

# Illinois SCHOOL BOARD *Newsbulletin*

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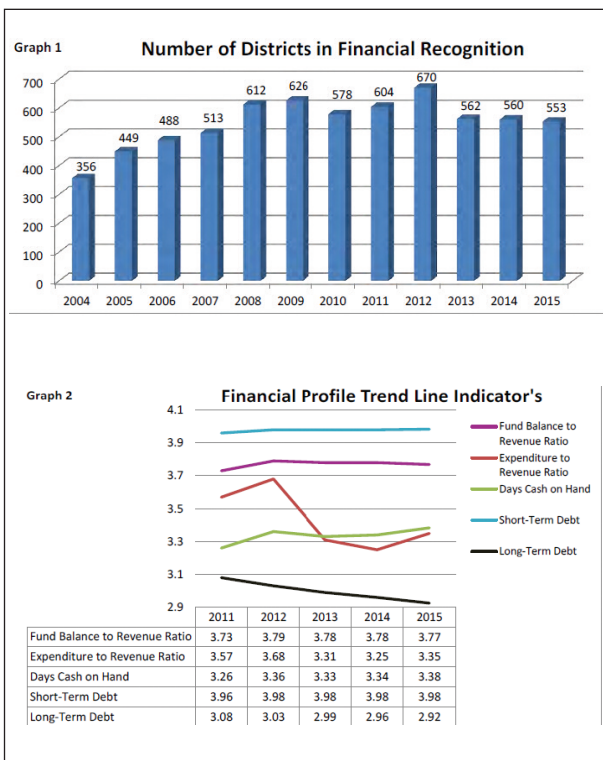
## School districts face growing debt, increased reliance on deficit spending

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) recently released its annual financial profile of public schools through Fiscal Year 2015, and the numbers are trending downward.

Districts are designated by one of four categories. The vast majority, or 553 districts, remain in the top category (Financial Recognition). But the number dropped by seven since last year, while the number of districts in the next category (Financial Review) increased by 18. State school officials said that long-term debt is increasing along with the number of districts that are expected to deficit spend.

Many of these districts have already made significant cuts; they have reduced staff, delayed building repairs and upgrades, and eliminated academic and extracurricular programs with little financial relief in turn, according to ISBE.

“Our data shows that while our schools continue to cut costs and stretch shrinking financial resources, many still must borrow or dip into their reserves in order to stay in the black,” said State Superintendent of



Education Christopher A. Koch. “There also appears to be a direct correlation between the decrease in state funding and the declining number of districts in Financial Recognition.”

ISBE’s look at the schools’ long-term debt indicates that:

- districts are continuing to decrease their expenditures and incur debt to sustain fund balances and operations; while
- districts issued \$356.5 million in new debt in FY 2014 in their operating funds; \$72 million (25.3 per-

See **PROFILE** on page 4

## School management groups file vital law brief in zoning case

ASB, Illinois ASBO and IASA filed an Amici brief on March 4 supporting CHSD 155, Crystal Lake, in a zoning case pending before the Illinois Supreme Court that arose over a dispute over athletic-field bleachers.

The school management associations’ brief argues that subjecting school buildings and ancillary structures to unfettered local zoning and land use regulations would frustrate and impede the ability of school districts to implement the statewide mission of providing high-quality public education.

Pointing to recent studies that show a positive influence from athletics on student academic success and graduation rates, the Amici brief also argues that athletic programs are “an integral part of providing a high quality public education.”

The brief notes that many Illinois school districts serve multiple municipalities, yet a zoning decision by just one municipal council could conceivably overturn the building referendum intent of an entire school district.

The brief asks the court to rule that school districts are not subject to municipal zoning and land use regulations.

To read the Amici brief for an understanding of the issues in the case visit: [www.iasb.com/law/AmicusCrystalLake.pdf](http://www.iasb.com/law/AmicusCrystalLake.pdf).

Also see *Attorney Honored*, page 6

## Alignment workshop set

The Illinois State Board of Education is once again sponsoring a one-day alignment workshop, "Detecting evidence in quality lessons/units: four dimensions of alignment in a one-page tool." The workshop will be held in Lisle on April 21 and in Moline on April 22. Each day's event will introduce teachers to a one-page tool, "educators evaluating quality instructional products" rubric, that helps identify all of the necessary criteria of quality lessons/units. Details and registration information are available online at [www.isbe.net/common\\_core/pdf/workshop-spring-2015.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/common_core/pdf/workshop-spring-2015.pdf).

## Wellness conference on way

Registration is now open for the 8th annual Illinois School Wellness Conference, set for April 23 in Champaign. It is hosted by Illinois Action for Healthy Kids. Conference sessions will highlight successful school health and wellness-related outreach in schools. Attendees will receive a certificate of completion at the end of the conference to obtain 5 CPDUs. Event registration costs \$100 per participant. To learn more contact Ryan Monroe, Illinois State Coordinator at [rmonroe@action-forhealthykids.org](mailto:rmonroe@action-forhealthykids.org), or phone (563) 419-1931.

## Excel nominees sought

Nominations are due June 8 for the Illinois State Board of Education's recognition program "Those Who Excel," which recognizes contributions to education. Forms were sent to school districts and are online at [www.isbe.net/those-who-excel/pdfs/those-who-excel-app.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/those-who-excel/pdfs/those-who-excel-app.pdf). The awards will be presented at a banquet in Bloomington on Oct. 17. Call ISBE's public information office at 217/782-4648.

## 'Tier II' pensions could cost schools dearly in teacher recruiting, retention: Mott

The Tier II pension benefit structure in the state's Teachers' Retirement System faces major problems that could cost local school districts a lot of money in the future unless corrected, according to IASB director Frank Mott of Forest Park SD 91.

