

# Illinois SCHOOL BOARD *Newsbulletin*

April 2012 / Issue No. 718



The Delegate Assembly votes on member district policy-setting resolutions at the Annual Conference in November. The deadline to submit resolutions to be voted upon at this year's assembly is June 20.

## Member resolutions for Delegate Assembly due by June 20 to propose policy changes

Local school boards are invited to submit resolutions for the 2012 Delegate Assembly. Information and resolution forms were scheduled to be mailed to district superintendents and board presidents on April 12.

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 entitled to send one delegate. Delegates gather at the Joint Annual Conference to vote on resolutions submitted by member districts in order to establish policy for IASB.

Proposals from active member boards may be submitted for: new IASB resolutions, amendments to existing position statements, reaffirmations of existing position state-

See **RESOLUTIONS** on page 5

## Gov. Quinn pushes to shift pension burden to districts

### Working group ordered to recommend solutions

Gov. Pat Quinn made it clear in his Fiscal Year 2013 budget speech Feb. 23 that he wants the state to shift all or part of the teachers' pension burden to local districts. Quinn has organized a Pension Working Group, a bipartisan panel of legislators and interest group representatives, that he charged with submitting recommendations to him by April 17.

Quinn warned lawmakers in his budget address that their toughest task ahead is overhauling state pensions. The governor also said that everything is on the table for pension reform. He said the cost of teacher pensions, from public schools to universities, can't be solely picked up by the state.

In order to protect education, health care and public safety spending in the budget, Quinn said the state must "stabilize and strengthen our public pension systems once and for all."

See **PENSION** on page 4

## On the inside

- District report cards changing .....Page 2
- Referenda results above average .....Page 6
- Transportation funds in doubt .....Page 8

**Financial profiles improving**

Page 3

## Advanced Placements rise

A record number and percentage of Illinois students are taking and passing Advanced Placement exams, according to the eighth annual *AP Report to the Nation*, which was released Feb. 8. Illinois ranks 15<sup>th</sup> nationwide, as 18.5 percent of the state's high school graduates scored extremely well on an AP Exam. That compares to just 11 percent in 2001. A record number of Illinois students took AP exams in 2011. The number of Latino graduates taking AP courses has quadrupled in the last decade. See the source report at: <http://apreport.collegeboard.org/>.

## Wellness conference set

Registration is now open for the fifth annual School Wellness and Recognition Conference, set for May 3 in Springfield. To register, go to [http://take.actionforhealthykids.org/site/Clubs?club\\_id=1121&sid=3980&pg=event](http://take.actionforhealthykids.org/site/Clubs?club_id=1121&sid=3980&pg=event). Questions? Contact Joan Love at 800/545-7892 or [jlove@isbe.net](mailto:jlove@isbe.net).

## Teacher evaluation seminar

A seminar on teacher evaluations will be held April 17 in Oak Park. The event will feature Charlotte Danielson, whose Framework for Teaching serves as the basis for the Illinois standardized teacher evaluation model. Attendees will also hear about the results of a three-year pilot project using the Danielson Framework within Chicago Public Schools. "Making Teacher Evaluations Meaningful...for Teachers, for Administrators, for Students" is scheduled for 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 17, at Percy Julian Middle School in Oak Park. There is no charge to attend, but registration is required by April 10. For information, contact Christy Glaze at [cglaze@illinois.edu](mailto:cglaze@illinois.edu), or at 217/333-9625.

# Law overhauls how districts present data for state's school report cards

Legislation signed into law in January as HB 605, sponsored by Rep. Linda Chapa La Via, D-Aurora, overhauls requirements in the state's school report card system. It would affect how districts and individual schools report their data.

State officials say the new cards will help the state better evaluate the success of schools, programs and districts by allowing ready comparisons between similar schools across the state, as well as current and past outcomes and progress. New detailed reports will be publicly available but designed for use by district and school leaders, with performance breakdowns by demographic subgroup and additional information.



Rep. Chapa La Via

Meanwhile, separate, more compact report cards for parents will be simplified, compressing over 10 pages of data currently reported into a two-page summary.

The required data for schools to report would change by grade level. The elementary school cards would show, for example, the number of students who attended preschool, while the high school cards would indicate how many freshmen have stayed on track academically at their school and how many graduates are completing their first year of college without the need to take remedial courses.

