

Illinois SCHOOL BOARD Newsbulletin

May 2006 / Issue No. 651

Foundation payments up in new budget But no funds available for school construction

A glance at the new state budget adopted on May 4 indicates spending on elementary and secondary education will climb nearly \$416 million in Fiscal Year 2007, or about 5 percent over FY 2006. The state budget will raise the “foundation” level by \$170 per pupil, to a total of \$5,334 (more than \$238 million was added to the state aid formula to reach this level).

Despite this significant increase, the approved level of education support still falls short of what the foundation level should be, at \$6,405 per pupil, according to an expert state panel known as the Education Funding Advisory Board (EFAB).

The education budget also includes \$45 million for Gov. Rod Blagojevich’s “Preschool for All” program, and \$10 million for a pilot program to reduce class sizes.

Despite various lobbying efforts,

See **BUDGET** on page 5



Hearts for Hurricane Relief: From left, Michael Johnson, IASB executive director; Michael W. Waldrop, MSBA executive director; C.H. “Sonny” Savoie; Sandra Sims-deGraffenried, AASB executive director; and W.F. “Freddie” Whitford, LSBA executive director, attended a Gulf region hurricane relief fundraiser in Chicago, sponsored by IASB. See story on page 8.

Critics, state boards argue over NCLB reporting requirements

An investigative reporting project by the Associated Press published on April 17 claims that states are exploiting a loophole in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) to avoid the federal law’s stiff penalties for schools.

The project found most schools were not required to report subgroup scores for many students who took

standardized tests under the federal NCLB Act in 2003-2004, including 81,863 children in Illinois, and nearly 2 million nationwide. Most of those students whose scores were not reported under NCLB are minority students.

Among the 81,863 Illinois students excluded from separate reporting based

See **NCLB** on page 4

On the inside

- More qualify for financial recognitionPage 2
- Illinois hosts NSBA conferencePages 8, 9
- Legal advice on student “blogging”Page 11

Administrators honor their colleagues

Page 5

ISBE funding for arts education, foreign languages

A new grant program has been announced to aid school districts in providing arts and foreign language programming. The funding, appropriated in the FY06 budget, will assist districts with planning to develop new or strengthened arts education and foreign language curricula. The funds will be for planning purposes only, and annual grants will range from \$20,000 to \$40,000, although districts can ask for less. Awards will depend on district size, program scope, and the required level of planning.

ISBE has been exploring how to ensure that all students receive a well-rounded education.

For more information on the Arts or Foreign Language Assistance grant program, call ISBE's Lou Berkman at 312/814-3853 or Joyce Krumtinger at 217/577-7323.

ISBE targets at-risk student achievement via training

ISBE recently launched a training and technical assistance project, Illinois ASPIRE, designed to create a coordinated, regionalized system of personnel development to help school systems provide early intervention services for at-risk students and students with disabilities.

The project will be carried out through four regional centers—one in Chicago and one each in the northern, central, and southern parts of the state. Federal grants for this effort were awarded in February.

For more information on the project, the regional centers, and applying to serve as a demonstration/data collection site, visit the ISBE Web site at <http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/illinois-aspire.htm> or contact Kathryn Cox at 217-782-5589 or kcox@isbe.net.

More districts qualifying for Financial Recognition status

As mentioned in the April *Newsbulletin*, more than half of all Illinois school districts (55.3 percent) achieved the highest financial ranking, Financial Recognition status, in Fiscal Year 2005. That is up from nearly 49 percent the previous year, according to the state's new financial profile, which was released by ISBE on March 16.



Jesse Ruiz

State Board of Education Chairman Jesse Ruiz said "...local districts [and state leaders] are working hard to manage resources carefully. And when you have that combination, the result is good for schools, good for communities and great for students."

The number of districts facing severe financial difficulty fell for the second straight year in the 2004-2005 school year. While nearly 80 percent of all districts were in severe difficulty two years ago, slightly more than 40 percent were so designated in the latest state listing.

ISBE annually provides financial profile scores for all Illinois school districts. The scores are divided into four categories: Financial Recognition, Financial Review, Financial Early Warning, and Financial Watch. Districts that fall under the last two categories are deemed in trouble and may require ISBE intervention for money management. A district's financial profile is based on five key indicators:

- Financial balance to revenue ratio
- Expenditure to revenue ratio
- Number of days' cash on hand
- Percent of short-term borrowing
- Percent of long-term debt margin remaining

But some critics say the criteria

used to determine scores may not always accurately reflect the financial health of a district.

Take Lincoln-Way CHSD 210, for example. The state has moved the district to Financial Early Warning status from Financial Review status, but the New Lenox-headquartered district notes that its finances were sound even before voters approved a bond referendum in March.

Lincoln-Way's score was negatively impacted by the recent purchase of land for a third high school. And the fact that the district's cash-on-hand figure is low also hurts the score, an official said.