That's one reason why a state task force was convened last fall by legislators to look into the potential problems created with Tier II and how these future concerns could affect the recruitment and retention of teachers. Mott is a member of that state panel, and he reported to the IASB Board on March 7 on the task force's reasons for forming, progress and concerns.

Mott explained that Tier II was created by state law in 2010 to cover any state employee who had not contributed to TRS or another Illinois public pension system before 2011. Sponsors said adding Tier II would help solve the financial insolvency faced by state pension systems by lowering pension benefits for the pension systems' new members. Reducing pensions will, of course, mean lower costs to the state in the long run.

In fact, if allowed to function as planned, Tier II should meet its goals, Mott said. The entire unfunded liability of TRS, now totaling over \$61 billion, would dwindle in the coming decades and ultimately disappear as the state draws full pension contributions from the growing ranks of Tier II members and pays them reduced benefits.

But some say the essence of Tier II – the reduced benefits structure – is a potential problem for the Teacher Recruiting and Retention Task Force to review. Courts could well declare that its reduced benefit structure for newer hires is unconstitutional and unfair to all Tier II members.

Currently, a Tier I pension costs the state 20 percent of the salary of an active member. But a Tier II member's pension costs just 7 percent of the salary of an active member. Tier

II active members, however, pay the same 9.4 percent salary contribution to the state pension system as active Tier I members.

As mentioned, this two-tier system could one day be declared unconstitutional, which would imperil the revenue stream intended to eliminate the system's unfunded liability. Mott said the Task Force will be looking at whether this concern, which has been expressed by some state pension officials, could undermine the ability of public schools in Illinois to attract the best and brightest teachers.

Meanwhile, the task force will also look at separate concerns of whether Tier II members will be forced into the federal Social Security system. If so, he said, those members and their school district employers might be required to start paying the 6.2 percent federal Social Security tax.

TRS members' service in public education is not currently part of Social Security, so neither teachers nor their employing school districts have to pay that federal payroll tax. But for TRS members to remain outside the feder-

See PENSIONS on page 10

## 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.

**James Russell,**  
Associate Executive Director

**Gary Adkins, Editor**  
2921 Baker Drive  
Springfield, Illinois 62703-5929  
(217) 528-9688

One Imperial Place  
1 East 22nd Street, Suite 20  
Lombard, Illinois 60148-6120  
(630) 629-3776  
[www.iasb.com](http://www.iasb.com)

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ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

## Latest state board appointee has long affiliation with IASB

John Sanders of Marion has been appointed and confirmed to a seat on the Illinois State Board of Education to replace Roberta Parks, who was earlier named but later decided she could not accept the appointment.

Like his late father James W. Sanders, a former IASB director who served on the Marion school board for 26 years, he is a regular attendee at IASB's Joint Annual Conference.



John Sanders

"I still go to the 'Triple-I' almost every year, and that will continue now

that I'm on the state board, and I look forward to the challenge of helping K-12 schools," John Sanders said.

Sanders, a former member of the Illinois Council of School Attorneys, has served on the board of the John A. Logan Community College since 1997 and is a partner at Sanders & Sanders, a general practice law firm known for its work in school law. Over the years it has represented more than 40 school districts throughout southern Illinois.

In addition to his legal work, Sanders has also served on the Illinois Supreme Court Committee on Character and Fitness, the Association for Community College Trustees and the Illinois Com-

munity College Trustee Association.

Parks withdrew from the state board seat now occupied by Sanders because of a commitment made last fall to become a member of a local charter school board.

Sanders was one of five new appointees to the State Board confirmed by the Illinois State Senate on March 19. Former Senator the Reverend James Meeks was appointed as the new chairperson. Meeks and Sanders will be joined on the ISBE by Lula Ford, Craig Lindvahl, and Eligio Pimentel. To get more background information on the new board members, please follow the following link: [www.isbe.net/board/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/board/default.htm).

## School funding reform eyed by House task force in 'long process'

The state's newly formed House Education Task Force on School Funding held its first meeting on March 11 to discuss legislative proposals to change the way Illinois funds schools. The meeting came nearly two years after the state Senate formed its own task force to discuss education funding.

During the meeting of the House task force, it became clear that this will be a long process in the Illinois House, too, just as it has been in the Senate. The task force meeting lasted just over an hour.

Jonathan Furr, director of the Office of Education System Innova-

tion at Northern Illinois University and the technical advisor to Senator Andy Manar (D-Bunker Hill) on SB 1, addressed the task force. Furr spoke about the changes it has undergone since being introduced as Senate Bill 16 last session.

Two major areas of change are an increase in the amount of money to go into the formula and a regional cost factor. Also discussed was Senate Bill 1403 (Barickman, R-Bloomington), a Vision 20/20 school funding initiative. SB 1403 would create an evidenced-based funding model that takes into account the cost associated with delivering qual-

ity, research-based programming and continues to generate much positive conversation, like many Vision 20/20 initiatives, in the General Assembly. Currently, the bill has 13 bi-partisan sponsors.

Discussion of the two proposals wrapped up with the task force members seeking to hear from more education stakeholders on the important issue of school funding reform.

The new House panel, like the Senate panel that preceded it, is comprised entirely of state legislators, so insights from educators and the public will be sought out, the lawmakers said.

## Nominees sought for seventh annual Holly Jack board secretary award

Now is the time for districts to nominate the employee who does the work of the school board secretary for the 2015 Holly Jack Outstanding Service Award.

This award was created to honor the memory of Holly Jack, a long-time employee of the association who served as an IASB Field Services administrative assistant and was instrumental in promoting and developing the secretaries' program that is offered at

the annual conference.