The revised school report cards will roll out by October 2013. No less than 30 days after receiving their cards from the state superintendent, every school district will be required to present them to the public at a regular school board meeting, and to post them on the district website, meanwhile making them available to local newspapers, and sending them home to parents when requested.

School reports currently are pub-

lished every fall for all public schools and contain a wealth of data, covering everything from key student demographics to test scores to average teacher salary. Under the new law, the report cards must include the following data:

- School characteristics and student demographics, including: average class size, average teaching experience, student racial breakdown, percentage of low-income students, percentage of students with limited English proficiency, percentage of students with an IEP, and per pupil operating expenditure;
- Curriculum information, including: advanced placement and dual credit courses offered, foreign language classes offered, before and after school programs, extracurricular activities offered, average number of days of physical education per pupil per week, gifted education programs offered;
- Student outcomes, including: percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards on assessments, percentage of 8th grade students who pass Algebra, percentage

See **REPORT** on page 3

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**Illinois Association  
of School Boards**

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**ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION  
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

# State profiles indicate more districts earn top grade for finances

## Only 17 districts on watch list, was at 24

The state's annual financial profile of public schools shows most school districts are doing a sound job managing their finances, even during the state's ongoing fiscal crisis.

The 2012 Financial Profile shows that 670 districts, or 77.3 percent of the state's 867 school districts, attained a "Financial Recognition" rating, compared to the 604 that achieved that rating a year earlier. Financial Recognition is the highest of four levels of financial accountability. While more districts have improved their financial standing, the Illinois State Board of Education data also shows that school administrators continue to reduce their expenditures and increase borrowing to balance budgets.

ISBE released the annual financial profile on March 21, using revised Fiscal Year 2011 data.

The profile takes into account the fact that the state remains behind in payments to school districts for the third consecutive year. At any given time over the past three years, the state of Illinois has had a backlog of bills owed to schools, sometimes totaling more than \$1 billion. As of this month, the state owed more than \$4.4 billion in overdue payments for all purposes, including \$729 million in school-related payments.

"Local school boards and administrators continue to make difficult choices as they grapple with decreased

	FY 11 Financial Profile Based on FY 10 Revised Data		FY 12 Financial Profile Based on FY 11 Revised Data	
	#	%	#	%
Financial Recognition	604	69.6%	670	77.3%
Financial Review	188	21.6%	143	16.5%
Financial Early Warning	52	6.0%	37	4.2%
Financial Watch	24	2.8%	17	2.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>868</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

local and state revenue as well as late payments from the state," ISBE Board Chairman Gery J. Chico said in a March 21 press release. "They have been forced to cut staff, forgo supplies, delay facility repairs and outsource operations in order to cut costs."

In addition to a greater number of districts receiving the highest rating, the number of districts in the lowest category also declined.

The 2012 "Financial Watch" rating dropped from 24 to 17 districts this year, or less than 2 percent of all school districts. Fifteen districts were removed from this list; 14 reflected improvement and one district was reorganized into another district. Eight districts were added to the list, although three of those were listed because they did not submit an Annual Financial Report, according to ISBE.

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

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

- Percent of short-term borrowing available
- Percent 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 a breakdown of the status of districts listed in the 2012 Financial Profile see the table on this page "Results of the Financial Profile."

"Districts have increased cash balances by issuing debt or restructuring debt payments," State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch said in the report. "While we expect continued lean economic times, our board is advocating a modest increase (3.9 percent) for the state's K-12 education budget to fund daily operations and important ongoing reforms."

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

### REPORT from page 2

- of students who graduate from high school who are "college ready," and percentage of graduates who are enrolled in some type of institution of higher education;
- Student progress, including: percentage of 9th-grade students who have earned five or more credits without failing more than one core class, number of kindergarten stu-

- dents who entered the program "ready to learn," percentage of students who enter high school "on track for college and career readiness;" and
- School environment, including: percentage of students and teachers with fewer than 10 absences in a school year, leaves taken pursuant to the Family Medical Leave Act,

three-year average of the percentage of teachers returning from the previous year, the number of different principals at each school in the last six years, and combined percentage of teachers rated as proficient or excellent in their most recent evaluation.

The law, Public Act 97-0671, was effective Jan. 24.

