school hours.

One caveat should be added: schools also may need trained public relations people to help school boards and administrators deal with the firestorm of press controversy and criticism surrounding such cases. A professional PR approach is needed in getting out the facts about the incident.

Policy Reference Manual offers sample policy for hazing discipline

IASB's PRESS service lists hazing in the Policy Reference Manual at 7:190, Student Discipline policy, where it is categorized with similar behaviors in the Prohibited Student Conduct subcategory.

Hazing is well detailed at 7:190-AP1 [AP means administrative procedure]. This AP information is intended for a student handbook. As is clear in footnote 2 to AP1, hazing in the criminal sense has a specific definition which involves bodily injury. The way the term hazing is used in this procedure sets up a two-

tiered structure of disciplinary actions.

Recognizing that hazing is, in and of itself, prohibited, hazing that does not endanger the mental or physical health or safety of another person is subject to one set of disciplinary actions. Hazing that does endanger the mental or physical health or safety of another person is subject to the disciplinary actions for hazing generally, as well as a suspension for up to 10 days, and/or expulsion for the remainder of the school term.

School leaders should contact their board attorney for additional advice.



"Oops! My mistake. That was the YEARLY budget estimate, not the MONTHLY estimate."

State testing history contradicts claims on changes in ISAT cut scores

ISAT becoming worthless for academic improvement

(Editor's note: this letter to the editor was originally published Feb. 3 in the Belleville News Democrat. It was written by James T. Rosborg, retired superintendent of Belleville District 118. It is being reprinted with permission of the author.)

Recently, the [Belleville] *News Democrat* wrote an editorial regarding the increased cut scores (Pass/Fail) on the ISAT state test given to grades 3-8 students. In the editorial, based solely on the latest propaganda from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), it stated that school superintendents would be “doing students yet another disservice if they explain lower test scores away as just a change in scoring.”



James T. Rosborg

School superintendents will have no choice but to say this if they want their constituents to fully understand this proposal. ISBE continues to use the phrases “higher standards,” “student growth,” and “academic success after high school” to further degrade public schools.

In my opinion, this language is used to seek more funds from the U.S. Department of Education. With that said, the purpose of this editorial is to give the reader a little researched history of Illinois testing, as opposed to the current emotional outcry being put forward.

In 2005, ISBE did a good thing. They vertically equated the ISAT test at grades 3-8 and provided an individual item analysis on each student. (Vertically equated means the test is structured to provide an estimate of how a student's score in one grade will predict their score for the following year).

Schools for the first time in near-

ly 20 years of state testing could use the state test scores for instructional improvement.

The state did not do this for the high school test (PSAE). Consequently, schools could not predict future scores beyond 8th grade. Also, there was no individual item analysis for the high school test, (PSAE), which is a key component of student academic improvement.

I was told by ISBE officials that they could not align the tests because the ISAT and PSAE tests were differ-

“No more are we asking the question, “What is best for today's student?” Instead, we are asking, “How can we get more funds.”

—James T. Rosborg

ent. How ironic that this can happen now, some eight years later.

There is a big disconnect between the ISAT and PSAE with 82% meeting/exceeding state standards on the ISAT and 51% on the PSAE. Instead of changing the cut scores (pass/fail) on one test (PSAE), ISBE has chosen to change six tests (ISAT – grades 3,4,5,6,7,8).

The theory is to match the new learning standards, yet the state is using 2008 grade 8 student results in ISAT with the 2011 juniors (PSAE) to get the new performance levels (backmapping). Both of these tests used the previous learning standards.

There is a statistical disconnect here. A good school uses raw data to see improvement, not some arbitrary decision made at ISBE.

No more are we asking the question, “What is best for today's student?” Instead, we are asking, “How can we get more funds from the fed-

eral government or high money organizations such as the Gates and Wallace foundations?”

Many people say charter schools are the answer. In a 2010 study of Stanford University's Center for Research on Educational Outcomes, (CREDO), researchers found 37% of charter schools produce academic results worse than public schools, with only 17% doing significantly better (*Newsweek, June 13, 2010*).

Educational success still comes down to good leaders, good teachers, good parents, and a supportive community.