The purpose of the award is both to honor Holly's contribution and memory and to recognize the extraordinary work and service provided by secretaries who serve and assist their local boards of education. The award is presented annually at the IASB/IASMIASBO annual conference in Chicago.

To be eligible for this service award an individual must be:

- A district employee who does the work of the school board secretary, and
- Have been employed in that position, either by your school district or another, for a minimum of five years.

The criteria includes:

- Excellent performance – Works "above and beyond" expectations, always going the extra mile to serve the district's educational staff, school board, community members, and

See **AWARD** on page 12

**PROFILE** from page 1

cent) more than the \$284.5 million new debt issued in the prior year, FY 2013.

For Fiscal Year 2015, ISBE projects that the number of districts with deficits will increase to 550 or 64.2 percent of the state's school districts, compared to FY 2014, when there were just 364 districts or 42.4 percent with deficits.

While the latest profile, based on data from Fiscal Year 2014 that ended June 30, 2014, shows that 553 districts, or 64 percent of the state's 860 public school districts, were in Financial Recognition status, those numbers are trending downward. Three years ago, 670 districts or 77 percent achieved the top status, the highest number ever to attain that ranking.

The 2015 report also shows that more districts are in real distress; increasing from 17 districts, or 2 percent on the Financial Watch list three years earlier, which was an all-time

Designation	Score	Definition	FY 15 # of Districts	FY 14 # of Districts
Financial Recognition	4.00 - 3.54	The highest category of financial strength. Districts require little or no review or involvement by ISBE.	553	560
Financial Review	3.53 - 3.08	Districts receive a limited review by ISBE but will be monitored for potential downward trends.	199	181
Early Warning	3.07 - 2.62	ISBE monitors these districts closely and offers proactive technical assistance. ISBE also determines whether they meet the criteria set forth in Article 1A-8 of the School Code to be certified in financial difficulty and possibly qualify for a Financial Oversight Panel (FOP).	70	72
Financial Watch	2.61 - 1.00	ISBE monitors these districts very closely and offers them technical assistance. Districts are also reviewed to determine whether they meet the legal criteria to be certified in financial difficulty and qualify for a FOP.	38	49

low, to 38 districts or 4.4 percent in the latest profile.

School districts are being good stewards of their funds, however, as the average "fund balance to revenue ratio" score has remained constant over the past years of falling state support, with only a slight decrease in the ratio in FY 2014. According to ISBE, though, school district reserves con-

tinue to be diminished.

In addition, even though the average of the "expenditure to revenue ratios" reflect a slight increase, districts overall continue to deficit spend, which is diminishing fund balances, state officials said.

The Financial Profile is created by using five indicators:

See **PROFILE** on page 6

## Many local school finance questions on April 7 ballots

A preliminary, unofficial look at school district referendum plans shows at least 12 local school district finance questions are set to appear on the April 7 general election ballot, including nine bond issues, and three proposed tax increases.

Districts known to be placing local school bond issues before voters in April include:

- **Champaign CUSD 4** (a \$144 million bond issue for facility upgrades, including a new \$94.5 million high school)
- **Delavan CUSD 703**, (a \$7.1 million school building bond proposition)
- **Grass Lake School District 36**, (a proposition to issue \$5.6 million in school building bonds, including a building replacement)
- **Midland CUSD 7**, Sparland (a \$12.85 million bond issue to build a new elementary school)
- **North Shore District 112**, Highland Park (a \$150 million bond issue, including new school construction)

- **Triad CUSD 2, Troy** (seeking a 50-percent tax increase in their education fund)
- **West Aurora School District 129** (a proposition to issue \$84.2 million in building bonds, including replacing an elementary school building)
- **Westmont CUSD 201** (a proposition to issue \$19.7 million in school building bonds)
- **Winthrop Harbor School District 1**, (a proposal to issue \$6 million in school building bonds)

The largest of these bond issues is at Highland Park, where an additional \$150 million in bond revenue could be obtained if voters approve the proposal. The measure asks voters to approve borrowing that would mostly fund a school consolidation plan to reconfigure and reduce the district's number of school buildings from 12 to seven. The plan is centered on the construction of a new middle school campus.

Tax issues on the April 7 ballot include propositions in:

- **Maroa-Forsyth CUSD 2** (to increase the educational tax rate for educational purposes, establishing it at 2.70 percent on the full, fair cash value of taxable property as equalized or assessed by the Department of Revenue instead of 2.30 percent, the current maximum rate)
- **Woodland CCSD 50** (a PTELL limiting rate increase from the lesser of 5% or the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index over the prior levy year to 5% for the 2015 levy year? For the 2015 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 \$57.16)
- **Colona SD 190** (seeking a \$1.09 increase per \$100 of equalized assessed valuation in their education fund)

IASB will report on results of all the April 7 school referenda.

# NEWS HEADLINES

**Batavia** (Feb. 24, *Kane County Chronicle*) Batavia District 101 board members have voted for the district to become a part of a STEM partnership school based at Aurora University. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and math. The school is a partnership of Aurora University and West Aurora, East Aurora and Indian Prairie school districts. Batavia's board has applied for membership in the STEM school, and its governing board has accepted the application. The plan is for 50 Batavia students from third through eighth grade to attend the school. District 101 will also supply two teachers to it for a two- to four-year period.

**Cary** (Feb. 23, *Northwest Herald*) Cary School District 26 will expand to a full-day kindergarten program beginning next school year, the board agreed on Feb. 23. Under the plan, the district will offer full-day kindergarten to all students, as well as expand its English Language Learners program, and bring back enrichment programs. Superintendent Brian Coleman said the staffing plan is the beginning of the district building its budget for the 2015-16 school year. The district is also looking to add three enrichment teachers and a technology specialist.