"[Lincoln-Way] believes taxpayer money belongs in taxpayer pockets," Assistant Superintendent Harold Huang said.


Ironically, the New Lenox district could improve its score simply by issuing working cash bonds, yet that would not only increase district debt but would end up costing taxpayers. "This points out the weakness of the system," Huang said.

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, *Director of Publications*
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


**ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

Officials reflect on improved referenda results

As mentioned in the April *News-bulletin*, voters approved 17 of 32 school tax increase referendums (53 percent), in the March 21 consolidated primary election. Those cold, hard numbers don't tell the story about how badly those referendums were needed.

Voter approval of both a tax increase and bond proposition came as particularly good news, for example, in **Millstadt** District 160, because it is currently listed on the state's "financial watch list," comprising the most financially troubled districts. Millstadt school leaders said that their overcrowded district in downstate St. Clair County will build and operate a pre-kindergarten through second-grade school that will accommodate more than 400 students.

More than 66 percent of voters approved the \$6.4 million bond issue to build the school. Almost 60 percent gave their approval for a 15-cent tax increase to staff and supply the new school.

"I am absolutely delighted and thankful for the community support," said Superintendent Al Scharf. "We educated the voters to the need, and they responded in the appropriate fashion."

Six of the 17 districts that passed school tax increases in March have appeared on the financial watch list within the past three years. The other five, in addition to Millstadt, are: CUSD 300, **Carpentersville**; **Pecaton-**

ica CUSD 321; Troy District 30-C, **Plainfield**; **Skokie** District 69; and **Yorkville** District 115.

Five districts that won at the polls in March recently appeared on the state's "early warning" list, which signals the approach of major financial trouble. Those districts are: CUSD 300, **Carpentersville**; **Elmhurst** CUSD 205; **Skokie** District 69; **Worth** District 127; and **Yorkville** District 115. So school and community leaders in all those districts have much to celebrate.

The 53 percent mark was also well above the 35 percent success rate posted in all elections in recent years (November 1989 through April 2005). It was also the highest success rate for tax referendums from any March election since 2000, when the success rate reached 67 percent.

The passage rate would have been even higher had several close elections resulted in victories. Among those were Troy CCSD 30-C, whose 45-cent increase in the education fund tax rate lost by one vote after provisional, grace period and absentee ballots were counted, and erased a two-vote victory margin.

The referendum committee Classrooms for Kids was expected to file for a discovery recount in several contested precincts.

At least four other districts lost referenda by less than 60-vote margins.

But success was more the order of the day. Millstadt was not the only district to pass both a tax and bond issue, as six other districts matched that

feat. Specifically, **Byron** CUSD 226; CUSD 300, **Carpentersville**; **Elmhurst** CUSD 205; **Manteno** District 5; **Waterloo** CUSD 5; and **Yorkville** District 115, all passed both a tax and bond issue.

The 74 percent success rate for bond issues in March was far above the average success rate for such questions in recent years, 59 percent. Seventy-four percent is the highest success rate for bond issues in any March election in recent memory.

Among the bond issue winners, the lone life safety proposal on the ballot won voter approval, as did the lone working cash proposal. Those two referendum winners were **Laraway** District 70C, with a \$400,000 life safety proposition; and **Fox Lake** District 114, with a \$3.75 million working cash bond proposition. The other 30 bond issues approved this time around were all for building bonds, which ranged in amount from a \$252 million proposal in **Plainfield** District 202, to a \$1.8 million proposal in Giant City CCSD 130, **Carbondale**.

In other action at the March election, two of three school district consolidation propositions were adopted. Proposals approved will unite **Prairieview** CCSD 192 and **Ogden** CCSD 212, both in Champaign County; and **Carthage** CUSD 338 with **Dallas City** District 336 and **LaHarpe** CUSD 335.

'High School Challenge' conference is June 19-20

The State Board of Education is asking high school educational leaders to make plans now to attend High School Challenge: Rigor and Relevance Meet Reality, June 19 and 20 at the Doubletree Hotel in Bloomington. This conference, which is endorsed by IASB, is designed 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 workshop fee is \$165, which includes two continental breakfasts, two buffet lunches, a sponsored social hour, and all materials. Overnight accommodations at a special conference room rate are available from the Doubletree Hotel at **1-309/664-6446**.

Conference collaborators, besides IASB, include: the Illinois State Board of Education, ACT, Illinois ASCD, Illinois Association of School Adminis-

trators, Illinois Business Roundtable, Illinois Education Association, Illinois Federation of Teachers, Illinois North Central Association, Illinois Principals Association, Large Unit District Association (LUDA) and the Regional System of Support Providers.

The conference registration form is available at: http://www.ilprincipals.org/PDF/High_School_Challenge_for_web.pdf. The registration deadline is June 12.

on the 2003-04 numbers, which is the last year for which reliable numbers are available, 24,465 were Hispanic, 22,868 were black, 17,809 were Asian, 14,800 were white and 1,921 were American Indians.

