

# Illinois SCHOOL BOARD *Newsbulletin*

April 2009 / Issue No. 684



IASB division officers assemble for lunch at a school cafeteria amid the Chicago Schools Tour at Leadership Conference on Feb. 27.

## Governor's plan would make public education a priority in an extremely difficult budgeting year

In his first state budget address on March 18, Governor Pat Quinn asked everyone to “share in the pain” of the current budget and economic crisis. But Quinn also made education a budget priority, proposing a modest increase in funding for elementary and secondary education.

To pay for the increases, the governor suggested a combination of proposed tax increases and budget cuts that he said would help the state crawl out of a multi-billion dollar budget hole.

Supporters of education in Illinois generally lauded the spending plan for schools at a time when most state agencies and spending areas were facing deep cuts. “We are appreciative that in a very difficult budget year, the governor is making public education a priority,” said Ben Schwarm, IASB’s Associate Executive Director. “The budget proposal makes cuts to most areas of state government, but K-12 education would receive a \$174 million increase over

## Division officers, Association staff work to boost workshop turnout

Division officers, directors and IASB staff took part in the annual Leadership Conference, Feb. 27 and 28 in Chicago. That’s where the Association’s “20% Challenge” campaign was officially kicked off.

The campaign is intended to raise attendance at the upcoming new board member workshops by 20 percent. This year’s school board elections on April 7 were expected to produce about 1,300 new board members. Typically, 50 to 60 percent of them attend the workshops, which focus on the

basics of finance, school law and governance.

This year, 10 workshops will be held at various locations throughout the state. They begin June 5 in Carbondale and Bloomington and conclude Aug. 22 in Springfield.

The leadership conference featured presentations by Association staff, followed by activities to stress the importance of board training and to help participants explore what tactics and strategies could be developed

See **TURNOUT** on page 3

See **BUDGET** on page 4

## On the inside

- Share the Success panels .....Page 6
- Obama education plan .....Page 8
- IASB job fair .....Page 10

**ISBE aims to phase out ‘hold harmless’**

Page 12

## ISBE gives stimulus funding guidance for school districts

State Superintendent Chris Koch was in Washington in early March and he reported that the federal stimulus package was the focus of many conversations.

Koch said he believes the U.S. Department of Education will begin to distribute half of the additional Title I and IDEA funds within the next 30 to 45 days, and the other half next summer or fall.

The state will be working on a supplemental appropriation to accept these formula funds, Koch added, so that ISBE can distribute the funds quickly. Once the state gets new estimates of what districts can expect to receive, ISBE will notify school districts and post this information to its webpage at: <http://www.isbe.net/arra/default.htm>.

No action is needed formally right now. But Koch suggested that school administrators informally begin speaking with their school board and staff about whether or not they will be able to use the funds this year, given how late it is in the fiscal year. And how can the school district use the funds, and would it need to amend its budget?

## Safe and Drug-Free Schools program resources online

The Illinois Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) Program recently announced resources for schools are online at the updated 2009 Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities website at: <http://www.safeschoolsil.net/index.asp>.

For further information, contact Albert J. Holmes, Jr. at 312/814-3653 or [aholmes@isbe.net](mailto:aholmes@isbe.net)

# Fourth annual high school event to focus on economic challenges

The Illinois State Board of Education is asking high school education leaders to mark their calendars to plan to attend the fourth annual High School Conference, June 15 and 16, at the Doubletree Hotel in Bloomington. "The High School Challenge: A Push and Pull Journey" is intended to create awareness of the changing global economy and the need to prepare Illinois students for the world in which they will live and work.



The conference is designed to provide educators with the tools they need to prepare students for the world in which they will live and work. Conference breakout session strands will include: national, state and local initiatives, curriculum and instruction, and tools and technology. Organizers say conference participants will leave the conference with:

- Practical strategies that have improved student performance in Illinois high schools
- Tools that can be used for data analysis and decision making
- Research-based strategies that support student learning
- Information about practical follow-up support for Illinois high schools

The conference is intended for superintendents, school administrators, teachers, school board members, curriculum directors, special education and ELL directors, regional office of education staff and ISC/RESPRO staff, business leaders and university personnel. School leaders are again being encouraged to

bring a district leadership team to the event.

This annual event is presented by the Coalition for Illinois High Schools. In addition to IASB, the Coalition includes: ACT Midwest Region, High School District Organization, Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education, Illinois Association of School Administrators, Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools, Illinois Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Business Roundtable, Illinois Education Association, Illinois Federation of Teachers, Illinois High School Association, Interactive Illinois Report Card (iirc), Illinois North Central Association, Illinois Principals Association, Illinois State Board of Education, Large Unit District Association, West 40 Intermediate Service Center 2, Regional Systems of Support, Illinois Virtual High School, and the Illinois Community College Board.

For questions, call 309/663-6377 or email [terraig@ihsa.org](mailto:terraig@ihsa.org).

*Illinois*  
**SCHOOL BOARD**  
*Newsbulletin*

**Illinois Association  
of School Boards**

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**ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION  
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

## TURNOUT *from page 1*

to improve attendance.

“We want you to help us think creatively about how to get (new school board members) to want to come and to decide to come,” said Angie Peifer, IASB Associate Executive Director.