**Danville** (March 16, *The News-Gazette*, Champaign) A new plan would cut almost \$600,000 from Danville CCSD 118 spending. Specifically, school officials are proposing to eliminate eight teaching positions and make other cuts for the upcoming fiscal year. If the cuts are approved, the district would have to issue reduction-in-force notices to only three teachers due to attrition. "This is a measured response," Superintendent Mark Denman said, explaining that the district is having to prepare its upcoming spending plan without knowing how much revenue it will bring in.

**Hinsdale** (Feb. 18, *Shaw Media*) Hinsdale High School District 86 is bringing in community members to review its master facilities plan and help make a recommendation on specific projects to the school board this summer. Volunteers learned about the process during a kickoff meeting Feb. 12 at Hinsdale South High School, led by an architecture and construction firm. Community teams will make their initial recommendations to a steering committee by mid March, which will evaluate the recommendations and hold an open community workshop. Final recommendations should come in time for another community workshop in May.

**Park Ridge** (March 10, *Pioneer Press*) The Maine THSD 207 school board is expected to adopt a new set of procedures dealing with transgender and gender nonconforming students. The proposal would create stronger, more specific language to protect such students from discrimination, harassment and bullying, and set the framework for making accommodations for transgender students. The board will take a final vote on whether to adopt the new procedures at April 13 meeting. Current district policies prohibit discrimination and harassment on the basis of sexual orientation. The proposed procedures would specifically prohibit bullying and harassment of students based on sexual orientation, gender identity and association with LGBT students.

**Springfield** (March 3, *The State Journal-Register*) Springfield District 186 is weighing its borrowing options, looking to make up for lost revenue if state categorical payments get delayed or cut in half. The board was presented with two options on March 3 to respond if the state fails to deliver all four of its fiscal 2015 payments for programs like transportation and special education. Superintendent Jennifer Gill has

warned the board that the recent expiration of the state income tax increase – a loss of more than \$2 billion in revenue to the state – could result in districts only receiving two of their four categorical payments. In District 186, that would mean a revenue loss of about \$6 million. Gill said she still had not heard from the governor's office about whether categorical programs will receive the same level of funding as last year.

**St. Charles** (Feb. 20, *Kane County Chronicle*) In response to a reduction in lunch purchases, District 303 officials want to withdraw two St. Charles high schools from the National School Lunch Program. District leaders reviewed the recommendation on Feb. 19 with members of the board's business services panel. By dropping out, the district would have more flexibility in portion sizes and the kinds of food offered, officials said. The district's elementary and middle schools would remain in the National School Lunch Program. Withdrawing from the lunch program would mean a loss of reimbursements of about \$500,000. Yet even without the national lunch program, the district would offer free and reduced-price meals.

**Monticello** (March 25, *The News-Gazette*, Champaign) The Monticello CUSD 25 Board of Education has approved a four-year, \$180,000 project to upgrade technology infrastructure. The project will include a tenfold upgrade in the data capacity of the wiring to 10 GB, new switches to take advantage of the new fiber optic data network and the upgrading of wireless access points. It will also include looping the local fiber network. The cost for that portion will be shared with the city of Monticello, Allerton Library District and Piatt County, which co-own the local fiber network with the school district.

## School foundations group meeting in Chicago on funding education

The National School Foundation Association (NSFA) will hold its 10th Anniversary National Conference April 22-24 at the Palmer House Hilton, Chicago. The event focuses on private funding and strategic partnerships for schools.

Education foundation leaders in schools across the nation are expected to gather for the NSFA conference to build relationships, share ideas and develop local education foundations to benefit students.

Attendees will hear success stories from local foundations that have established strong relationships with businesses, alumni, community leaders and other partners to raise monies from the private sector for various school needs.

Expected to attend are superintendents, administrators, school board members, education foundation executive directors, education foundation board members, and community lead-



- Go Build Relationships
- Go Share Ideas
- Go Develop Your Foundation

ers interested in increasing educational opportunities for young people through philanthropic support and involvement.

Keynote speakers announced for this year's event include:

- Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner.
- Matt Gandal, task force facilitator for the Council of Chief State School Officer's task force on improving career readiness, and president of the Education Strategy Group (see [www.edstrategy.org](http://www.edstrategy.org)). He previously served as a senior advisor to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.
- "Donor guru" Lynne Wester, a well-known fundraising resource person who has been featured in *The Washington Post* and *The Chronicle*

*of Philanthropy*.

- Rich Harwood, founder and president of The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, which teaches people and organizations to solve problems and change how communities work together.

The NSFA aims to provide training and support for the development of school foundations and endeavors to increase student achievement through philanthropic investment and involvement.

For information on NSFA conference registration visit: [www.event.com/d/24qy1v](http://www.event.com/d/24qy1v).

For more information on NSFA: [www.schoolfoundations.org](http://www.schoolfoundations.org).

## Illinois attorney Petrarca is chair-elect of national school attorneys council

Justin Petrarca, a member of the Illinois Council of School Attorneys since it was founded in 1987, is now the chair-elect for the The National School Boards Association Council of School Attorneys (COSA). An attorney with Scariano, Himes & Petrarca, Chicago, he was recently honored by NSBA for that accomplishment at its annual conference in Nashville.



Justin Petrarca

COSA is the national network

of attorneys representing K-12 public school districts whose mission is to support school attorneys and provide leadership in legal advocacy for public schools.

In his new role, Petrarca hosted the 2015 COSA School Law Seminar in Nashville on March 20. COSA also hosted a reception, co-sponsored by IASB, to honor chairman-elect Petrarca as a COSA lifetime achievement award recipient.