Diane Ravitch, a greatly respected New York University educational historian, said it well: “The machinery is in place to measure and test, driving out innovation, creativity, and divergent thinking. Kids have more tests resulting in a worse education” (*Ravitch, October 4, 2010, The Blog*).

This attitude will cause communities to continue to see less classes in vocational education, gifted, physical education, and the fine/practical arts.

The new harder ISAT test is not going to improve schools. You can expect local district scores to reflect a 25-35% decrease in test results — results that are already so messed up that virtually no school district is meeting adequate yearly progress.

This is in a state that can barely help schools because of cutbacks at our state board on its own staff.

The change in test results reflects another sad commentary of governmental involvement in schools in the past quarter of a century. Schools will find themselves unable to compare test scores between years because ISBE has changed the test scoring once again.

If the goal of the state board is to make our tests meaningless, as far as academic improvement, then ISBE is certainly accomplishing its goal.

IASB directors hear details of pension funding problems, politics

The IASB Board of Directors at their quarterly meeting in February heard a first-hand report from the head of the Illinois Teachers Retirement System (TRS) about the state's massive pension problem. What they didn't hear was a viable solution.

Dick Ingram, executive director of TRS, addressed the board on Friday, Feb. 8, at the Hyatt Regency Chicago. His presentation was informational and Ingram stressed that neither he nor the TRS board of trustees is advocating a specific answer to the unfunded pension liability, which now exceeds \$52 billion.

Ingram conveyed that figure in a simple formula: contributions plus investments equals benefits minus liability.

The amount of that liability, which alone represents more than half of the state's five public pension costs, exceeds the state's general fund budget by nearly \$20 billion. The problem, Ingram said, is that pension costs are growing faster than revenue and will get worse.

"Actuaries project the state contribution will grow from \$3.4 billion

in Fiscal Year 2014 to \$9.8 billion in the next 30 years. Merely keeping TRS appropriation at 7.2 percent of the state budget will require additional revenue of \$60 to \$80 billion over that period," he said.

Ingram did not shy from commenting on the political consequences of underfunding the pension system. It comes down to a difference between "political math" and standard actuarial math, he said.

"Since 1970, state contributions have been \$30 billion lower than they should be for full funding," he said. The state plan falls short because it works on a 50-year plan that is tied to debt service or borrowing. Ingram said the pension system should only be amortized over 30 years without borrowing to pay the cost.

"Teacher pension costs are back-loaded under the current funding scheme," he continued. "We need to stop using Illinois math. None of the proposals such as raising revenues or refinancing the debt come close to solving the problem.

"It's not that the problem is unfixable. But unless lawmakers are willing to make hard choices, these options are just nibbling around the edge," Ingram said. TRS has 370,000 members and more than 105,000 who are currently receiving benefits. The average teacher pension in Illinois is more

than \$48,000 annually.

Ingram said it is this group – current beneficiaries – that could make the biggest change in the unfunded liability. He referred to potential changes in the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) formula and start date for COLA adjustments – two proposals that are opposed by teachers' unions and many lawmakers.

Other board action

The Board of Directors also spent time reviewing its governance policies. Work is continuing on the executive director's interpretations and indicators. The board is also working on its monitoring processes and calendar. This work is also to support the annual board self-evaluation, which will be conducted at its May meeting.

Reports were heard about the recent Federal Relations Network conference in Washington, the 2012 Joint Annual Conference, changes to the NSBA national affiliate program, and plans for the Association's centennial celebration.

The board also discussed legislative initiatives, changes to athletic policy on students with disabilities, and Association finances.

It was also noted that the local school board terms of 11 of the 21 division directors and officers expire in April; most are running for re-election.



Dick Ingram

IASB staff, district leaders attend AASA Conference, share vital administrative concerns

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) held its annual conference Feb. 21-23 in Los Angeles. Participants could choose from among 11 round robin presentations, five "thought leader" sessions, four general sessions, exhibits and other daily activities that focused on board/superintendent relations, student achievement, and other education-related topics.

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

Presenting at this year's conference was Debbie Wilson, Superintendent of **Prospect Heights District 23**. Wilson and two other school administrators presented strategies on Feb. 21 for increasing test scores by improving student health. She was joined by Donna Bingaman, associate principal, **Arlington Heights District 25**, and Nimisha Kumar, principal, **Orland SD 135**, Orland Park.