Although they properly followed NCLB guidelines, in fact, 62 percent of Illinois schools were not required to report separate scores for any black, Hispanic, Asian and Amer-



Reg Weaver

ican Indian students – who are among the primary subgroups the law was designed to help. Schools did include the students' scores within their school-wide totals, however, and no one questions the fact that schools followed the law.

But critics say federal regulations implementing NCLB are flawed because the law's intent is for schools to monitor student progress in key categories, including group progress by race, language ability, family income and disabilities. A school is designated as not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) if students in any one category – such as disabled students – fall short.

The subgroup scores required by NCLB cover the following categories:

- racial/ethnic, including whites, blacks, Hispanics, native Americans, Asian/Pacific islanders, and multi-ethnic
- economically disadvantaged
- students with disabilities and with Individualized Education Plans and 504 Plans
- limited English proficient students

The federal government allows states to exempt groups of students for reporting purposes where school enrollments fall below a certain level, an exemption intended as a statistical safeguard so that a group with relatively few students cannot inordinately deflate the subgroup's scores. The exemption is also said to protect individual students' privacy rights with regard to test results when such sub-

groups' scores are made public.

In Illinois there must be at least 45 children of a particular subgroup to qualify as a subgroup under the law. The number had been 40 students, but this was changed last year with federal approval. The state board of education is now seeking to increase the minimum reporting requirement to subgroups of no less than 90 children.

These reporting exemption levels vary widely from state to state. Oklahoma, for example, limits subgroups to 52 or fewer students in the testing population, one of the largest across-the-board exemptions. In contrast, Maryland has an exempt group size of just five. As a result, the U.S. Education Department is currently not counting about one in 14 students' test scores.

In addition to helping some schools escape penalties for not meeting AYP, critics say that states may be painting a misleading picture of their schools' academic progress, particularly rural and small schools.

Under the NCLB law, all public school students must be adept at reading and math by 2014, when 100 percent of children will be expected to pass the state exams.

Sanctions imposed for not meeting yearly targets can include everything from changing curriculum to extending the school year or firing teachers and administrators.

"This research shows the law has made states so afraid that their schools will fail to meet adequate yearly progress that they are seeking out loopholes. This is an unfortunate consequence of a system designed to penalize public schools and educators, rather than educate the children of this nation," according to National Education Association President Reg Weaver.

The USDE said that while it is pleased that nearly 25 million students nationwide are now being tested regularly under the law, it is concerned.

"Is it too many? You bet," said Education Secretary Margaret Spellings. "Are there things we need to do to look at that, batten down the hatches, make sure those kids are part of the system? You bet."

JCAR blocks proposed school junk food ban

A proposal by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to ban schools from selling junk food and soda has been blocked by a legislative committee on grounds that it does not provide a "total approach" to child nutrition.

The Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR), which provides a review of proposed changes in state regulations, rejected the ban on April 11 in a bipartisan, 10-1 vote. The vote means that this proposal is dead, although advocates say they will now push another new rule to ban junk food.

The complex proposal that was defeated would have prevented the sale of junk food, such as soft drinks, candy and chips, in elementary and middle schools during the school day.

JCAR prevented establishment of the rule, however, stating that it set "nutrition standards that are substantively problematic as they do not provide a total approach to child nutrition."

JCAR also said the proposal "largely excluded local school district input and expertise" in its development. The rule was opposed by the Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance, which stated that phone calls to JCAR members by school administrators, board members, and principals made it possible to stop the new mandate.

"Nobody is arguing that elementary and middle schools should be promoting "junk food," said Ben Schwarm, IASB associate executive director for governmental relations. "But the ISBE proposal would have gone much further and would have affected much of the school food service program. And it would be hard for some schools to implement because of the different restrictions for different ages."

Sen. Maggie Crotty, co-chair of the committee, said it was hard for the lawmakers to support the ban after school districts have told them they had problems with it.

'Stand up for public education' Dunn tells IASA

The federal No Child Left Behind Act weighs heavily on schools, but the pressure is also beginning to mount at the state level as well, according to State Superintendent Randy Dunn.

He was one of a number of speakers who urged superintendents to be vigilant and consistent in their message and to "stand up for public education" as the Illinois Association of School Administrators met April 26-28 in Springfield for its annual conference.

Dunn said ISBE "does not have the ability to provide the services and support you need as schools move into restructuring status."

He also cautioned that "others are out there trying to frame the debate" over the reauthorization of NCLB and changes that need to be made to the act.

"We're moving to the next generation with these issues," Dunn said, citing that the "buzz" in Washington, D.C., is turning toward an "every child



Tom Leahy, Superintendent of Quincy District 172, was named Superintendent of the Year.

a graduate" mantra and that the conversation seems to be shifting to talk about "educating for workforce skills" rather than providing a liberal education or educating for a democratic society.