Petrarca, who received his J.D. from the John Marshall Law School, has significant experience in negotiating public contracts, including teachers' contracts. Before attending law school,

he was a public school teacher and school administrator, with building and central office experience totaling approximately ten years in these areas.

His experience also includes work in school finance, district consolidation, public-sector labor law, and organizational development.

Petrarca is a regular presenter at the Joint Annual Conference, and at national conferences of the American Association of School Administrators, National School Boards Association, National Council of School Attorneys, and Midwest Suburban Superintendents' Group, and other education groups.

### PROFILE from page 4

- Fund balance to revenue ratio
- Expenditures to revenues ratio
- Days' cash on hand
- Percent of short-term borrowing ability remaining
- Percent of long-term borrowing ability remaining

The 2015 Financial Profile for all districts can be found online at: [www.isbe.net/sfms/P/profile.htm](http://www.isbe.net/sfms/P/profile.htm).

The state board has asked for an additional \$730 million for a total \$7.5 billion appropriation in FY 2016 to fully fund General State Aid.

The Fiscal Year 2016 budget rec-

ommendation would end the 89 percent proration schools are currently faced with and fully fund the \$6,119 per pupil foundation level the state has established. Districts this year, however, will receive \$5,446 per pupil in foundation support, again 89 percent of the foundation amount set by law.

# IASB Board bids farewell to four directors, digs into governance work

The IASB Board of Directors continued to work on revisions to Association governance culture policies, operational expectations, interpretations and evidence indicators at their March 7 quarterly meeting.

The meeting, held in Lisle, was the last one for four directors, including: DuPage division director Rosemary Swanson, **Wheaton-Warrenville CUSD 200**; West Cook division Director Frank Mott, **Forest Park SD 91**; Southwestern division director Rob Luttrell, **Triad CUSD 2**; and Wabash Valley division director Tim Blair, **Casey-Westfield CUSD 4C**. All four directors did not file to run for their local school board in the April 7 consolidated elections.

Board president Karen Fisher, **Ottawa THSD 140**, presented each with a plaque to commemorate their service. The board also discussed how it goes about recruiting and mentoring new directors.

Thomas Ruggio, **Woodridge SD 68**, has already been named to replace Swanson. Directors to fill vacancies in the other three divisions will be chosen according to the by-laws of their division and appointed to fill the remainder of their director's term. The seats to be filled will become vacant after the April 7 election.

The board also reviewed its own goals for its work over the next three years. Many suggestions were heard

and will be considered by the executive committee for possible adoption at the May meeting.



Retiring board members Rosemary Swanson, Frank Mott and Rob Luttrell were awarded plaques at the Spring Northwest Division meeting on March 10 by IASB President Karen Fisher (left) and Executive Director Roger Eddy (at right.)

Several oral and written presentations and reports were made, including a state teacher recruiting and retention task force, the state board's reaction to parents opting out of student testing, Association finances, the Association plan to upgrade its financial and association management systems, IASB's amici brief filing in a case before the Illinois Supreme Court, the Illinois High School Association, IASB Service Associates membership recommendations, and current and pending legislative issues.

The next meeting will be held May 2 at the IASB office in Springfield.



Tim Blair

## 20 regional training sessions for new board members set for launch on May 8-9

Regional workshops for new board members are scheduled at 20 locations around the state from May 8-9 to July 10-11. A brochure is now online at: [www.iasb.com/calendar/newBM-workshops2015.pdf](http://www.iasb.com/calendar/newBM-workshops2015.pdf). These two-day training events are offered as one-day mandatory board training sessions on Fridays, and one-day Basics of Gov-

ernance sessions on Saturdays, with a \$40 discount available to registrants taking both days of training.

Attendees on Friday can expect: Professional Development Leadership Training, including four hours of instruction in education and labor law, financial oversight and accountability and fiduciary responsibilities. Also offered

See **TRAINING** on page 9

## NEWS FROM IASB

### Division governing meetings

Check the Events Calendar at [www.iasb.com](http://www.iasb.com) to identify divisions holding spring governing meetings. In those divisions, all board members and superintendents are invited to attend. Beginning April 28 and concluding June 30, these meetings maintain association governance and determine board development programming topics for the fall 2015 and spring 2016 division dinner meetings. "Local board members determine educational programming for these meetings," said Cathy Talbert, IASB associate executive director. "Some divisions delegate this responsibility to an elected executive committee, while others discuss and determine topics of interest at governing meetings," Talbert said.

### Video archive

An archive of videos produced by the Illinois Channel featuring IASB-related events and footage is now available on the Association's home page. Videos are organized by year and feature Conference activities, as well as other relevant content for board members. The channel is a nonprofit corporation, modeled after C-SPAN, that produces programming on government, politics, and public policy. The archive is online at: [www.iasb.com/illinoischannel.cfm](http://www.iasb.com/illinoischannel.cfm).

### Mandated training online

The Online Learning Center is preparing for new members needing Professional Development Leadership Training (PDLT) with Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) Training. The center closed the old version of the mandatory training course in early March. A new course on PDLT with PERA with updated content will open in a few weeks. Members with concerns or inquiries regarding this revision should contact Linda Zulaski at [lzulaski@iasb.com](mailto:lzulaski@iasb.com).

## Illinois districts well represented at 75th annual National School Boards Association event

More than 300 Illinois school officials converged on Nashville, TN for the 2015 National School Board Association's (NSBA) annual conference. This year's conference took place March 21-23 carrying the theme "Their Futures Start with You" throughout the hundreds of panel sessions and related events.

More than 200 exhibitors packed the exhibition hall displaying various school related products, including several that are members of IASB Service Associates.