## PENSION *from page 1*

Teachers make up nearly three quarters of the state's pension costs. But school leaders around Illinois say the state cannot leave school districts too much on the hook either.

As **Rockford SD 205** Financial Chief Cedric Lewis recently explained to a Rockford television reporter: "Thirty-six million dollars is not going to be easy for [District] 205 to shore up in short order and provide the quality instructional program that we're trying to provide for our children." Lewis noted that the district just paid \$13 million in pension costs for its teachers. Picking up the state's \$36 million share would cost the same as 500 teachers.

But State Representative Dave Winters (R-Shirland) said the formula has to change. He said the state puts in much of the cost of pensions and yet the pension level is set by the universities and the school districts.

The governor said he wants lawmakers to come up with a new pension model. But with at least 88 different bills on the table, there are as many potential solutions as problems.

The state closed fiscal 2011 with \$82.9 billion of unfunded pension obligations for a funded ratio of just 43.4 percent. Quinn said the government would fully fund the scheduled fiscal 2013 payment of \$5.2 billion in the budget. That is up from \$4.1 billion this fiscal year. Pension payments in the next year will account for 15 percent of the general fund budget, up from 6 percent in 2008, he said.

Quinn laid out a series of possible reforms to rein in costs. He recently named a working group of lawmakers to meet with stakeholders and come up with a reform plan for legislative action by April 17.

Quinn's administration has long floated the idea of requiring suburban and downstate school districts to contribute to their teachers' pensions, which now require payments by the state. Quinn noted in his address and budget documents that \$2.7 billion of the state's fiscal 2013 payment will go to cover teachers' pensions and \$1.4

billion for universities.

Previously the governor had said he wants "meaningful reform" of the pension system but he now has laid out four "key variables," namely:

1) Employer contributions: Make local school boards and universities pay the "normal costs" of the pension liability. This amounts to about one-third of the total pension liability. The governor said the change wouldn't necessarily result in higher local property taxes, which are capped, but could be done via economizing by employers.



House Speaker  
Michael Madigan



Pension Panel  
Chairman Jerry  
Stermer

Senate President John J. Cullerton (D, Chicago) has said much the same thing. House Speaker Michael Madigan (D, Chicago) has said he favors this approach, as well. This would cost each school district 7.65% of its TRS payroll – about \$700 million statewide.

2) Employee contributions: Quinn said he favors increasing employee pension contributions out of their paychecks. Insiders suggest that various incentives be used to hike employee contributions by 3 percent, which could raise hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

3) Cost-of-living adjustments: Statehouse experts have been talking about basing annual cost-of-living raises on the original retirement income, rather than basing the increases on the previous year's amount. By doing that, the state would switch to "simple" interest and avoid compounding interest, which adds up considerably faster.

4) Retirement age: The age has been raised for future hires, but the governor wants to use the same approach for current public employees.

The state constitution says pension benefits of public employees represent an "enforceable contractual relationship, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired." Some contend this wording means that once a worker starts paying into the pension fund, the benefits can never be reduced in any way.

Alternative proposals floated by lawmakers include revising the payment plan that is supposed to bring Illinois' pension system to a 90 percent funded ratio by 2045. The reform task is complicated by state constitutional protections afforded to employee pensions. Accrued benefits of current employees are clearly protected, but lawmakers and legal experts disagree over the constitutionality of cutting future, as-yet-earned benefits of current employees.

The General Assembly's non-partisan Illinois Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability told lawmakers in February that any revenue growth expected in the next fiscal year would be consumed by increased pension payments, while \$8.5 billion in unpaid bills "will continue to put massive pressure on the state's financial condition."

Meanwhile, the governor's warnings on pension reforms echo those of rating agencies, investors and government review groups that are closely watching the state, which now pays an interest rate penalty to borrow because of financial ratings.

Illinois' challenges prompted Moody's Investors Service earlier this year to lower the state's rating on \$27 billion of General Obligation debt one notch to A2 with a stable outlook. Fitch Ratings affirmed its A rating and stable outlook. Standard & Poor's affirmed its A-plus rating and negative outlook.

The Civic Federation of Chicago recently warned in a report that a fiscal meltdown awaits the state as its bill backlog rises to \$34.8 billion in fiscal 2017 unless state lawmakers act.