"NCLB is going to continue to define

what we do in our districts for some time to come," Dunn said. "It is not going away."

In other business, IASA honored Tom Leahy, superintendent at **Quincy District 172**, as the 2006 Superintendent of the Year. Leahy, who is also IASA's president-elect for 2006-07, was superintendent in **Payson CUSD 1** and **Central CUSD 3** in Camp Point before taking over the Quincy superintendency in 2000.

David L. Fields, a member of the State Board of Education and former superintendent in **Danville CCSD 118**, was honored as the 2006 recipient of the Van Miller Distinguished Practitioner Scholar Award for leadership in school administration.

Lynn Carter, superintendent at **Virginia CUSD 64**; Brad Cox, superintendent at **Tri-Valley CUSD 3** in Downs; and Andrew Wise, a principal at **Olympia CUSD 16**; each received a James V. and Dorothy B. Moon Scholarship worth \$1,800 for continuing education.

BUDGET *from page 1*

no funding for the School Construction Grant Program was provided. A separate bill was defeated on the House floor on the final day of the legislative session that would have set aside \$500 million for school construction. A similar bill failed earlier in the spring in the Senate.

The following are some other highlights of the new education budget:

- Mandated categorical grants are prorated at the same level as FY '06 (more than \$56 million must be put into these grants to reach this level);
- The School Safety and Educational Improvement Block Grant (ADA Block Grant) would see a \$10 million increase over FY '06;
- The "poverty grant" would be funded at 100 percent;
- Transition Assistance is funded at \$11.8 million. This is to guarantee that no school district can receive less state funding in FY '07 than it did in FY '06;

- The Teacher Education/National Board Certification line item would see a nearly \$5 million increase over FY '06;
- The bilingual education line item would see a \$4.5 million increase over FY '06;
- The After School and Student Support Programs/Mentoring program would see a nearly \$12 million increase over FY '06;
- The Arts and Foreign Language line item would see a \$2 million increase over FY '06.

Several new line items are established in the budget bill, including:

- \$10 million for a new class size reduction grant necessary to fund the governor's pilot program for class size reduction (contained in SB 2882);
- \$5 million for grants to law enforcement agencies for school security;
- \$5 million for the School Technology Revolving Loan Fund that was "zeroed out" last year and not fund-

ed. There is speculation that this could be used for the lieutenant governor's laptop computer proposal.

Total state spending would grow by about \$1.4 billion under the new budget. Much of this new funding would come from growth in income and sales tax revenue, now climbing after several years of stagnation. The legislature also closed some business tax "loopholes," took nearly \$160 million out of special-purpose funds and sold part of the state's student loan portfolio.

The budget slashes the amount of money the state pays into government pension funds, including the state's teacher pension funds.

Ralph Martire of the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability had harsh words for the budget in this regard. He said it contributes to "a huge liability for future generations."

The final FY 2007 ISBE budget is posted online at: http://www.isbe.net/budget/FY07/FY07_final_budget.pdf.

School Type	Total # of Core Academic Classes	# of Core Academic Classes Taught by HQT	Percent of Core Academic Classes Taught by HQT
All Schools	146,280	143,619	98.2%
All Elementary Schools	108,245	106,468	98.4%
All Secondary Schools	38,035	37,151	97.7%

School Year	Percentage of Qualified Title I Paraprofessionals
2004-2005	83%

Academy readies for LeaderShop Symposium

IASB will offer a day-long learning opportunity for current School Board LeaderShop Academy members and their superintendents on Saturday, June 10, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Springfield.

The event will be led and facilitated by Phillip Boyle, a proponent of applying democratic theory in school governance and an expert in public leadership techniques. Founder of the consulting firm Leading & Governing, and a former associate professor of Public Management and Government at the University of North Carolina, he now serves as an adjunct professor in the University's programs for elected officials.

Boyle will lead interactive workshops on public values and choices, as well as problem solving, and will offer support for participants' reflection, feedback, and leadership lessons. He will also detail a strategy to help boards use public values to frame public problems, choices, and decisions.

Tuition is \$175 per person, and meals and materials will be provided, as well as time to network and share ideas with other Academy members. The LeaderShop Academy is designed to promote and recognize board members' efforts toward continuous learning and professional development. Admission to membership requires completion of three School Board LeaderShop programs. At least two of these programs must be from a core curriculum and one of those must be a school district governance overview. The third may be either a core or an elective offering.

Academy membership is maintained by completing at least one additional program (either core or elective) over a two-year period. Currently there are 386 members of the Academy.

For more information contact IASB's Judy Williams at ext. 1103 or visit the IASB Web site to register for the event: <https://www.iasb.com/>.

Flexibility sought for requirements in NCLB's 'Highly Qualified Teacher'

Illinois is seeking to take advantage of regulatory flexibility extended from the U.S. Education Department last year that would postpone by one year the deadline for meeting NCLB's highly qualified teacher requirements.