This was the first time Nashville had acted as host city for the annual event, which also marked NSBA's 75th anniversary. Attendees were invited to help celebrate the occasion during a Saturday evening reception featuring live music and snacks. In similar décor to IASB's 2013



Jane Pauley

centennial anniversary, the reception area was adorned with an oversized timeline showcasing important moments throughout NSBA's history.

The organization was started in 1940 by several state associations, including IASB. Its original headquarters were located in Evanston, Illinois.

NSBA Executive Director Tom Gentzel opened the conference at the first General Session by encouraging school officials to "take pride in the work they are doing."

"Public schools today are more successful than ever. Enrollment in Advance Placement classes has doubled. Our schools are unmatched at serving children with disabilities," Gentzel continued. "The Stand Up 4 Public Schools campaign is helping shape public opinion. We reminded the nation that public education is



Illinois delegates arriving early for the NSBA policy making assembly included Carolyne Brooks, Roger Pfister, Roger Eddy, Karen Fisher and Marks Harms

one of the most successful endeavors ever."

General Session speakers at the three-day event featured national television personalities and Emmy Award winners Montel Williams and Jane Pauley (a replacement for Arianna Huffington due to illness), as well as



Montel Williams



David Pogue

author and Yahoo Tech founder David Pogue.

All three spoke of a rapidly changing world and all were steadfast in the role that education leaders should continue to play in helping to shape the future of society.

Williams, who is also one of the celebrity advocates for NSBA's "Stand Up 4 Public Schools" campaign, pointed directly to the link between democracy and public education.

"It doesn't matter where you come from in this country, it doesn't matter what your background... education is the greatest equalizer the world has ever known," an energized Williams proclaimed to a cheering audience. He went on to stress the importance of sharing this message not only with others involved in education, but with the entire community, as he rightfully

See NSBA on page 11

## Illinois boasts two NSBA '20 to Watch' school tech leaders

Two Illinois school district superintendents are among the winners of the National School Boards Association's 9th annual "20 to Watch" recognition program that celebrates leaders in education technology. The Illinois winners this year were:

- Art Fessler, Superintendent, **Community Consolidated School District 59**, Arlington Heights.



Art Fessler

Because Fessler is committed to providing students with the best possible learning environment, he has undertaken the challenge of rebuilding the entire K-8 curriculum with his district's instruction department to focus on the development of 21st century skills and the authentic, embedded use of technology. Grade 3-8 students have both a Chromebook and a Nexus 7 tablet, while each student in grades K -2 has a Nexus 7 tablet."

- John Hutton, Superintendent, **Gurnee School District 56**.



John Hutton

Hutton's vision for student-centered learning and his ability to articulate that vision to the community, in partnership with the district's school board, garnered passage of a comprehensive building referendum after seven previous failed referenda attempts.

The 1:1 learning initiative and the strategic use of data address the digital divide in this diverse community and help prepare all students for life in a global economy.

Fessler and Hutton were recog-

See 20 TO WATCH on page 12



## 30 winning panel-session ideas chosen to 'Share the Success'

Panel sessions for the 2015 Joint Annual Conference submitted by local school districts have been evaluated and 30 proposals were chosen from 75 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. 20-22 in Chicago.

The conference's Share the Success panel sessions will be presented by school board members, administrators and other school or community members who are involved in the selected programs. Proposals were evaluated March 6 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 time slot may be offered an opportunity to present in the Carousel of Panels event on Saturday afternoon, Nov. 21.

The IASB board development staff will be working in the next few months

to assign time slots and locations for the panels. The complete lineup for all conference programming will be announced in September.

Conference and housing registration will open in early June. This year's event will be the 101st annual conference of the Illinois Association of School Boards and the 83rd joint annual conference with the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) and Illinois Association of School Business Officials (Illinois ASBO).

IASB will send an email reminder to all members a few days before the registration materials go live. Meanwhile, all up-to-date information about the 2015 conference can be found online at: [www.iasb.com/jac15](http://www.iasb.com/jac15)

## Keynote speakers for 2015 Joint Annual Conference confirmed by staff

Speakers for the General Sessions at the 2015 Joint Annual Conference have been confirmed by the IASB Meetings Management staff.

The First General Session speaker will be DeDe Murcer Moffet, a motivational speaker, author, trainer, comedian, and niece of New York Yankees legend Bobby Murcer. Living life with passion, knowing what you were born to do then doing it full out is her definition and experience of success. Moffet says that today, more than ever, people want authentic leaders who will help them unlock their potential and reduce internal obstacles so their talent can take center stage.

The president of the University of Maryland, Freeman Hrabowski, will

be the keynoter at the Second General Session on Saturday morning.

Hrabowski chairs the Educational Excellence for African Americans Advisory Commission. In 2008, he was named one of America's Best Leaders by *U.S. News & World Report*. *Time* magazine name him one of America's 10 Best College Presidents in 2009 and one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World in 2012.

Sunday's keynote speaker at the Third General Session will be Kevin Brown. He is assistant vice president



DeDe Murcer  
Moffet



Freeman  
Hrabowski



Kevin  
Brown

of SERVPRO, an international franchise system with nearly 1,700 franchise locations specializing in fire and water cleanup and restoration. Brown frequently addresses large corporate audiences, including Siemens, State Farm, Bristol-Myers, Delta Airlines, etc. He challenges people to show up every day and make a positive difference at work and in life.

### TRAINING *from page 7*

are school board-oriented Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) Training; and Open Meetings Act (OMA) Training. IASB is the only source that offers all the mandated training con-

tent in one day.

Basics of Governance attendees on Saturdays will take home a real understanding of board and board-member roles and responsibilities.

They will also have the chance to network with peers and sharpen decision-making skills. Details about locations and costs are at: [www.iasb.com/calendar/calendar.cfm](http://www.iasb.com/calendar/calendar.cfm).