Share the Success panel ideas were judged by volunteers at IASB in Springfield and Lombard on March 2.

## Over 30 conference panel ideas chosen to 'Share the Success' this November

Panel sessions for the 2012 Joint Annual Conference panel submitted by local school districts have been evaluated and more than 30 proposals were chosen from 100 topics submitted.

The selected school districts are being invited by mail to present 90-minute "Share the Success" panel sessions at the IASB/IASA/IASBO conference, to be held Nov. 16-18 in Chicago.

These panel sessions – presented by the board members, administrators and other school or community members who were involved in the particular programs showcased – are based on actual school system experiences.

Proposals were evaluated on five key points:

- interest or relevance
- clarity and conciseness of the proposal
- clarity of objectives and whether they are realistic

- evidence of whether the presentation will address the appropriate school board role on the chosen topic
- evidence of creativity and an innovative approach

Districts whose proposals were not selected for a panel session slot may be offered an alternative opportunity to present during the conference. IASB will again be featuring many such sessions in a Carousel of Panels event on Saturday afternoon, Nov. 17.

The carousel gives districts and organizations a chance to make three, one-half-hour presentations on their topic in just under a two-hour period, allowing attendees an opportunity to obtain a wide variety of information in minimal time.

The IASB board development staff will be working in the next few months to assign time slots and locations for the panels. Those details will be announced in September when the Conference Preview is posted.

### RESOLUTIONS *from page 1*

ments, or belief statements.

The deadline to submit resolutions is June 20.

Once IASB has received all the resolutions, a committee consisting of one elected member from each of the 21 IASB divisions will meet to review resolution proposals. The committee is empowered to recommend the approval or disapproval of proposed resolutions, and to determine which ones are presented. This year's committee is chaired by IASB Vice

President Karen Fisher.

Appeals to Resolutions Committee decisions are allowed when submitted in writing at least eight days before the Delegate Assembly, which will be held on Saturday, Nov. 17.

For information about this process, contact division representatives to the Resolutions Committee listed in the mailing, or phone IASB's Connie Crowder at ext. 1132.

Resolution forms are posted on the IASB website.

## NEWS FROM IASB

### Division meetings/OMA

Division meetings and Open Meetings Act Training (OMA) will wrap up in May. The OMA training is specifically designed for board members and satisfies the new mandatory Open Meetings Act training requirements. Certificates of completion were provided to registered attendees at the end of the training.

Two divisions offered the OMA training prior to their regular division meetings and three others are hosting OMA training-only events.

Training was offered April 4 at the South Cook division and will be offered April 30 at the West Cook division prior to the meetings.

Stand-alone OMA training is set for April 12 at the Northwest and Three Rivers divisions and is set for May 9 at the Lake division.

Registration is open to all school board members, regardless of their district's division affiliation. For more information and to register for any of these events, visit IASB's online calendar at: <http://www.iasb.com/calendar/calendar.cfm>.

### Policy subscription services

This spring, IASB is surveying members that use the Association's policy subscription services, seeking feedback on their experiences.

Such services include School Board Policies Online (SBPOL), web publishing local school board policy manuals; PRESS Plus, providing full-maintenance of local school board policy manuals; and BoardBook<sup>®</sup>, providing e-delivery of board meeting packets and e-board meetings.

Policies online and PRESS Plus surveys will be sent in April and BoardBook<sup>®</sup> surveys will be sent in May. The online surveys will be distributed via email and the results will provide information to staff for monitoring member satisfaction and continuous improvement.

# Voters approve four of six tax questions, 10 of 15 bond issues

## Pass 67% of school finance propositions

A preliminary, unofficial look at school referendum results shows voters approved four of six local school tax questions, and 10 of 15 school bond propositions in the March 20 primary election.

The 67 percent pass rating is well above the average approval rate seen for both tax and bond issues in primary elections in even-numbered years since November 1989, which stood at 36 percent for tax questions and 58 percent for bond issues.

However, only one of three countywide sales tax increase proposals was passed. The measure to raise funds for school facility purposes passed with 62 percent voting “yes” in Saline County, but lost with only 37 percent voting “yes” in Morgan County and with just 22 percent voting “yes” in Washington County.