Another session was led by Hardy Murphy, Superintendent of **Evanston-Skokie District 65**. Murphy presented on the topic "Creating Quality

Teacher Appraisals Linked to Student Achievement and Compensation."

IASB Executive Director Roger Eddy presented a panel titled, "Know When to Hold 'Em, Know When to Fold 'Em." Joining Eddy were veteran Association search consultants Tom Leahy and Dawn Miller.

They discussed the fundamentals of interviewing for a school administrator job, and noted that assuming the wrong things about the process is all too common. They said this can be prevented with the right information and the right attitude.

Member survey seeking feedback on views, needs and demographics

IASB is polling its membership on a variety of issues. An online survey was posted on Friday, March 1, and will close on Monday, April 1.

Every five years, IASB polls its membership to gain insight into what board members and superintendents think and value.

In addition to collecting important demographic information, this comprehensive survey is used to determine who is using IASB services, what they think about them, and how the Association can change to better meet member needs.

Unlike previous years when only mailed, printed surveys were used, the 2013 survey is being offered in both online and print formats.

Those who cannot access the survey electronically can request a printed, postage-paid copy.

An email containing a link to the survey site was sent on March 1 to all members who have shared their emails with IASB. In addition, a letter announcing the survey was mailed to board presidents and superintendents on Feb. 20.

IASB Executive Director Roger Eddy said that the survey provides an invaluable resource to the Association. "We obviously don't intend this to be mandatory. But we do want our members to know that their response rate is important to the validity of the survey," he said.

"I personally want to thank our members ahead of time for participating," Eddy added.

All answers are confidential and no lists or addresses will be collected or shared with any individuals or organizations. Results of the membership survey will be shared after they are tabulated.

Anyone with questions about the survey, access issues or a request for a print version should contact IASB Communications at 217-528-9688, ext. 1131, or by email at dheckrodt@iasb.com.

Previous member surveys can be found online at: <http://www.iasb.com/services/surveymenu.cfm>. The current survey is online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Q3QS62T>.

Starting Right workshops offered

For districts that will seat new board members after the April election, IASB has a document entitled, "Orienting New School Board Members on the way to Becoming a High Performing Board."

It suggests a process designed to facilitate school board and superintendent conversations about the district's identity, purpose and processes.

Sample agendas are provided in this publication, which is available online for downloading at <http://www.iasb.com/training/orienting.cfm>.

Directors from the field services department are also available to visit member districts to work with the new governance team in the popular IASB workshop, Starting Right: Board-

Building for the New Governance Team.

The Starting Right workshop provides an opportunity for the board to discuss board process policies, agreements about how the board does its business. The new governance team can discuss the board's practices, procedures and professional ethics, getting new team relationships off to a good start. As with all field services workshops, the field services director will work with the board president and superintendent to customize this workshop to meet the unique needs of the board.

IASB's field services department can provide more information or help member districts set up an in-district visit.

NEWS FROM IASB

PERA document

IASB has prepared a document that explains the state's Performance Evaluation Review Act (PERA) to guide school board members and others on the reform law. Written in a Q&A format, it addresses the Act's definition and purpose, deadlines and procedures, effects on tenure, RIFs, dismissals, and other common concerns about measures affecting the terms and conditions of teacher and principal employment. It can be found at: <http://iasb.com/law/PERAoverview.pdf>.

Conference exhibits

Application forms and instructions are now online for contracts and housing of all exhibitors at the Joint Annual Conference. Except for a few exhibit booths reclaimed by firms keeping their same space as last year, all booths are to be assigned on first-paid/first-received contract basis. Instructions and forms are posted online at <http://www.iasb.com/jac13/exhibitor.cfm>. Questions should be directed to IASB Meetings Management at 217/52809688, ext. 1115.

Recent court decisions

Summaries of recent court and agency decisions affecting schools and of interest to school leaders have been posted to IASB's website. Summaries posted through March 7 dealt with a legal proceeding to remove a board member, a Title IX liability case, and a state pension system case regarding a disagreement over the retirement benefits paid a group of school administrators. Watch for summaries of recent opinions from Ill. Attorney General Public Access Counselor, coming very soon. These and other recent summaries are online at: <http://www.iasb.com/law/decisions.cfm?AreaID=1>.