# Lower gas prices a boon to some Illinois school districts

The price of a gallon of gasoline recently dropped below \$2 in Illinois, the first time below that level since March 2009. The price of regular gas in the state was \$2.35 a gallon as of March 17, according to GasBuddy.com, compared to \$3.40 a year ago. It was as high as \$4.21 a gallon in July 2008.

Officials who oversee fleets of school buses say the drop in gas prices might help create a little wiggle room in extremely tight school budgets. In fact, fuel savings are expected to continue for the next two years, though not as much. The U.S. Department of Energy is forecasting gasoline prices to average \$2.33 a gallon in 2015 and \$2.72 a gallon in 2016, while diesel fuel averages are expected to be \$2.85 and \$3.25 a gallon, respectively.

Regardless, any extra savings is always appreciated, school leaders say.

The drop in fuel prices is translating into some savings for local school districts, which burn thousands of gallons of gasoline and diesel fuel to operate school buses.

Shane Barnes, director of transportation for **Quincy SD 172**, said his department is on track to realize about \$54,000 in savings this fiscal year if fuel prices remain at their current levels.



Brian Kurz

The school district in Quincy budgeted \$120,000 for gasoline purchases and \$375,000 for diesel fuel for fiscal 2015, which ends June 30.

“If things stay the same, we will spend \$102,000 on gas and \$339,000 on diesel,” Barnes said.

That would be a savings of \$18,000 on gas and \$36,000 on diesel fuel. The district’s transportation department could use that money to cover other expenses – and, in fact, it already has.

Barnes said his department recently faced an unexpected repair bill after water seeped into an underground fuel-storage containment area near the gasoline pumps where a fleet of buses are parked. A sump pump and other equipment had to be replaced along with an old gas pump used by bus drivers, Barnes said.

The repairs ate up most of the district’s fuel savings.

“If we wouldn’t have had those savings, we wouldn’t have been able to do that work,” Barnes said.

In August, the Quincy district awarded a motor fuel contract to Petroleum Traders, the only bidder. The company offered to sell fuel to the district at three different escalating market prices based on grade. Then as the market prices rise or fall during the course of the year, the district has to pay more or less.

As it turned out, the district has been paying less in recent weeks.

The **CUSD 4** district in Mendon,

another IASB Two Rivers Division district, also is taking advantage of low gas prices. At its monthly meeting on Jan. 21, the board decided that now was a good time to top off the district’s gasoline storage tank with the pre-purchase of 7,500 gallons of fuel for under \$1.90 a gallon. That is about half the gasoline the district’s school buses will use in a year.

“We saved about 82 cents a gallon over last year,” Superintendent Brian Kurz explained. “We have a fixed amount of storage in the tanks we rent from our fuel provider, and we are always looking for when it might be a good time to buy. After looking at prices over the last four or five school board meetings, we saw prices drop to a low enough number that we could purchase some – and decided to pull the trigger on it.”

School buses transported 864,329 public school students more than 230 million miles last year in Illinois, and the state paid out \$537 million in prorated reimbursements to districts for transportation costs, according to the Illinois State Board of Education.

Regular transportation reimbursements from the state are prorated at 72 percent, however, which represents nearly a \$150 million loss to Illinois school districts. And school leaders note that they will clearly not be able to cover that state funding deficit with any expected savings on gas prices.

## PENSIONS *from page 2*

al Social Security system, the state pension system’s minimum benefits must match or exceed the minimum benefit available from Social Security. That is known as the “safe harbor” clause of the federal Social Security law.

Mott said these are just some of the key concerns about Tier II that could impact schools. The goal of the task force’s work, he said, is to find options to fix Tier II so that TRS members, employers such as schools, and the state can avoid major problems.



pointed out, “If you don’t do it, who will?”

IASB staff were on hand helping to foster a similar message by bringing the Association’s community engagement workshop to the national platform. Field Services Director Reatha Owen and Board Development consultant Angie Peifer delivered, “The Board’s Role in Community Engagement” as a pre-conference workshop on Friday, March 20.

A number of Illinois school officials also shared their insights on school governance and other education related topics in panel sessions throughout the weekend.

The nine participating Illinois districts and school leaders, included: **Niles Township High School District 219**, “A Taste of Their Own Medicine: Getting Your School-Based Health Center Up and Running.” Presenters: Robert Silverman, board president; Nanciann Gatta, superintendent; John Heintz, chief legal officer; and board members Sheri Doniger, Carlton Evans, and Ruther Klint.

**Community Unit School District 300**, “Five Technology Issues You Need to Know: Protecting Your Board, Staff, and Students from the Top EdTech Legal Risks.” Presenters: Anne Miller, board president; and Brian Crowley and Jacqueline Wernz of Franczek Radelet.

**Township High School District 214**, “Student Data Privacy and Security in the Digital Age.” Presenters: Keith Bockwoldt, director of technology services; and Keith Krueger, CEO of the Consortium for School Networking. Bockwoldt also presented, “Building the Human Capacity for a Digital Leap,” with Alice Owen, executive director of the Texas K-12 CTO council; and Superintendent Mark Edwards and Chief Technology Officer Scott Smith of North Carolina’s Mooresville Graded School District.

**Maine Township High School District 207**, “Instructional Coaching Matters: A Plan to Support Teachers to be Their Personal and Professional Best.” Presenters: Ken Wallace, super-



The Illinois reception at NSBA featured a country costumes theme. Shown are Sharon and Dale Hansen, Karen and John Fisher, Carolyne and Danny Brooks, and Sue and Phil Pritzker.

intendent; and Barb Dill-Varga, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.

**Schaumburg Community Consolidated School District 54**, “Teach to Lead.” Presenters: Andy DuRoss, superintendent; Nick Myers, associate superintendent; and Teresa Huber, board member.