School district tax increase referenda for educational purposes were adopted in: **Earlville CUSD 9**, in LaSalle County (a levy increase to a rate of \$4 per \$100 of assessed valuation from the current \$2.60 per \$100); **St. Liberty Consolidated SD 30**, in St. Clair County (a levy increase of the tax rate to \$2.45 per \$100 of assessed valuation for five years); **Valmeyer CUSD 3**, in Monroe County (to raise the debt service extension base from \$83,695 to \$350,000, with the base to be increased each year by the lesser of 5 percent or the percentage increase in the consumer price index for the previous year); and **West Northfield SD 31**, Northbrook, in Cook County (a levy increase to a rate of \$1.88 per \$100 of assessed valuation from the current \$1.61 per \$100 of assessed valuation).

Bond issues were approved by voters in **Blue Ridge CUSD 18** in DeWitt, McLean and Piatt Counties (\$6.5 million); **Clinton CUSD 15**, in DeWitt, Logan, and Macon counties (\$16.7 million); **Fox Lake Grade SD 114**, Spring Grove, in Lake County

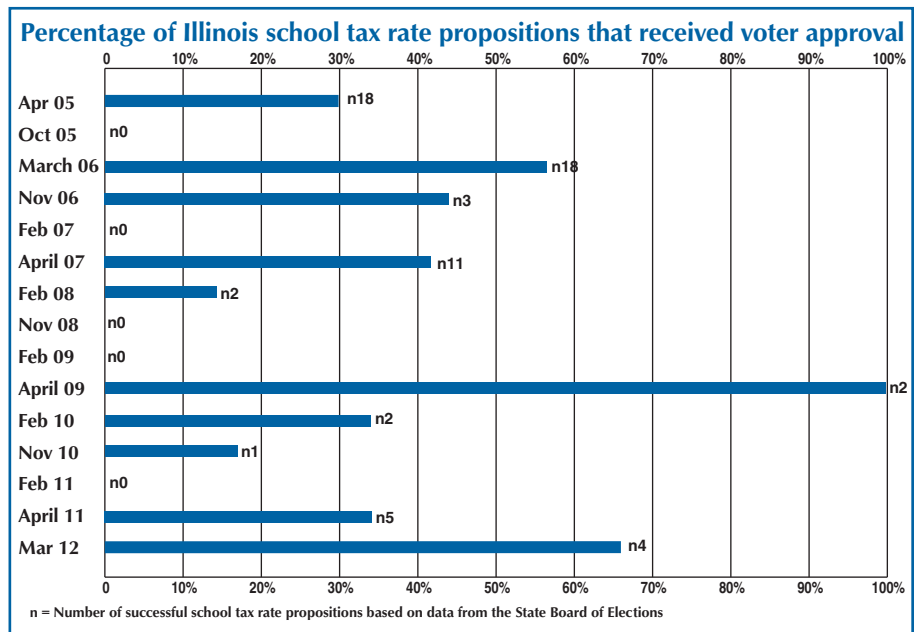
(\$3.75 million); **Gower SD 62**, Willowbrook, in DuPage County (\$9 million); **Opdyke-Belle Rive CCSD 5**, in Jefferson County (\$400,000); **Quincy SD 172**, in Adams County (\$6.2 million); **Taft SD 90**, Lockport, in Will County (\$3.2 million); **Valmeyer CUSD 3**, in Monroe County (\$1.5 million); and **Woodlawn CHSD 205**, in Jefferson County (\$575,000).

All were building bond issues, with the exception of the proposals in Fox Lake, Quincy, and Valmeyer, which were for working cash funds. The Fox Lake bond proposal won by the incredibly narrow margin of 611-608, according to the preliminary, and as yet unofficial, count. Election results will

become official after canvassing of results is completed on April 20.

The two school district consolidation propositions on the March ballot both failed, including a new “hybrid merger” question in Union County. It would have enabled the approval of any of eight possible scenarios to consolidate four school districts: **Lick Creek District 16**, **Anna CCSD 37**, **Jonesboro CCSD 43**, and **Anna-Jonesboro High School District 81**. The measure passed only in Anna CCSD 37.

Also defeated was consolidation of three school districts in McDonough County: **Abingdon CUSD 217**; **Avon CUSD 176**, and **Bushnell-Prairie City CUSD 170**, Bushnell.