Lone school finance referendum on the February ballot is defeated

A tax increase proposition for **Golf School District 67**, Morton Grove, the lone school finance question on the Feb. 26 ballot, was defeated by a 66 percent margin.

Voters also rejected the same question last November, but the sponsors said the district needed the money to restore full-day kindergarten, reading and library programs and staff and other programming, and eliminate fees on athletic and extra-curricular programs.

The measure asked voters the following question:

“Shall the extension limitation under the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law for Golf School District Number 67, Cook County, Illinois, be increased from the lesser of 5% or the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index over the prior levy year to 16.3% for the 2013 levy year?”

“For the 2013 levy year the approximate amount of the additional tax extendable against property containing a single family residence and having a fair market value at the time of the referendum of \$100,000 is estimated to be \$93.80,” the bond measure stated.

School officials were uncertain whether they would be putting the tax question on the ballot again in the next election.

No other school district tax or bond issue in the state was scheduled for the February primary; however, a number of proposals are set to appear on the April 9 consolidated election ballot.

Included are no fewer than three bond propositions in DuPage County alone, plus another bond issue in Bureau County.

Specifically, the following school funding questions are among those that will be presented to local voters on April 9:

- A **Butler School District 53**, Oak

Brook, bond proposition in DuPage County.

If approved, this measure authorizes Butler School District 53, Oak Brook to increase its debt by \$15 million through issuing general obligation bonds in that amount in order to fund the constructing and equipping of a school building.

- A **Wheaton Community Unit School District 200** bond proposition in DuPage County.

If approved, this measure authorizes Wheaton Community Unit School District 200 to increase its debt by \$17.6 million through issuing general obligation bonds in order to fund the equipping of a new early childhood center and the replacement of the existing Jefferson Early Childhood Center.

- A **Hall Township High School District 502**, Spring Valley, bond measure in Bureau County.

If approved, this measure authorizes Hall Township High School District 502, Spring Valley, to increase its debt by \$32 million through issuing general obligation bonds in that amount in order to fund the construction of a new classroom building.

- A **Lake Park High Community School District 108, Roselle** bond proposition in DuPage County.

If approved, this measure authorizes Lake Park Community High School District 108 to increase its debt by a total of \$8 million through issuing general obligation bonds in that amount in order to fund the improvement and construction and equipping of an indoor swimming pool addition to the Lake Park East Campus High School Building.

Information on results of these and other school finance referendums in the April 9 election will be reported in next month’s newsletter.

Two deadlines remain for April 9 election

School board candidates and officials preparing for the April 9, 2013 election still have several potential deadlines to consider.

Friday, April 5, 2013, is the last day for the election authority to have official ballots available for inspection by candidates or their agents. (10 ILCS 5/16-5)

Tuesday, April 30, 2013, is the last day for the county clerk or board of election commissioners to canvass the election results. (10 ILCS 5/22-17)

A complete list of remaining dates and deadlines for the April 9, 2013, election is available online at: <http://www.iasb.com/pdf/13electioncalendar.pdf>. Local election officials can also find help at: <http://www.elections.state.il.us/Downloads/ElectionInformation/PDF/2013LEOBook.pdf>

New health education law adds sex abuse prevention to curriculum in all grades

In January, Gov. Pat Quinn signed into law a new requirement for school districts in the Comprehensive Health Education Act. Public Act 97-1147, effective Jan. 24. It requires that age-appropriate sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention education be included in grades pre-kindergarten through 12.

Previously, sexual assault awareness curriculum was required only in secondary schools. The law allows programs on sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention to be included in teacher in-service programs.

The law does not prescribe a specific curriculum to be used for this instruction, so the local school district has discretion in this area.

One helpful curriculum is available, however, from a not-for-profit group, online at: <http://laurenkids.org/curriculum/>.