One of the requirements for obtaining this added flexibility is demonstrating the good faith efforts Illinois schools have already made in response to relevant NCLB requirements. Some of those efforts are described below and include what the Illinois State Board of Education has reported to the federal education agency:

- Rules adopted. State rules defining highly qualified teachers were adopted and effective Feb. 21, 2006.
- Reporting information provided. School, district and state report cards contain the required information. District administrators know they must inform parents of the various Parents Right-to-Know materials. Sample letters are posted on the agency's web site.
- Significant progress made. Illinois' Consolidated State Performance Report was submitted and it shows the significant progress toward completion.

All states were to have met all "highly qualified" requirements by the conclusion of the 2005-06 school year. But the states were advised this past October by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings that there could be an oppor-

tunity to extend the time for completing the work of meeting the highly qualified teacher requirements.

Spellings noted in a letter to the states that "...despite the progress we are making, there is still a lot of work to do to ensure that each state can meet the goal that every child is taught by a highly qualified teacher by the end of the 2005-06 school year." She explained that information from individual states would be reviewed to ascertain whether or not "good faith efforts" had been made to fulfill these NCLB requirements.

"This entire process has been a challenge," said Randy Dunn, Illinois State Superintendent of Education. "And the reality is that while progress has absolutely been made statewide, there are still locations where there are not highly qualified teachers in place for all core subject area assignments."

For the fourth straight year, special education, Spanish, and mathematics are at the top of the teacher shortage list in Illinois, both in terms of the number of districts affected and the severity of the shortage. Through 2009, it is estimated that Illinois will need over 36,000 general education and 8,000 special education teachers. *The Educator Supply and Demand Study: 2005 Annual Report* is particularly interesting in this regard. You can read it at: http://www.isbe.net/research/pdfs/supply_demand_05.pdf.

Board hears plans for expanding staff and building

The IASB Board of Directors met March 11 in Chicago and reviewed plans for adding two staff members in the training area. The board also learned that 2006 IASB membership includes 97.4 percent of all Illinois school districts, up from 96.8 percent in 2005.

The board also heard a proposal for expansion of the Springfield office on current Association-owned property at a cost not to exceed \$350,000. The board was informed that all office space is filled to capacity, leaving no space to accommodate the immediate and future staffing needs anticipated to provide member-requested services. Consensus was reached that more definitive plans and costs for the proposed Springfield office expansion should be developed for possible consideration by the board at its next meeting.

The board made no changes in IASB's 20-year-old membership dues formula, and no changes to the Joint Annual Conference registration fee formula, which already includes an annual 4 percent increase to cover growing production costs. The board did, however, learn that 2007 budget assumptions call for new pooling programs and sponsored programs.

The Board's next meeting is set for May 19 and 20 in Springfield. The major focus will be on adopting budget assumptions for fiscal year 2006-2007.



NEWS HEADLINES

Carpentersville (April 21, *The Courier News*, Elgin) The village board recently denied a request from CUSD 300 to waive village-required engineering fees associated with an upcoming school construction project. Village trustees who made the decision said the municipality simply could not afford to pick up the nearly \$9,000 tab.

Chicago (April 19, *Chicago Tribune*) The windy city's Local School Councils are still having a significant impact after 18 years in existence, experts say. Voters again chose local citizens to serve on the 11-member councils at special elections held on April 19, as nearly 7,140 candidates were running for more than 6,300 seats to represent about 580 public schools. Each lay council has the power to hire a school principal and to help set spending priorities at the building level.

DeKalb (April 26, *Daily Chronicle*, DeKalb) Municipal officials recently revised a tax abatement proposal to allow the DeKalb school district to withdraw from business subsidy agreements with just a month's notice. The board had asked for the exit clause. The new proposal also includes "clawbacks," measures that would allow for collecting tax dollars the district had initially abated should a subsidized company fail.

Dimmick (April 19, *NewsTribune*, La Salle) The Dimmick board passed a resolution on April 18 against a proposal for high-voltage power lines to be built on the highway in front of a school in the district.

Freeport (April 21, *The Journal-Standard*, Freeport) School board members did not reach agreement on a new dress code discussed at the school board meeting on April 19. Although the proposed new rules would be stricter than the existing code, the measure is far looser than a plan instituting a school uniform, which the

board had previously considered.

Granville (April 21, *The Journal Star*, Peoria) The Putnam County school board agreed on April 19 to narrow rebuilding options in response to the tornado damage that closed a Granville grade school two years ago. The board decided to focus on two basic alternatives: either repair or replace Hopkins Elementary in Granville, or eliminate that facility and build a new elementary or middle school in Hennepin.

La Salle (April 20, *NewsTribune*, La Salle) The La Salle-Peru THSD 120 Board of Education is concerned about a current school district rule that exempts students from final exams if they have good attendance and passing grades. Students who have no more than two absences a year and a 70 percent average in their class are exempt from final exams. Board members agreed to bring their concerns to the Internal Review Team that developed the exemption rule.