## School tax and bond referendum proposals may be put on Nov. 6 ballot through Aug. 17

There is still plenty of time for school boards to initiate a school finance referendum for the Nov. 6, 2012, general election.

Aug. 17 is the last day for a board of education to adopt a resolution putting such public policy questions on the ballot for the November election.

The school board’s resolution should be drawn up with the aid of an attorney. It must contain the exact wording of the ballot proposition and other information specified in the School Code.

If a tax rate proposition is involved, the notice of election and the ballot must contain information called for by paragraphs 9-11 and 17-3.4 of the School Code. Although publishing the notice and printing the ballot are responsibilities of the election authority, the school board must provide this information and should, therefore, incorporate wording for the election notice as well as for the ballot in its resolution. It is important to insure the legal sufficiency of the election notice as well as the ballot.

# NEWS HEADLINES

**Chicago** (March 5, *Chicago Tribune*) Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced a salary bonus plan March 2 to bring top principals to Chicago. Chicago will search the country for 50 new school principals this year and pay a \$25,000 bonus if they agree to take over a troubled city school. The privately funded plan is intended to build on the merit-pay system for principals in Chicago public schools implemented last year, Emanuel said. The mayor's office also announced a plan to partner with universities to train and mentor new principals. Officials also said that the federal government will do more to help school districts. Much of the \$550 million allotted to the next round of Race to the Top, a competitive grant program, will be awarded on a district-by-district basis. Previously, funding had been awarded to states.

**Chicago** (Feb. 28, *Chicago Tribune*) Arts programs helped to improve standardized test scores at three schools in Chicago over three years, according to a report by Loyola University and the educational arts nonprofit Changing Worlds. With Chicago District 299 moving to a longer school day next year, the Chicago Teachers Union and parent groups like Raise Your Hand have called for more time devoted to enrichment classes like music and art and less time spent in test preparation. The study found an 11.5 percentage point gain in three years for composite test scores meeting or exceeding state standards. The students also scored more than 11 percentage points higher, on average, than fourth, fifth and sixth graders at the same school who did not take part in the arts program.

**Edwardsville** (March 8, *Belleville News-Democrat*) A round of budget cuts will go before the Edwardsville District 7 board soon as the district tries to cope with the continued loss of state revenue. Superintendent Ed

Hightower said March 7 he will recommend \$3 million in cuts over a two-phase program this year. That will include as many as 86 people laid off. In phase one, the district would eliminate 19 positions. Of those, 10 will be retiring teachers who will not be replaced. Another four will be high school teachers, even as the district maintains class size at 34 students. The financial pressures on the district have increased as the state has fallen six months behind in its payments, with a \$2 million debt. The state failed to make its final payment to districts last year and is likely to do the same this year, Hightower said.

**Harrisburg** (March 6, *The Southern*) Harrisburg students returned to their classrooms March 5, just five days after an EF-4 tornado changed their world. The tornado, which took six lives, injured about 100 people and destroyed or damaged more than 100 homes and businesses, had an effect on every student, school officials said. The district provided extra counselors in each building, who not only talked with children about the disaster but also assessed the immediate needs of those affected directly by the storm. Each school in the district has set up a disaster relief fund that will be used for the needs of the children affected.

**North Chicago** (March 5, *Lake County News-Sun*) The North Chicago CUSD 187 Board of Education voted on March 1 to reject a charter proposal urged by the state and promoted by a top charter operator. Plans for the charter, which would be privately operated by an outside company but funded by district revenue, call for a focus on science, math and technology, an enrollment of up to 500, and using a part of Naval Station Great Lakes as the site of the school. The aim was to open by next fall. But board members expressed concern over the estimated \$2 mil-

lion per year cost and the possibility that the district will not be reauthorized for federal impact aid — a funding loss they said could force deep cuts on the rest of the district. The state began pushing a charter for North Chicago schools, which have at times struggled both academically and financially, after the district signed an intergovernmental cooperative agreement in 2010. Under the agreement, the state could override the board's vote.

**Rockford** (March 7, *Register Star*) Rockford SD 205's "chronic truancy" rate is expected to double this school year, due to a change in state law that reduces the number of school days a student can miss before a district intervenes. In Rockford the revised law is putting more pressure on caseworkers who intervene when students are found to be truant. The law was updated in July to define "chronic truant" as a student who misses 5 percent of school days without a valid excuse. That's nine days of an average 180-day school year. In the past, that threshold was 10 percent of school days — or 18 days. The rationale for the change is that state legislators want to raise the state's education attainment level.