NEWS HEADLINES

Aledo (Feb. 5, *Quad-City Times*) Truant students could face fines of up to \$750 for themselves and their parents if they miss school without “valid cause” for more than five days during a school year under an ordinance being considered by the Aledo City Council. Before approving the ordinance, aldermen want city attorney Mark Walton to provide his opinion on what age of the students it should address. Subsequent offenses could result in fines of up to \$300 per offense.

Berwyn (Feb. 20, *Berwyn Life*) Heritage Middle School’s Heritage Earth Action Team (HEAT) was one in five schools in the United States to receive a grant from the Green Global Foundation, a nonprofit, non-political organization. The grant was awarded due to the HEAT’s short film, *Sporktagion*, and the message it shares about plastics in schools, in particular, sporks. The film takes a stand against such disposable items.

Chicago (Feb. 7, *Chicago Tribune*) Chicago District 299 principals will have to meet a more rigorous set of benchmarks this year to collect bonuses of up to \$20,000, according to district officials. Mayor Rahm Emanuel has made principal recruitment, training and evaluation central to his efforts to overhaul the district. Last year, he secured \$5 million in private donations from prominent philanthropic families to help boost the salaries of the city’s best-performing principals.

Decatur (Feb. 13, *Herald and Review*) Robertson Charter School announced it would offer a free, six-week course in self-defense for Macon County educators beginning Feb. 26. “Our board decided to do something special for our community by sponsoring these free classes,” said Bishop G.E. Livingston, president of Robertson. Recent violence in schools in other states inspired the idea. One

of the things they planned to work on is awareness of the environment and what’s going on around the educator.

Elgin (Feb. 8, *The Daily Herald*) Elgin Area District U-46 will offer tuition-based, full-day kindergarten next year in a pilot program that could see future expansion. Officials said the program will be open to 80 students across four classrooms. The kindergartners will be selected by lottery, officials said. District U-46 now offers full-day kindergarten only for students who show an academic need for extra support. Board President Donna Smith said when all-day kindergarten first was offered to a select group of students, parents started asking for it for their own children. “They were the ones who suggested, ‘Can’t we pay additional for the all-day?’” Smith said. Longer days should give teachers the chance to do more literacy activities, potentially boosting student performance in the elementary grades.

Roxana (Feb. 8, *Alton Telegraph*) Roxana CUSD 1 has formed a special committee made up primarily of teachers to explore the possibility of creating attendance centers. The committee first met in October and has followed up with round-table discussions among a committee of administrators, staff and parents. Members also are doing site visits to schools organized along this academic approach, but no decision has been reached. Assistant Superintendent Steve Oertle outlined the pros and cons of the model. “Grade-level meetings are moving from ‘sage on the stage to guide on the side,’” he said. “We should be teaching kids how to learn, and this is based on collaboration between students and staff.” A benefit for student learning would be greater ability for teachers at the same grade level to meet more regularly to assess student performance and adjust

instruction to meet learning needs. The small size of the district also would allow an entire team to be located within one building.

Statewide (Feb. 8, *The State Journal-Register*) State officials are seeking a compromise to a looming July 1 deadline for school districts to hire certified school nurses who cost more and are in shorter supply than registered nurses. After getting complaints from administrators, State School Superintendent Chris Koch met Feb. 4 with interested parties to discuss possible solutions. “Because of the shortage, we have to do something short term to allow existing personnel to gain, quickly, the expertise needed to do the job. (We also agreed) we are not going to make the current July 1 deadline,” Koch said. Michael Chamness, spokesman for Illinois Association for School Administrators, said his organization is glad the requirement is being re-examined. He said a July 1 deadline is unrealistic in the current budget climate.

Statewide (Feb. 13, *Chicago Tribune*) The mandatory school age could fall from 7 to 5 in Illinois in a move aimed at countering a crisis in K-8 truancy and absenteeism. State Sen. Kimberly Lightford recently introduced legislation to lower Illinois’ compulsory school age. Experts say it is critical to establish the habit of attendance in kindergarten and first grade. Yet Illinois law does not make school compulsory until most children enter second grade. [Some say the fiscal impact of this is small because most people already enroll their children in kindergarten. But school management groups disagree, saying there will be additional costs for bringing more children to school, strengthening truancy programs for expansion down to kindergarten, and the other supportive services needed to address students who are failing or truant.]