The IASB staff, in addition to preparing the curriculum and materials for new board member workshops, developed PowerPoint presentations, talking points and scripts for division officers to present at their spring dinner division meetings.

Also presented were two new publications, including “Orienting New School Board Members on the Way to Becoming a High-Performing Board Team,” which is designed to help boards orient new board members, so that they “arrive ready to govern.”

The other new publication presented is called “School Board Governance Basics,” and it includes the IASB Foundational Principles of Effective Governance, Code of Conduct, and a new document, School Board Member Opportunities and Expectations.

Another tool features written testimonials prepared by veteran school board members Dale Hansen, **Grant Park CUSD 6**; Melinda LaBarre, **Springfield SD 186**; Dane Tippett, **Triad CUSD 2**; Joanne Zendol, **Berwyn South SD 100**; and Sean Doyle, **Summit Hill SD 161**.

More information about the division team efforts to raise attendance will be posted on IASB’s Members-Only website, <http://members.iasb.com>.

In addition to the school board training activities, Leadership Conference participants and guests were invited to visit the Harriet B.G. Stowe Fine and Performing Arts Academy, and they heard an acapella performance by the Lincoln Park High School Singers.

Interested participants at the two-day IASB Leadership Conference took in the award-winning performance as part of a Chicago Schools Tour on Feb. 27.



IASB’s 2009 Leadership Conference featured an acapella concert by the Lincoln Park High School Singers from Chicago District 299.



The event offered plenty of hands-on training activities for IASB leaders, including Illini Division Director Michelle Skinlo, Mattoon CUSD 2; and North Cook Division Chairman Phil Pritzker, Wheeling CCSD 21.

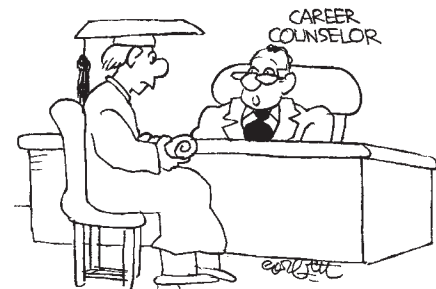
## Directors learn of record-low number of non-member districts

The IASB Board of Directors met on Feb. 28 in Chicago and reviewed early plans for the 2009 Joint Annual Conference.

The board also reviewed the Association’s membership status and learned that 2009 IASB membership currently includes 98.5 percent of all Illinois school districts. That is unchanged from 98.5 percent in 2008; membership percentage totals had risen in each of the previous two years. The board was told that IASB has a record-low number of non-member districts. Meanwhile the total number of Illinois school districts, now 868, has fallen every year since 2003, when

the total was 892.

The Board’s next meeting is set for May 8 and 9 in Springfield. The major focus will be on adopting budget assumptions for fiscal year 2009-2010.



“I wish you’d come to me sooner.”

**BUDGET** *from page 1*

last year's level."

Schwarm added that while IASB does not advocate for a specific source of state revenue for education purposes, it does "strongly support fair taxation policy and a reliable and stable source of funding for our public schools."

Legislative leaders, however, were not buying the ideas for revenue expansion exactly as presented. Illinois Senate President John Cullerton said he was, instead, willing to entertain the idea of a temporary state income tax increase.

Such an approach has been used during previous economic downturns. Twice in the 1980s, Gov. Jim Thompson signed temporary tax increases into law, although the second temporary increase, passed in 1989, later became permanent under Gov. Jim Edgar.

"So that's something which could be suggested, if people were actually willing to vote for it, if that's the condition that helps get the 30 votes we need to pass it," Cullerton told the *Chicago Tribune*, referring to the number of votes needed for such a plan to be approved in the state senate.

Most lawmakers say they are keeping an open mind about Quinn's budget, anticipating an extensive budget debate. House Minority Leader Tom Cross (R-Oswego), and Senate Minority Leader Christine Rodogno (R-Lemont) say they give Quinn credit for communicating with them, laying out a bold plan and not "sugar-coating" the state's problems.

But that does not mean everyone is buying into the governor's budget: "I think Illinoisans want to know, 'Before you raise my cost of living, what are you going to do to clean up Illinois government? What are you going to do to reform it? What are you going to do to fumigate that government?'" House Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago) told the *Chicago Tribune*.

Quinn's plan also did not sit well with Republican lawmakers, includ-



Gov. Quinn answers numerous tough questions from statehouse reporters.

ing Sen. Dan Rutherford, (R-Chenoa), who said there is still plenty that can be trimmed from state government spending. While Rutherford opposes burdening taxpayers, he admits legislators are going to have to put their

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Gov. Quinn recommends that the foundation level in the General State Aid formula be increased by \$130 per pupil (from \$5,959 per pupil to \$6,089 per pupil) and that the mandated categorical grants be fully funded.

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heads together and come up with something acceptable to get rid of Illinois' backlog of unpaid bills.

"It's time for the politicians to sit down and the statesmen to stand up," Rutherford said. His alternative suggestions for getting the state out of debt include reforming Medicaid and limiting benefits for new state employees.