Lake Zurich (April 28, *The Daily Herald*, Arlington Heights) The Lake Zurich CUSD 95 school board recently agreed to let Lake Zurich use a new artificial turf field at its high school for police officer training exercises and for village park programs.

Springfield (May 2, *State Journal-Register*, Springfield) The District 186 school board approved a policy on May 1 authorizing periodic weapon searches, as needed, of secondary school students. Two gun-related incidents in the neighborhood of two city high schools led to lockdowns at those schools in January. Springfield's police department had previously sought, and has since obtained, a federal grant to pay for school weapon searches. The police will use the grant money to defray the cost of metal-detector wands and police overtime salaries, and they have agreed to make the searches available to all Springfield public and private schools.

Illinois hosts 66th annual NSBA conference

Guests are enthusiastic about Chicago location

For the first time since 1960, the annual conference of the National School Boards Association was held in Chicago. And by all accounts, especially among first-time visitors, the event was a major success.

The 66th annual event was held April 7-11 at the McCormick Place Lakeside Center in Chicago. The four-day event drew about 14,000 board members, superintendents, exhibitors and guests, including more than 7,700 paid registrants.

The 2006 conference had been scheduled for New Orleans, one of four cities that NSBA rotates the conference among every four years. However, devastation to the Gulf Coast last fall from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita forced the move to a new city.

"I enjoyed the conference," said David Daigle, school board member from Iberville Parish, La. "Chicago is a great city; very clean, easily accessible, kind and helpful people, not to mention a magnificent conference center. Thanks for such an enjoyable conference. Hopefully we will have the opportunity in the future to go again."

A board member from New York even suggested that Chicago be included as part of the regular rotation for NSBA conference.

Mayor Richard M. Daley was on hand to welcome the crowd at the First General Session on Friday.

Illinois representation was substantially higher than last year's attendance of 427 individuals, representing 118 Illinois districts. Proximity to Chicago and a special one day-only registration fee helped to boost in-state attendance, said NSBA officials, who were still sorting out on-site registrations and cancellations to determine final figures.

Guests, exhibitors and presenters were housed in 45 hotels scattered throughout downtown Chicago and bused to the lakefront convention center. A portion of the hotel registration



The throng of about 14,000 attending NSBA's convention included 7,700 paid registrants, with hundreds representing Illinois school districts.



IASB Past President Christy Coleman of the Geneseo CUSD 228 Board of Education receives a Magna Award on the district's behalf from Joseph S. Villani, NSBA's Deputy Executive Director.

fees was donated to a Hurricane Katrina relief fund to aid the New Orleans hospitality community.

Another fund-raiser for Gulf Coast school districts impacted by last fall's disaster was held April 10 at Morton's, The Steakhouse. IASB executives, officers and other board members hosted several hundred guests at the "Hearts for Hurricane Relief" benefit dinner.

Like most years, the 2006 conference included workshops, panels, exhibits, delegate assembly, regional caucuses, education fair, roundtables, boot camps and various social events to keep everyone busy.

Pre-conference workshops

In one of the Meet the Experts panels, Barbara Toney, consultant to IASB's Targeting Achievement Through Governance program and Mark C. Metzger, board member, **Indian Prairie CUSD 204**, Naperville, shared their thoughts

on "Top Ten Questions Board Members Ask," regarding board member roles, responsibilities, relationships, and effectiveness.

Executive Job Fair

Representatives from Illinois and 17 other state associations participated in a job fair for prospective superintendent candidates.

Donna Johnson, Dawn Miller, Dave Love, and Larry Dirks, IASB directors of field services, met with candidates to discuss certification requirements, the application process and strategies for job placement. Association representatives also attended the annual meeting of the National Association of Superintendent Searchers.

Share the Success

Panels to showcase local districts and their successful strategies included five Illinois districts.

Illinois districts, and presenters included:

- **District 45 DuPage County**, Villa Park, William Schewe, superintendent; Susan Schwicardi, assistant superintendent; and board members Matt Kerr and Linda Nystrom
- **Orland SD 135**, Orland Park, Linda Anast-May, superintendent; John Paul, board president; and Barb Rains, director of community relations
- **Elementary SD 159**, Matteson, Tobin Mitchell, director of IT; and Robert Klemp Jr., technology coordinator
- **Marion CUSD 2**, A. Sue Easton, school improvement facilitator; Carroll Phelps, consultant
- **Wheaton Warrenville CUSD 200**,

Lori Belha, assistant superintendent; Kevin Kane, retired principal; Marie Slater, board member; Andrew Johnson, board president; Mary Lou Sender, administrative assistant to the superintendent; and Deputy Chief Joe Grimaldi, Winfield Police Department.