**Rockford** (March 30, *Register Star*) Classes resumed April 2 in Rockford SD 205 after a tentative deal on a teachers contract was reached March 30 following a two-day strike. District administrators and union leaders emerged from a private bargaining session to announce the agreement, then resumed talks behind closed doors at a downtown law firm. Officials shared no details about the contract agreement, except that it is a four-year deal. Teachers ratified the labor agreement on April 1 by a vote of 1,264-12. The school board held a special meeting April 3 to adopt the deal.

# School district transportation funding on state budget chopping block for FY 13

After two years of reduced funding in the school district transportation reimbursement, the state's formula may be significantly altered or altogether eliminated.

That is just one of the proposals being investigated by the state board of education.

But the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is exploring proposals that would either require more cuts, grant districts more options, or eliminate transportation funding entirely. The following proposals are being discussed:

- Moving to a per mile or per pupil reimbursement;
- Making student transportation permissive for all school districts, instead of mandating such transportation (and allowing school districts to charge a fee to transport students);
- Eliminating transportation reimbursement of all vehicles other than school buses;
- Eliminating the flat grant funding for the 119 school districts that receive transportation this way instead of through the formula;
- Eliminating transportation reimbursement to school districts that use mass transit for transportation of students;
- Eliminating all transportation reimbursement funding for the school districts that are not currently mandated to provide transportation (this includes 387 school districts, including all but five of the high school districts in the state); and
- Extending the mileage threshold for free transportation beyond the current 1.5 miles

In response to these proposals, some school districts are formulating options for reducing the number of bus routes they run. Others have begun to talk about the option of implementing a "pay-to-ride" system where parents could pay the district to provide a seat for their student on a bus.

For example, Lemont-Bromberek CSD 113A is weighing both options, according to District 113A Director of Transportation Pam Mazurek.

For nearly 100 years, community unit districts have been mandated to provide school busing. But new school districts, such as charter school districts and magnet school districts, are not required to do so. Still, most school districts do offer transportation because the parents and communities want it, both to reduce traffic congestion and to increase child safety.

In the governor's proposed budget the regular transportation reimbursement line item would remain the same after the governor cut the transportation line item in FY '11 and FY '12.

For the past two years, the governor and legislature have cut the transportation payments to a 74 percent proration level. As a result, some school districts were forced to cut bus routes after the state informed them it would no longer fully fund transportation for students living within a mile-and-a-half of their school, as long as the walking or biking route is not deemed hazardous. Statutory authority for this program can be found in the Illinois School Code at 105 ILCS 5/29-5.2.

The Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance is included in the transportation reimbursement discussions.

"We should take a long, hard look at these proposals before making any legislative change," said an Alliance leader, IASB Associate Executive Director of Governmental Relations Ben Schwarm. "School board members will first take into account the safety and well-being of the students. And reducing bus routes, requiring parents to drive their children to school, and charging for student transportation may not be in the best interest of the students, parents, and members of the community. Some things the state will just have to pay for," Schwarm concluded.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

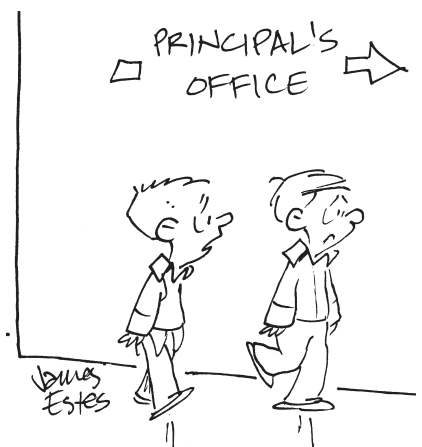
**May 2 – Central IL Valley Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting,** Lariat Steakhouse, Peoria

**May 2 – Kaskaskia Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting,** Cunetto's, Greenville

**May 3 – Abe Lincoln Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting,** IASB, Springfield

**May 3 – Blackhawk Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting,** The Cellar, Geneseo

For more information about coming events, see the IASB Web site at [www.iasb.com/calendar](http://www.iasb.com/calendar)



"We should have known enough to shut up when her eyes and ears started twitching."