Besides recommending that K-12 education receive a funding increase for Fiscal Year 2010 of nearly \$174 million over the current FY '09 level, the new governor also proposed \$1.5 billion in state school construction funds. He also recommended spending more state funds for school maintenance grants and pre-school

construction.

School advocates were pleased. "We strongly support a statewide infrastructure program that contains funding for public school construction; this would be a significant accomplishment in which our members would truly benefit," Schwarm said.

The governor generally followed the budget proposal of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). He recommended that the foundation level in the General State Aid formula be increased by \$130 per pupil (from \$5,959 per pupil to \$6,089 per pupil) and that the mandated categorical grants be fully funded. Other line items proposed for an increase over FY '09 levels include: early childhood education (\$12.5 million) and bilingual education (\$8 million). A new line item for a Longitudinal Data System would also see funding of \$2 million.

Many smaller education budget line items funded in FY '09 were eliminated in the proposed FY '10 budget, including: Adler Planetarium, After School Matters, Chicago Principals Mentoring Class Size Reduction Pilot, "Hard to Staff" Schools, Healthy Kid/Healthy Minds, Homeless Education, the Illinois Economic Education Program, the Illinois Governmental Internship Program, Jobs for Illinois Graduates, After School Support Program, Metro-East Consortium Parental Guardian Programs, Regional Superintendent Initiatives, Targeted Interventions, Transition of Minority Students, Transitional Assistance, Chicago Aerospace Initiative, Classroom Cubed, Fast-Growth Districts, Gifted Education, Agudath Israel of Illinois, Museum of Science and Industry, and the Rural Technology Initiative.

About \$335 million in federal stimulus fund money is earmarked in Quinn's FY'10 budget for school district Title I programs for disadvantaged students. Roughly \$262 million

See **BUDGET** on page 5

## BUDGET *from page 4*

of this amount is allocated for special education through the federal Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In other ISBE line items, the governor suggested the state would be able to use fewer dollars in general revenue fund monies and “fill in” the shortfall with additional federal recovery funds. About \$1.7 billion in federal stimulus money is included in the governor’s proposed budget for the ISBE.

Some line items receiving those funds include: Bi-Lingual Education, General State Aid Mentoring, truant alternative programs, special education transportation, and student assessments.

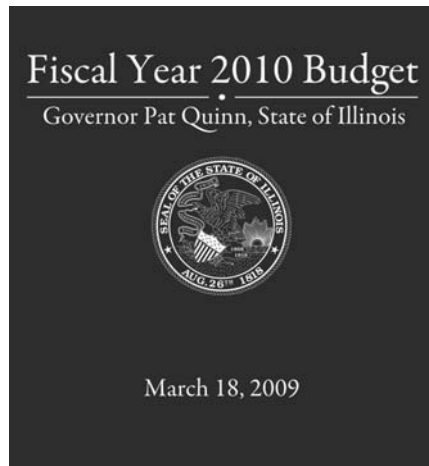
The governor proposed a \$26 billion statewide infrastructure program to build roads, bridges, and schools. For K-12 education, as mentioned, the program would provide \$1.5 billion in state funds to build new schools. With the local match, however, this would provide \$3 billion in school construction funds. About \$100 million would be available (with a required dollar-for-dollar local match) for school maintenance grants for smaller repair and maintenance projects at schools. And \$25 million would be provided for renovations and additions for school districts and not-for-profit organizations to support pre-school programs.

The infrastructure program would be funded from new state revenue sources, including:

- An increase in driver’s license fees and vehicle registration fees
- Current motor fuel taxes and vehicle registrations
- An increase in title fees to pay for transit
- A 10 percent share of the personal income tax increase and the corporate income tax increase

### **New revenue sources**

Governor Quinn also proposed to raise the state individual income tax rate from 3 to 4.5 percent, bringing in an estimated \$2.8 billion. Like-



wise, he would raise the corporate income tax rate, boosting it from 4.8 to 7.2 percent, in order to raise \$350 million in new money). And by “closing loopholes” in the corporate income tax base, the state would see an increase in revenue of about \$173 million under the governor’s plan. These changes would include:

- Correcting the tax code to include taxes from the “outer continental shelf” and U.S. Territories
- “Decoupling” from certain federal tax incentives
- Repealing the Research and Development tax credit

- Limiting corporate tax credits to 50% of their tax owed

According to the governor, an additional \$94 million in revenue would come from expanding the sales tax to cover prewritten software that is acquired via a licensing agreement and by limiting an exemption in the sales tax regarding graphic arts firms.

### **‘Tax equity’ sought**

In order to spare lower-income households from some of the tax increases, the governor proposed to increase the state’s standard personal exemption from the current \$2,000 up to \$6,000. He said that provision is aimed at ensuring that the overall income tax burden will decrease for many lower-income taxpayers.

Yet another tax break, a “sales tax holiday,” would be imposed during 10 days in August, under the governor’s plan. Shoppers would be able to purchase clothing, footwear and school supplies during that time without paying the state sales tax.

It remains to be seen how much of the governor’s revenue and expenditure plan will be adopted into law.