National Affiliate Roundtable

Illinois districts also participated in roundtable events held at the National Affiliate Center. Illinois districts, roundtable topics and presenters included:

- **Danville SD 118**, Nanette Mellen, superintendent; Mark Denman, associate superintendent; David Groves, board president
- **Joliet SD 86**, Troy Whalen, assistant superintendent; Nannette Ochs, principal; Deborah Ziech, board member

School Architecture Exhibition

Thirteen Illinois school projects were among the 119 showcased in the annual Exhibition of School Architecture.

And the Grand Prize winner in 2006 featured an IASB member district — **Aurora West CUSD 129** — for construction of Greenman Elementary School.

Cordogan Clark & Associates Inc. and Architecture for Education Inc., Aurora, were the designers.

Other IASB member districts represented and their architects were:

- Hope Academy, **Decatur SD 61**; BLDD Architects Inc., Decatur
- Fisher Grade School, **Fisher CUSD 1**; Farnsworth Group Inc., Bloomington
- Aspen Elementary School, **Hawthorn SD 73**; Legat Architects Inc, Waukegan
- Robert L. Hergett Middle School, **Aurora West USD 129**; Cordogan Clark & Associates Inc., Aurora
- Mannheim Middle School classroom addition, **Mannheim SD 83**; SPM Architects Inc., Palos Heights

Walk of Excellence

Formerly known as the Education Excellence Fair, the event featured 10 districts from around the nation that demonstrated the benefits of successful academic programs at their schools.

Flanagan Unit 4 showcased its Discover the Dynamic Drama of DVD Documentaries, a project that allows students to demonstrate their use of technology to show what they learned about Salem witch trials, Shakespeare, World War II, and other topics.

A project that joined students from Elm Place Middle School, **North Shore District 112**, Highland Park, with students from a school in Mobile, Alabama, depicted information about Hurricane Katrina.

Magna Awards

At an awards luncheon Monday, the American School Board Journal presented its 2006 Magna Awards to 21 school districts.

Among four winners in the under 5,000 enrollment category was **Geneseo CUSD 228**, which won for its “2010 Initiative.”

Among four winners in the over 20,000 enrollment category was **Chicago District 299**, for its “Power of Parents Initiative.”

Another Illinois district, **THSD 214**, Arlington Heights, earned an honorable mention for its “Newcomer Center.”

“I have been to many national school boards conventions and this was one of the best yet. I think the location, first of all, was superb. I had never been to Chicago and I found it to be a wonderful, beautiful city and I would love to return to see more of it.”

Beverly Levine,
Southern Westchester, N.Y. Board of
Cooperative Educational Services

“I enjoyed the conference. Chicago is a great city; very clean, easily accessible, kind and helpful people, not to mention a magnificent conference center. Thanks for such an enjoyable conference. Hopefully we will have the opportunity in the future to go again.”

David Daigle, board member
Iberville Parish, La.

More of this coverage from the NSBA Conference can be found at www.iasb.com



IASB President Marie Slater joins the presidents of other state associations on stage at the NSBA conference.

Districts invited to submit own resolutions to Delegate voting

June 21 is the deadline for member boards to submit Delegate Assembly resolutions. Forms are available by calling the Association at extension 1132. Proposals may be submitted for new IASB resolutions, amendments to existing position statements, or reaffirmations of existing position statements.

What is the Delegate Assembly?

The annual Delegate Assembly of IASB functions as the major policy-setting mechanism of the Association. The assembly is made up of delegates chosen by member school boards to represent them (each board is entitled to send one delegate). Delegates gather at the Association's annual conference to vote on resolutions submitted by member districts to establish legislative policy for IASB for the coming year.

Resolutions received prior to the June 21 deadline will allow the staff to prepare adequate background materials for the resolution committee.

What is the resolutions process?

A resolutions committee of at least seven people is appointed from Asso-

ciation members each year by the IASB president to review proposals submitted by member districts. The committee is empowered to recommend the approval or disapproval of proposed resolutions, and to determine which resolutions are presented.

Committee decisions may be appealed by member districts in writing to the committee at least eight days before the assembly's annual meeting, which this year is scheduled for Nov.18.

IASB sent letters and forms on March 31 to all member board presidents and district superintendents asking boards to submit resolutions. For information, contact your division representative to the resolutions committee (a list of these representatives and contact information was included in the mailing) or phone IASB Governmental Relations at ext. 1132.

(Editor's note: June 9 is the planned mailing date for the 2006 Joint Annual Conference registration packet that will go to district superintendents. Questions about registration procedures for the 2006 conference should be directed to IASB Meetings Management, at ext. 1115 or 1102.)

Deadline nears for architects to enter school projects exhibits

Proud of a building project in your district? If so, don't keep it to yourself. Help your architect or other design professional earn recognition and awards in the 2006 Exhibition of Educational Environments, sponsored by IASB Service Associates.