Impact of sequestration on schools may be quite harmful

Cost is \$250,000 for every 5,000 students

Under a deal reached between the President and Congress at the start of the new year to raise tax levels, it was agreed that federal programs were to be subject to an across-the-board cut of 5.1 percent on March 1. This “sequestration” plan, since implemented for year one, indicated those cuts are to continue for the next nine years.

For now, that means that for every 5,000 students in a district, schools will lose about \$250,000, or even more if they receive Title I funds for disadvantaged populations. For every \$1 million of federal aid districts receive, they would lose approximately \$51,000. These budget cuts to education programs would take place in the middle of the 2013-14 school year, with the exception of Impact Aid, with cuts allowed to proceed as of March 1.

The American Taxpayer Relief Act adopted in January reduced the amount of the across-the-board budget cuts to domestic programs for FY13 from \$109 billion to \$85.3 billion. Therefore, the percentage of the budget cuts will be lower than the 8.2 percent calculated earlier by the White House Office of Management and Budget. Revised esti-

mates indicate the budget cuts will be around 5.1 percent.

The cuts for education won't be felt until late summer, and there is speculation Congress could act to rescind the cuts before then.

Sequestration is the automatic, across-the-board cancellation of a portion of federal budgetary resources. It was put into place as a government-wide effort to cut overall federal spending and lower the deficit without concern for priority investments.

The cuts would affect all school districts and the millions of students they educate. Yet many districts say they have already implemented cuts commensurate to dire state and local budget conditions. Any further cuts, some say, would result in larger class sizes, narrowing of the curriculum, loss of extracurricular activities, and teacher and staff lay-offs.

Opponents said budget reductions under the Budget Control Act, in August 2011, should have been sufficient.

Bipartisan Policy Center Debt Reduction Task Force chairs, former Budget Committee Chairman, Pete Domenici, and former Federal Reserve Vice Chair, Alice Rivlin, have stated that “further significant cuts in discretionary spending will do little to improve long-run fiscal sustainabili-

ty and risk harming investment, recovery, and future growth.”

State and local governments have very limited capacity to soften the federal school funding cuts under sequestration. According to a survey by the American Association of School Administrators, “nine out of ten (90 percent of) school administrators [indicated] that their state would be unable to absorb or offset the cuts of sequestration” and their district would be unable to absorb the cuts.

NSBA said recently that the very programs that are at risk support economic growth, including Title I aid to schools; IDEA funds for students with disabilities; Impact Aid; teacher quality grants; after-school grants; English Language Acquisition grants; and career and technical education.

In FY 2011, K-12 programs were already cut by more than \$835 million. Additional budget cuts are expected to damage school districts.

Background

Sequestration is a product of the Budget Control Act of 2011 enacted in August of 2011 as the result of negotiations between Congress and the Administration to raise the national debt limit. In exchange, the law cre-

See **SEQUESTER** on page 13

Qualified Zone Academy Bonds offered for renovations, equipment, training

In addition to reducing the amount of sequestration budget cuts, the American Taxpayer Relief Act also permanently extended the arbitrage rebate exception for school construction bonds and extended Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZABs) program for 2012 and 2013.

It newly provides \$400 million in bond volume for each of those years. QZABs can be used to finance school renovations, equipment purchases, develop course material, and train teachers and personnel at a “qualified zone academy.”

See **BONDS** on page 13



The federal bonds program called QZAB was extended for 2012 and 2013 to finance school renovations, but not new construction.

Consolidation commission recommendations go to state lawmakers in both chambers in bill form

To implement some of the short-term priority recommendations of the so-called Classrooms First Commission, legislation was recently introduced in both houses – as SB 1877, sponsored by A. Manar (D, Staunton), and HB 2267, sponsored by J. Gordon-Booth (D, Peoria). The full list of final recommendations was published last June by the state panel, officially known as the School District Realignment and Consolidation Commission, led by Lt. Gov. Sheila Simon.

Simon had pledged to work with state lawmakers to introduce several legislative recommendations outlined in the commission's final report, "A Guide to P-20 Efficiency and Opportunity." The first, just introduced, deals with reducing barriers to voluntary district reorganization.