*“If you want a great job that won’t be exported, get into politics.”*

# 27 top panel ideas chosen from 100

## Winners being invited to 'share the success'

All of the 2009 Joint Annual Conference panel ideas proposed by school districts have now been evaluated by a panel of IASB staff and members, with 27 winning proposals having been chosen from more than 100 topics submitted. The selected school districts are currently being invited by mail to present 90-minute "Share the Success" panel sessions at the IASB/IASA/IASBO conference, to be held Nov. 20-22 in Chicago.

Proposals were evaluated on five key points: 1) interest or relevance for today's leaders; 2) clarity and conciseness of the proposed presentation; 3) clarity of objectives and whether they are realistic in a 90-minute session; 4) evidence regarding whether the presentation will address the appropriate school board role on the chosen topic; and 5) evidence of creativity and an innovative approach to the issue or topic.

See the list at right of panels chosen to be presented at the 2009 conference.

Those who offered proposals that were not selected for presentations in 90-minute panel sessions may yet be offered an alternative opportunity to present on their chosen topic during the conference. IASB will again be featuring many such sessions in a Carousel of Panels event on Saturday afternoon, Nov. 21, at the Joint Annual Conference.

The Carousel of Panels allows presenters a chance to make three, one-half-hour presentations on their chosen topic in just under two hours, enabling attendees to gather a wide variety of information in a short time.

### JAC Proposed Panel Results - 2009

Title	District/Organization
Partnering Moodle-ing and Technology for Rural Chemistry Classroom	AC Central CU 262, Ashland
Rtl: A Road Map to Successful K-8 Implementation	Summit Hill SD161, Frankfort
Diversity – A World Reality: Building Passion for Change	Plainfield CUSD 202/ Kaleidoscope Group
Designing a Framework for Rtl	Riverton CUSD 14
Classroom Instructional Technology and the role of the administration	Geneseo CUSD 228
The State of the Schools: Increasing Community Involvement through Communication	LeRoy CUSD 2
Hire with Confidence: Standardization Is a Must	Pekin Public SD 108
The Board + Rtl + COACHING = Student Success	Addison SD 4
Transforming Professional Development from Teacher Wants to Students Needs	Wood Dale SD 7
Reduce and Eliminate Healthcare Cost Drivers; Not Benefits	Indian Prairie CUSD 204, Naperville
Creating a Collaborative Culture ... through Positive Interventions for Students	Champaign CUSD 4
Lost Generations: The Critical Need to Challenge the Advanced Learner	Germantown SD 60
Swimming in Quicksand: How to Prioritize Technology Projects	CUSD 300, Carpentersville
Dropout Prevention & Recovery: Strategies to Get Students Back in Class	School District U-46, Elgin
Boundary Changes, Buildings and Beyond: A Multipurpose Model for ... Community	Woodstock CUSD 200
Explaining the Levy Process and How it Calculates your Property Tax	THSD 113, Highland Park
District Dashboard – A Progress Monitoring And Reporting Tool to [boost] Performance	Lake Villa CCSD 41
School Boards and Decision-Making for ELLS In Multicultural Schools	Des Plaines CCSD 62
Second Language Parents + Children: A Community Partnership for Learning	Wheeling CCSD 21
Response to Intervention (Rtl) at the High School Level	THSD 214, Arlington Hts.
Freshmen Transition and Support Program in A Mid-Sized School District	Stockton CUSD 206
Continuous Improvement to ... Climate Through a Data-Driven Discipline Program	Massac CUSD 1
Teaching Outside the Book: A ... Science Curriculum ... [using] Community Resources	Serena CUSD 2
The Implementation of Project Lead the Way	Highland CUSD 5
Are You Contributing to the High Performance of Your Board Team or Hindering its Success	Lindop SD 92
Distance Learning Knows No Boundaries	Avon CUSD 176
Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports: How it Helps with Rtl	Martinsville CUSD 3

# Entries sought in school design awards program

## July 24 deadline set; display at conference

**P**roud of a new building or renovation in your school district? Then why not help the architect or other design professional responsible for it earn recognition and awards in the 2009 Exhibition of Educational Environments (EEE) program?

The annual EEE awards program is sponsored by IASB Service Associates, a special arm of the Association comprising private firms that have demonstrated an exemplary record of providing quality products and services to schools.

Award program entries are being sought from firms engaged in any aspect of designing public school facilities. The facilities may be intended for instructional, recreational, administrative or other use, but construction must be completed in time for occupancy with the start of school in the fall of 2009.

Entries are due in IASB offices by

July 24, and must be made by — or with the written permission of — the author/owner of the project design documents. Each entrant is limited to no more than two project entries per year, and no project may be entered more than once. There is a \$250 fee for each entry (maximum of two entries).

A total of 25 projects were chosen for the competition last year and were placed on display during the Joint Annual Conference. Again this year, chosen entries will be on display all three days of the conference, Nov. 20-22. Unlike last year, however, the displays will not be removed prior to Sunday. A list of the 2008 winners can be viewed at: <https://www.iasb.com/jac08/eee.cfm>.

Plans call for preliminary materials to be submitted by Sep. 14 and evaluated on Sep. 17. The judging will be done in Springfield on a blind basis by a jury of three school board members or administrators and three architects, all appointed by IASB and experienced in school facilities or design.

Criteria include suitability for stated program requirements, functional relationships, aesthetics, grade level or departmental organization, flexibility, expansibility, compatibility with external environment, uses of new technology, barrier free accessibility, energy efficiency, environmental controls, site adaptation, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, activity area groupings, security and building orientation.