**Adlai Stevenson HSD 125 and Lake Villa CUSD 41**, “Develop a Vision and Make it Work for You.” Presenters: Merv Roberts, Adlai Stevenson board member; and Joanne Osmond, Lake Villa board member and IASB Lake Division director.

**Indian Creek School District 425**, “The R-E-S-P-E-C-T Initiative: Teaching Respect for Others, Esteem for Self, Suicide Prevention Education, and Civility Training for All.” Presenters: Pamela Rockwood, superintendent; Vaughn Boehne, board president; and Pamela Ottengheime, board secretary.

**Leyden High School District 212**, “One-to-One Learning in the Cloud: Three Years of Experience.” Presenters: Nick Polyak, superintendent; Mikkel Storaasli, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction; Jason

Markey, principal at East Leyden High School; and Bryan Weinert, technology director.

NSBA’s “Stand Up 4 Public Schools” campaign also featured a local presence, with videos from some participating Illinois districts incorporated into one continuous loop that was displayed at the NSBA booth in the exhibit hall.

On Friday, before the official conference kick-off, the NSBA delegate assembly approved resolutions that were referred to as “advocacy marching orders,” outlining initiatives that will be the focus of attention for the coming year. The resolutions fall into three core areas:

- Reauthorization of key education laws, including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) with additional provisions such as fully funding the laws and greater flexibility for local districts to make educationally sound decisions.
- Promoting local control by clearly defining the appropriate role of

See NSBA on page 12

**NSBA** *from page 11*

federal agencies and granting greater flexibility in school meal programs.

- Increasing support and financial resources to state and local education agencies with the goal of reducing the number of persistently low-performing schools and carrying out locally determined transformation plans.

Illinois delegates joining the 150-member NSBA policy making body included IASB President Karen Fisher, Vice President Phil Pritzker, Past President Carolyn Brooks, and Treasurer Dale Hansen.

Alternate delegates were directors Mark Harms, Corn Belt Division, and Ben Anderson, Northwest Division.

In addition to approving resolutions and making policy decisions, delegates elected new officers. John Tuttle of Oklahoma was selected to serve as NSBA president for the 2015-16 term.

In remarks to the conference attendees, Tuttle said he planned on taking the “Stand Up” initiative to a new level.

“My message will be not only that we stand up, but that we step up and speak up for public education. It will take all of us to speak up for the many whose voices are not being heard,” Tuttle stressed.

Also on Friday, Illinois school board members and other school officials in attendance were treated to a reception hosted by IASB.

Guests were greeted by Association officers dressed in “country attire” featuring cowboy hats and boots, with plenty of Nashville’s world-famous music for entertainment.

The 2016 NSBA Annual Conference is scheduled for April 9-11 in Boston.

More information and additional coverage of 2015 conference events is available at the NSBA Conference Daily site at [www.nsba.org/tags/conference-daily](http://www.nsba.org/tags/conference-daily).

**HOLLY JACK** *from page 3*

students.

- Initiative – Demonstrates independent problem solving ability.
- Innovation – Demonstrates imagination in the work environment.
- Staff development – Strives to empower, embrace, and equip colleagues to reach their professional and personal potential.
- Self-improvement – Demonstrates a desire to enhance excellence.
- Passion – Demonstrates a passion for work and public education.
- Dedication – Devotes time and energy to improve.

The deadline for submitting the documents is Sep. 30. Nomination forms are available on the IASB website, [www.iasb.com/jac15/pdfs/HollyJackAward2015.pdf](http://www.iasb.com/jac15/pdfs/HollyJackAward2015.pdf) or contact Anna Lovern, Director, Policy Services, 217-528-9688, ext 1125, email address [alovern@iasb.com](mailto:alovern@iasb.com).

**20 TO WATCH** *from page 8*

nized for their ability to inspire colleagues to explore and embrace innovative technology solutions that contribute to high-quality instruction and support more personalized learning experiences for students.

“This year’s ‘20 to Watch’ honorees highlight the kind of exciting innovations that exist throughout America’s public schools. These teachers and administrators, with support from their school boards, share a vision for learning that will prepare students for future success,” said Thomas J. Gentzel, NSBA’s executive director. “These inspirational pioneers are having a positive impact on the districts they serve.”

This year’s “20” were honored March 16 at the yearly conference of the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) Conference, which was held in Atlanta, and they were also recognized at NSBA’s 2015 annual conference in Nashville in late March.

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**April 15 – BoardBook Webinar**, online  
**April 28 – Wabash Valley Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting**, Casey

**April 30 – Illini Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting**, Urbana

**May 5 – Abe Lincoln Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting**, Springfield

**May 5 – Blackhawk Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting**, Geneseo

**May 5 – Egyptian Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting**, Mt. Vernon

**May 6 – Central IL Valley Division Summer Governing Meeting**, Peoria

**May 7 – Corn Belt Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting**, Fairbury

**May 7 – Shawnee Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting**, Marion

**May 7 – Kaskaskia Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting**

**May 8-9 – New Board Member Workshop**, Mt. Vernon

**May 8-9 – New Board Member Workshop**, Glenview

**May 8-9 – New Board Member Workshop**, Macomb

**May 12 – Boardbook Webinar**, online

**May 13 – Western Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting**, Macomb

**May 15-16 – New Board Member Workshop**, East Peoria

**May 15-16 – New Board Member Workshop**, Oak Lawn

**May 27 – Southwestern Division Summer Governing Committee Meeting**, Belleville

**May 29-30 – New Board Member Workshop**, Normal

**May 29-30 – New Board Member Workshop**, Collinsville

**May 29-30 – New Board Member Workshop**, Freeport

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