Specifically, the House and Senate versions of legislation would deal with immediate concerns on:

Non-contiguous reorganization

The measure allows non-contiguous but compact districts to realign. Compact districts are defined as having administrative offices no more than 30 miles away from each other. To guard against "district shopping," a district would have to document that contiguous districts rejected merging.

Several districts have experienced difficulty trying to reorganize with contiguous districts, although sponsors say their proposed reorganization is necessary to maintain instructional

quality and financial viability.

Expedite dissolution under 750 pupils

The legislation allows a school district of fewer than 750 students in enrollment to dissolve without a referendum vote. Currently this is only an option for districts serving communities with fewer than 5,000 residents. Therefore, districts with a larger population but small student enrollment are not able to use the abbreviated dissolution process.

Expanding this current process, sponsors say, would streamline the reorganization process for 53 school districts across Illinois; possibly leading to additional reorganizations in some of them. DCEO has identified 16 counties in Illinois with small school-age populations that are expected to decline through 2030, which could increase the number of districts that benefit from the additional flexibility granted by this legislation.

Delayed reorganization effective date

The legislation allows two or more reorganizing districts that require a new building to delay the effective date of reorganization until one of the districts is awarded funding under the School Construction Law. No changes are made to the requirements districts must meet in order to reorganize. This provision simply allows districts to delay when a reorganization becomes effective.

To read the commission's final report visit <http://www2.illinois.gov/ltgov/Documents/CFC%20Materials/CFC%20FINAL%20REPORT.pdf>.

SEQUESTER *from page 13*

ated a Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (called the Supercommittee) tasked with developing a plan to produce a savings of \$1.2 trillion by Nov. 23, 2011.

The Supercommittee was unable to reach an agreement, though, on how to enact the \$1.2 trillion in cuts. Thus, the Budget Control Act included a provision stating that in lieu of an agreement or congressional passage of legislation by the Supercommittee, a series of across-the-board budget cuts (also called sequestration) to both defense programs and domestic programs, including education, will occur instead. The cuts apply to "discretionary" spending.

The impact on education programs this year is an estimated \$3.5 billion to \$4.1 billion cut. This includes an estimated \$1.2 billion cut to Title I grants for disadvantaged students and a \$900 million cut to special education under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for the 2013-14 school year.

Here's what Illinois stands to lose, according to a White House fact sheet:

- **Teachers and Schools:** Illinois will lose approximately \$33.4 million in funding for primary and secondary education, putting around 460 teacher and aide jobs at risk. And 39,000 fewer students would be served and 120 fewer schools would receive federal funding.
- **Education for Children with Disabilities:** Illinois will lose approximately \$24.7 million in funds for about 300 teachers, aides, and staff who help children with disabilities.

For local districts, a tool is available to help determine the impact. The AASA developed an Excel sheet to use to calculate the impact on a given district. Simply plug in the amount the district currently receives from the listed Programs, and the file automatically calculates the cut and the totals in the "Sequestration Invoice Spreadsheet" link halfway down the page at: <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/sequestration/>.

BONDS *from page 12*

None of the proceeds can be used for new construction or land acquisition. In general, a "qualified zone academy" is any public school (or academic program within a public school) that is located in a federally designated empowerment zone or enterprise community (per U.S. Housing and Urban Development designation), and is designed to cooperate with businesses to enhance the academic cur-

riculum and increase graduation and employment rates.

Schools are also eligible to take advantage of the QZAB program if at least 35 percent of students enrolled are eligible for free or reduced priced school lunches. In order to utilize the QZAB program, a school district must have written commitment for a 10 percent match from a private business.

Trend for more strikes continues in 2013 after increase in Fall 2012

The 2012-13 school year began with six strikes in 2012 and the trend for more work stoppages is continuing into the 2013 year.

The latest strike began Feb. 28 in **Dixon Unit SD 170**, where the Dixon Education Association voted Jan. 18 to file an intent-to-strike notice. The district has 166 teachers and an enrollment of 2,781 students. (The status of this strike was unknown as of publication date of this newsletter).