Top awards will be presented at the conference, with the two awards of distinction to be featured and presented during the first general session. Those two winners will be featured on a DVD presentation that will show the winning designs, and the DVD will run during the first general session. It will also run during the presentation of the awards. The two top awards will be displayed at the Grand Ballroom entrance to give them prominence.

Entry flyers will be mailed in June. For more information contact IASB's Dana Heckrodt, ext. 1131.

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## Boards asked to submit Delegate Assembly resolutions by June 24

**T**he deadline is approaching for member boards to submit 2009 Delegate Assembly resolutions to help direct IASB in the coming year. Copies of resolution submission forms are available by calling the Association at extension 1132. Proposals from active member boards may be submitted for: 1) new IASB resolutions; 2) amendments to existing position statements of the Association; or 3) reaffirmations of existing position statements; or 4) belief of statements.

IASB's annual Delegate Assembly serves as the major policy-setting mechanism of the Association. Each year's assembly consists of delegates chosen by IASB member boards to represent them, with each board enti-

tled to send one delegate to the assembly each year. Delegates gather at the Joint Annual Conference to vote on resolutions submitted by member districts in order to establish policy and set the direction for IASB for the year ahead.

Submission deadline is June 24. Resolutions are welcome any time before that, however, and earlier submission allows the staff to better serve member districts by preparing adequate background material for the resolutions committee.

How does the process work? It's simple.

A resolutions committee of one member from each of the 21 IASB divisions is elected by each division to review resolution proposals. The com-

mittee, which is chaired this year by IASB Vice President Joe Alesandrini, is empowered to recommend the approval or disapproval of proposed resolutions, and to determine which ones are presented. Appeals to resolutions committee decisions are allowed when submitted in writing at least eight days before the delegate assembly, which is scheduled to meet in November.

IASB sent letters and forms on April 1 to board presidents and superintendents asking for districts to submit resolutions. For information, contact your division representative to the Resolutions Committee (representatives were listed in the April 1 mailing) or phone IASB at ext. 1132.

# Obama education plan seeks extra pay for top teachers

## Plan would add charters and lengthen school days

In his first major education speech as President, Barack Obama proposed lengthening the school year and instituting higher pay for top teachers as part of an effort to help U.S. students regain an edge in the competitive world economy.

Teacher organization leaders responded favorably to the President's remarks of Mar. 10, but said working out the details will be crucial in determining their final response to the plan, adding that it is important that teachers' voices be heard. Some urged a bottom-up process that would work with teachers and their organizations at the local level in negotiating any pay enhancement programs.

Illinois educators also were cautious in their response. While rewarding teachers for good work is a good idea, according to **Galesburg District 205** Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Joel Estes, the subjectivity in evaluating performance could prove a hindrance:

"That is a very difficult topic because who measures, and how do you measure, the value of a teacher?" he said. "There are teachers working in very impoverished schools in our country who are doing absolutely phenomenal teaching, (but) scores may not be as high," Estes told the *Galesburg Register-Mail*.

Obama told the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce: "The future belongs to the nation that best educates its citizens, and my fellow Americans, we have everything we need to be that nation."

The President painted the education drive as part of a broader push to promote economic growth in the face of a deep recession and the nation's

worst financial crisis in decades.

The administration's plan includes a focus on "cradle to career" learning and expansion of early childhood education programs, Head Start and Early Head Start, which together received \$5 billion in funding in the \$787 billion economic stimulus package recently approved by Congress.

School management advocates, including the Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance, had this to say about those ideas. "We are a little bit ahead of the curve in Illinois, but we welcome the President's continued support and involvement. Illinois has already made significant investments in early childhood education and charter schools," said Ben Schwarm, IASB Associate Executive Director.

President Obama not only suggested paying the best teachers more, but called on American educators to pursue several other new approaches, including:

- Moving bad teachers out of the classroom, and recruiting a new generation of teachers
- Improving early childhood education by expanding Head Start, increasing access to child care and doing more for children with special needs
- Opening more charter schools
- Lengthening the school day and school year, ending what he called a competitive disadvantage with other countries

"We applaud the President's directive of allowing local school boards to better facilitate removing bad teachers from the classroom," said Schwarm. "IASB members strongly encourage the commitment of resources for a longer school day and school year. Additional student contact time is a proven element to greater student achievement in the classroom."

But the president also challenged states to adopt more uniform and rigorous education achievement standards, especially in reading and math,

and called for expansion and redesign of federal student aid programs.

Some school board members in IASB member districts were less than sanguine about the prospects for the Obama plan. While being cautiously hopeful regarding Obama's initiative, for example, **Wheeling District 21** senior board member Phil Pritzker, added this caveat: "I believe it is important to have those who have the experience of governing public education in this country play a significant part in helping to define those best practices we know will help propel this nation's educational program to its most competitive position in the world economy."

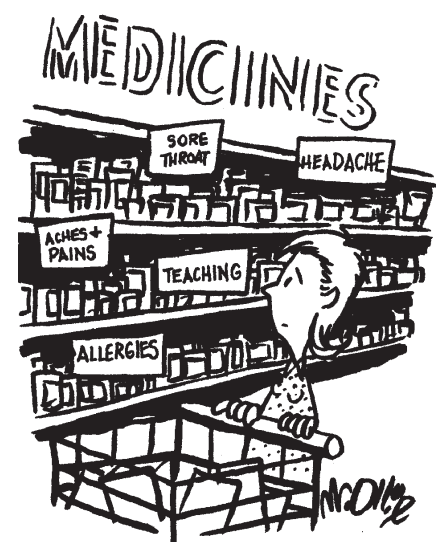
Pritzker, who chairs IASB's North Cook Division, added: "New initiatives must not be mandated and sold as the answer to the general public without the means to pay for them."

Another member, Board President Greg Wolfe, **Oakwood CUSD 76**, Fithian, was "encouraged that President Obama is lifting up education reform as a priority."

"My hope is that our state and national leaders realize that along with any new legislation or mandates they approve, they will also need to secure the financial support needed for local districts and boards to effectively implement those changes," he said.



Education Secretary Arne Duncan would administer plan.





# NEWS HEADLINES

**Champaign** (Mar. 13, *News Gazette*, Champaign) On Mar. 9 a group of leaders from Champaign and Urbana schools, the University of Illinois and Parkland College, along with a Champaign-Urbana Schools Foundation representative, met with area legislators about the economic stimulus package. Attendees presented a list of potential stimulus projects through which the entities they represent could work together. For example, \$100,000 for an afterschool arts program would enable University of Illinois students and faculty to teach area middle school students. “Our feeling was, well, if you’re not at the table, (you) can’t play the game,” explained one participant.

**Chicago** (Mar. 9, *Chicago Sun-Times*) The shooting of kids must stop. That is the consensus of Chicago educators trying to reduce the incidence of such violence. A total of 508 Chicago school kids were shot from September 2007 through December 2008, according to data compiled by Chicago District 299 and released to the public in March. No child was shot in school, and most did not die. But school officials have compiled the numbers to search for patterns that might help them get a handle on the problem. New schools CEO Ron Huberman is reviewing and verifying data, and will announce a new program in May to address the problem.

**Elgin** (Mar. 15, *The Daily Herald*) As part of next year’s efforts to reduce expenses by \$17 million, Superintendent Jose Torres says the district will be “right-sizing” special education by staffing to state standards. The changes – which include different class size standards and an overall reduction in special education teachers and teachers’ aides – will not affect the quality of services, officials stressed. Special education classroom staffing will follow the rules established under law.

**Grayslake** (Mar. 20, *Chicago Tribune*) Illinois State Board of Education members unanimously agreed on Mar. 19 to renew the state’s only charter school devoted to environmental education, allowing Prairie Crossing Charter School to keep its doors open five more years. But the Grayslake school must begin to give annual progress reports on its efforts to recruit a more diverse student population, explain the transportation and other assistance available for low-income families and post online information about operation and finances. Board members lauded the school’s top test scores and conservationist curriculum but voiced concerns about demographics.

**Highland Park** (Mar. 20, *Chicago Tribune*) North Shore District 112 has reached a compromise on a proposed ban of peanut products and has adopted instead a highly nuanced, voluntary program to protect students with serious food allergies. District 112 joins a growing list of schools trying to find a balance between protecting allergic students and allowing others to eat typical school lunch fare. Some have banned peanut products as the number of students with the allergy has increased. Other districts, including District 112, have instituted peanut-free lunch tables and classrooms, and have reserved the right of the superintendent to institute further restrictions.

**Mundelein** (Mar. 11, *The New York Times*) Writing in *The New York Times* about a solution to the nationwide shortage of qualified, endorsed bilingual teachers, Superintendent Roger Prosis, of Diamond Lake District 76, Mundelein, noted that “for bilingual education, you need bilingual teachers.” Solution? He recounted the success in his district of a research-based program alternative called “sheltered English,” which calls for teaching in English and pro-

viding support in Spanish. “Bilingual education should be optional, not mandatory. The local district should decide,” Prosis stated.

**Naperville** (Mar. 11, *The Daily Herald*) A Naperville middle school abuse case has prompted a panel of state lawmakers to support legislation letting school officials move students accused of certain forcible felonies to alternative school programs. Just a week earlier, a different legislative committee had rejected the idea, saying it was too far-reaching an approach and expressing concern over moving children when they have not been convicted of doing anything wrong. But school officials have said their options are limited under current law when an incident of student-on-student abuse occurs off school grounds.

**Nationwide** (Mar. 5, *Associated Press*) Nearly one-fourth of the nation’s kindergartners are Hispanic, evidence of an accelerating trend that will see minority children become the majority by 2023. It appears the trend is set to accelerate, because the younger the grade level, the higher the percentage. Census data released on Mar. 5 also shows Hispanic students make up about one-fifth of K-12 enrollment. Hispanic population growth and changes in the youth profile are likely to influence political debate for years to come, from jobs and immigration to the No Child Left Behind law.

**Statewide** (Mar. 17, *The Daily Herald*) The Illinois Supreme Court on Mar. 17 repeatedly questioned a school district’s claim that it is entitled to keep its superintendent’s contract out of the public eye. Attorneys argued that because a former superintendent’s employment contract was a part of his personnel file, the school district did not have to disclose it to residents requesting it under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).