School officials in Dixon cited state cuts and lower property tax revenue. The district is losing \$750,000 in aid for fiscal year 2013 compared to fiscal 2012. "There's a lot of unknowns, one of the things that's a ways out is the pension or if any [added costs] will come onto school districts," said Dixon Schools Superintendent Michael Juenger. "Right now on the federal level there's discussion of the sequestering on dollars and how that's going to affect us as well."

The Dixon walkout came three weeks after the Feb. 4 strike in **West Chicago SD 33**. Four thousand students were impacted for three days by the walkout of more than 280 teachers. Health insurance premiums had been a key sticking point. Under the settlement, teachers will pay 30 percent of the health insurance premiums, up from the current 20 percent.

The first strike of the 2013 year was called in **Grayslake CCSD 46**, where 325 teachers went out on strike on Jan. 16. The issues involved salary, increases for advanced education and retirement benefits. The action ended three days later, with nearly 4,000 students returning to classes. A tentative two-year agreement reached during talks led by a federal mediator has not yet been ratified.

Strikes and threats of strikes have been increasing ever since the Chicago Teachers Union waged a well-publicized strike against the Chicago Public Schools in September. The first **Chicago District 299** strike in 25 years lasted eight days, ending on Sep.

18. More than 350,000 students and 26,000 teachers and staff were idled.

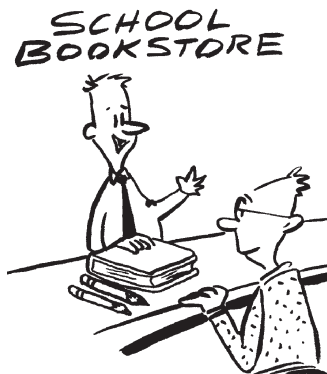
District 299 officials noted the main sticking points involved the details of the new, state-required evaluation system and a union demand that laid-off teachers receive first consideration for rehiring. District leaders reportedly were concerned the latter could result in principals being forced to hire unsuitable teachers.

A front-page *Chicago Tribune* story on Sep. 19 indicated a compromise had been reached on these differences. The reported settlement allowed principals to determine teacher hires while adding a recall provision for top-performing teachers who are laid off because of school closings.

Other provisions included: smaller teacher raises than before; 3% raises this year, and 2% for the two following years; average pay raises of 17.6% over four years, when including cost-of-living; raises, experience raises, and raises for advanced degrees; and no merit pay system.

The potential for additional strikes continues, as intent-to-strike notices have been filed in several other school districts. Notices are pending in **Barrington District 220**; **Crab Orchard CUSD 3**, Marion; and **Ewing Northern CCSD 115**, according to the state Educational Labor Relations Board.

Impasse and final offers are posted on the agency's website at: <http://www2.illinois.gov/elrb/Pages/FinalOffers.aspx>.



"Will this be cash, credit, debit or hall pass?"

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 20 – North Cook Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Maine West High School Auditorium, Des Plaines

March 21 – Northwest Division Spring Dinner Meeting, PLT Middle School, Prophetstown

March 27 – South Cook Division Spring Dinner Meeting, Plus Pre Meeting Briefing for Board Candidates, Holiday Inn, Matteson

April 3 – DuPage Division Briefing for School Board Candidates, Marquardt SD 15 Training Center, Glendale Heights

April 4 – Kishwaukee Division Dinner Meeting, Prairie Grove Elementary School, Crystal Lake

April 25 – Illini Division Summer Governing Meeting, Urbana Garden Family Restaurant, Urbana

April 30 – Wabash Valley Division Summer Governing Meeting, Richard's Farm, Casey

May 1 – Kaskaskia Division Summer Governing Meeting, Cunetto's, Greenville

May 1 – Central Illinois Valley Division Summer Governing Meeting, Lariat Steakhouse, Peoria

May 2 – Blackhawk Division Summer Governing Meeting, The Cellar, Geneseo

May 2 – Shawnee Division Summer Governing Meeting, Bennie's Italian Foods, Marion

May 2 – Abe Lincoln Division Summer Governing Meeting, IASB Office, Springfield

May 7 – Egyptian Division Summer Governing Meeting, 9th Street Grill, Mt. Vernon

May 7 – Western Division Summer Governing Meeting, Red Ox Restaurant, Macomb

For more current information, see www.iasb.com/calendar/