A total of 547 prospective job candidates lined up for interviews with school district recruiters at the 2009 IASB Job Fair in Chicago on Mar. 7.

## IASB job fair judged a success by most participating school districts

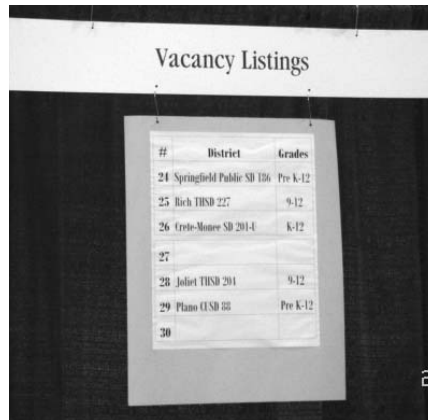
A total of 35 recruiting districts were on hand for the 14th annual IASB Job Fair for Teachers, Administrators and Education Majors, held on Mar. 7 in Chicago at the Shannon Center of Saint Xavier University.

Advance online registration for job candidates drew 512 registrants, but onsite registration, starting at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday morning, raised the total to 547 job seekers.

Anyone who might expect that the current recession would draw the biggest crowd in the IASB Job Fair's history, the fact is, this year's fair did not come close. The 2003 Job Fair actually set the record, drawing an estimated 1,240 job candidates. In fact, the 2009 Job Fair was the sixth largest such event.

But this year's fair was arguably the most successful, judging from the comments of the recruiters. Recruiters who took the time to evaluate the job fair all agreed that their school district would participate again next year, and all were happy with the facility, the time allotted, and the convenience of the fair's location. What is more, all agreed that they had met their district's objective in coming to the fair.

What were the fair planners doing



right? Directions to the Shannon Center had been posted well in advance on IASB's website. Job candidates this year received a booklet from IASB with information about the recruiting districts at the fair. And candidates then could determine which recruiter to visit by stopping at the job vacancy booth to pick up a copy of the school district's current list of open or future positions.

The list of successful IASB staff organizers and participants included Deputy Executive Director Mike Bartlett, Executive Searches Consultant Dawn Miller, and Lombard office administrative staff, including Loretta Cotten, Judy Niezgodka, Linda Cala, Kim Munch, Bridget Trojan and Mary Torgler.

## NEWS FROM IASB

### Student talent still sought for Joint Annual Conference

The IASB/IASA/IASBO Joint Annual Conference is looking for high schools and middle schools that want to showcase their talented fine arts students, whether in music, art, drama or a compilation of programs.

Selection will be based on both the performance and production quality of the DVD, which should run no longer than 15 minutes.

For more information on this matter, go to the IASB website, <http://www.iasb.com/jac09/students.cfm>.

### Journal focuses on erosion of local control questions

Control of the schoolhouse is a continuing struggle among local, state and national governments, as well as the business community, education unions and even major foundations. The May-June 2009 issue of *The Illinois School Board Journal* will take a look at the politics of education in Illinois.

Also featured are articles dealing with tax issues, budgets and how to focus on board work, not staff work.

### New Members-Only survey: 'Why did voters elect you?'

Why do you think voters elected you to the school board? That is one of the most recent survey questions posed on IASB's Members-Only website. If you would like to participate in a survey to help inform IASB and its membership, log onto the site (you will need your email address and your member ID number from any IASB mailing) and take "the survey" at: <http://members.iasb.com/features/>.

# School districts show improvement in financial profiles

## Leaders do 'sound job' managing the finances

The Illinois State Board of Education's annual financial profile of public schools, using revised data that takes into account the fact that the state is behind in payments to school districts, shows that districts across the state are doing a sound job managing their finances even during this current fiscal crisis.

"These are extremely tough economic times and I know the flow of state aid is a major issue for school districts right now," said State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch. "We get calls to our office everyday from districts that need overdue payments to run programs. This data shows that local school boards remain good stewards of our state resources."

The 2009 financial profile is based on revised Fiscal Year 2008 data in order to eliminate the impact of payment delays for mandated categorical funding support in such areas as pupil transportation, special education and other expenditures. Delays are said to be due to the state and

national financial crisis.

Currently, the state has a backlog of bills totaling more than \$3 billion, of which nearly \$680 million are bills vouchered by the Illinois State Board of Education for payment to school districts. The backlog of state bills dates back more than three months.

The district profile is designed to better illustrate information on school district finances and to establish financial designation lists for all school districts. Fiscal Year 2009 data provided to ISBE showed a 3 percent increase in the number of districts that achieved financial recognition, the highest ranking a district can receive in terms of financial stability, going from 69 percent of districts last year to 72 percent this year.

The latest financial profile ratings were based on ISBE's analysis of annual financial reports that school districts submitted for the year ending June 30, 2008.

Five indicators are used to determine a school district's financial rating:

- Fund balance-to-revenue ratio
- Expenditures-to-revenues ratio

- Days of cash on hand
- Percentage of short-term borrowing available
- Percentage of long-term debt remaining

Based on this formula, districts are designated in one of the following four categories (highest to lowest): Financial Recognition; Financial Review; Financial Early Warning; or Financial Watch.

For the 2009 Financial Profile of 870 districts, there are:

- 626 Financial Recognition school districts, up from 602 in 2008
- 165 Financial Review school districts, compared to 182 in 2008
- 57 Financial Early Warning school districts, compared to 59 in 2008
- 22 Financial Watch school districts, down from 30 in 2008

To see the entire list, searchable by district name, county or designation, visit ISBE at <http://www.isbe.net/sfms/P/profile.htm>.

For questions regarding the school district financial profile, phone Ken Wargo or Lou Ferratier of ISBE at 217/785-8779 or email [kwargo@isbe.net](mailto:kwargo@isbe.net), or [lferrati@isbe.net](mailto:lferrati@isbe.net).

## Bills aim at tougher Freedom of Information, Open Meetings acts

Two bills are pending in the General Assembly that would amend the state's Freedom of Information and Open Meetings acts, expanding the public's right to obtain documents from public bodies and attend government meetings.

One bill would create the office of a public access counselor, which would have the power to address violations, and revise the Freedom of Information Act, giving it more teeth. These new laws would require government accountability and cause greater concern for public officials.

Attorney General Lisa Madigan, working with the Illinois Press Association and other groups, is leading the charge for these two bills:

**House Bill 4165.** This proposed piece of legislation would allow for the:

- Investigation of violations of the Freedom of Information and Open Meetings acts
- Issuance of opinions on violations with which a public body will have to comply
- Filing of lawsuits if a person or public body fails or refuses to obey a subpoena

**House Bill 1370.** As a result of hearings by the Joint Committee on Government Reform, Representative Barbara Flynn Currie (D-Chicago) filed an amendment to HB 1370. It would basically re-write the Freedom

of Information Act (FOIA) to:

- Re-define "public body" (school districts are still included)
- Re-define "public record"
- Require "immediate" action on requests
- Require public bodies to designate an FOIA officer
- Shorten the time governmental bodies have to respond to requests and cut out the appeals process
- Impose a fine on governmental bodies if they willfully and intentionally fail to comply with FOIA (fines from \$100 up to \$1,000)

The amendment has not yet been scheduled for a hearing in the House.

## State may phase out 'hold harmless' aid but some would be harmed by cuts

The Illinois State Board of Education's budget, and the governor's recommendation, would begin phasing out a special state payment called the general state aid "hold harmless" that only certain school districts receive. But what is "hold harmless" and why does the state board want to phase it out over the next three years?

The purpose behind hold harmless funding, which began about 10 years ago, was to ensure that school districts receive at least as much state funding as they did in the 1997-98 school year.

Hold harmless funding was intended to help school districts adjust when the state made sweeping changes to the school funding formula, but it never was intended to become permanent, legislative insiders say. The formula change meant that schools with greater local resources would receive less aid from the state.

A total of 261 school districts received the first hold harmless payments in 1999. In the current fiscal year, 86 districts receive the payments. Only 23 of those 86 districts are from the original group of 261.

The current hold harmless payout to districts amounts to \$26.1 mil-

lion. In the coming fiscal year, the projected payout was to be \$36.2 million, because more school districts would become eligible for the payments. But the state board, grappling with a state budget deficit estimated at \$9 billion or more, is "looking for ways to address financial needs for schools overall." Hence the board recommended trimming the payout to \$18.1 million in the coming fiscal year and eliminating the payments in three years.

When the idea of phasing out the payments came up recently at a meeting of a House appropriations committee, lawmakers seemed receptive. Rep. Roger Eddy (R - Hutsonville), a school superintendent, said he thinks the elimination of "hold harmless" should take place over five years, not three.

Again, a total of 86 school districts currently qualify for hold harmless general state aid funds. Those districts are located all over the state. Some district administrators say the survival of their district now is dependent upon "hold harmless" funding.

"The state superintendent just threw 86 school districts right under the bus," said **New Holland-Middletown ESD 88** Superintendent Terry Scandrett.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**May 12 - Corn Belt Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting**, McDonald's Restaurant, Fairbury, 6:30 p.m. - Dinner

**May 27 - Southwestern Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting**, Ramada Inn, Fairview Heights, 6:30 p.m.

**June 2 - Two Rivers Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting**, Red Dome Inn, Pittsfield, 6:30 p.m.

**June 5-6 - Basics of Governance & Law on Board Meetings & Practices Workshop**, Holiday Inn, Carbondale, Fri., 6/5/09 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m., Sat., 6/6/09 - 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**June 5-6 - Basics of Governance & Law on Board Meetings & Practices Workshop**, The Chateau, Bloomington, Fri., 6/5/09 - 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m., Sat., 6/6/09 - 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**June 6 - Comprehensive Workshop for Board Presidents**, The Chateau, Bloomington; Holiday Inn, Carbondale, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**June 6 - Comprehensive Workshop for Board Presidents**, Holiday Inn Carbondale, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**June 12-13 - Basics of Governance & Law on Board Meetings & Practices Workshop**, The Westin Itasca Northwest, Fri., 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.; Sat., 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**June 13 - Comprehensive Workshop for Board Presidents**, The Westin Itasca Northwest, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.