The competition is being publicized via a special mailing this month that seeks entries 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, 2006.

Entry deadline is July 14, and entries 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 \$200 fee for each entry.

Chosen entries will be displayed in the exhibit hall at the Joint Annual Conference in November.

For information or entry forms contact Dana Heckrodt, ext. 1131.

School Code, Law Survey are targeted to ship by June 1

Two updated standard legal reference books should be shipped on June 1, namely the *Illinois School Law Survey*, by Brian Braun, and the *Illinois School Code*, compiled by Lexis Publishing Company for IASB.

The complete new Ninth Edition of the *Illinois School Law Survey* (\$30 regular price, or \$25 for IASB members) is being prepared for release, and the 2006 *Illinois School Code* (\$35, or \$30 for IASB members) also is being released.

The complete new editions of these works may be ordered from IASB Publications now at ext. 1108.

Recent IASB Mailings

IASB regularly sends informational materials to all member districts. Here is a list of such items recently mailed to representatives of your district. For more information about any item, contact your board president or district superintendent or get in touch with IASB.

Illinois Council of School Attorneys' membership directory, 4/28/06 sent to district superintendents.

Delegate Assembly resolution submission form and cover letter, 3/31/06 to board presidents and district superintendents.

What can boards expect in superintendent hiring?

The May issue of *The Illinois School Board Journal* looks at the superintendent hiring process from the availability of candidates to



closing the deal with the best contract. A special four-page center section features the Hearts for Hurricane Relief fund-raiser held with NSBA's April conference in Chicago.

Disciplining students for disruptive 'blog' postings



by Melinda Selbee, IASB's general counsel

Have you logged onto MySpace.com? MySpace hosts Web space used by many young people to publish their own "blogs" (short for Web logs). While blogs often focus on a particular subject, such as, music, politics, or humor, many function as online journals. These blogs are similar to diaries except that the author's personal thoughts and experiences are shared with thousands of people around the world.

When the school community in Hermitage School District logged on to MySpace in December 2005, they found a parody of the school principal. The parody contained crude comments with sexual overtones. Justin, a high school senior, used his grandmother's computer during non-school hours to create the parody. School officials gave him a ten-day out-of-school suspension, placed him in the alternative curriculum program, and prohibited him from participating in the high school graduation.

Justin sought to enjoin the school's action, charging, among other things, a violation of his First Amendment rights. The Court found for the district. While this decision has no precedent-setting value for Illinois schools, it provides a reasonable forecast of how such a case would be analyzed in Illinois.

In order to determine whether to grant a temporary restraining order, the Court analyzed Justin's likelihood of success on the merits – an "essential element" in determining whether to issue a temporary restraining order. The Court reviewed U.S. Supreme Court decisions involving free speech rights of students in the school setting and summarized the law with a particularly succinct quote from another opin-

ion:

These decisions reveal that, under [*Bethel School District No. 403 v. Fraser*], a school may categorically prohibit lewd, vulgar or profane language on school property. Under *Hazelwood [School District v. Kuhlmeier]*, a school may regulate schools-sponsored speech (that is, speech that a reasonable observer would view as the school's own speech) on the basis of any legitimate pedagogical concern. "Speech falling outside of these categories is subject to *Tinker's* general rule: it may be regulated only if it would substantially disrupt school operations or interfere with the right of others." [*Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist.*]

As the facts in this case did not fall within the first two categories, the Court applied the *Tinker* rule and analyzed whether Justin's parody substantially disrupted school operations or interfered with the rights of others.

The facts in this case began with a student's purely out-of-school conduct that migrated to the school setting. The Court observed that a school's authority over off-campus expression is much more limited than expression on school grounds; however, it declined to apply a heightened standard of review. Instead, it was satisfied that *Tinker's* general rule should be applied to student speech no matter where it occurred.

The Court reviewed the events following Justin's web-publication of the parody to determine if the parody disrupted school operations or interfered with the rights of others. The Court found plenty of disruption. For example, other students incessantly accessed Justin's parody, causing the school to shut down its computer system for six days. This action had a snowball effect – classes were cancelled and students were unable to use the computer system for class work.

Under these circumstances, the Court found that Justin's actions substantially disrupted school operations

and interfered with the rights of others, which, along with his apparent violations of school rules, would provide a sufficient legal basis for the school's actions. *Layshock v. Hermitage School Dist.*, 412 F.Supp.2d 502 (W.D.Pa., 2006).

How this applies to you

This decision presents many issues for school officials to consider.

Most, if not all, school boards have a policy on Internet safety and acceptable Internet use. This decision is a reminder to monitor these policies and their implementing administrative procedures. School officials may want to inform parents about the popularity of child-posted blogs. Parents are likely partners in the campaign to warn students about the inherent dangers that unfettered postings to these sites pose.

This decision also is a reminder to school officials to review their student discipline policy. Will it allow the district to discipline a student for misconduct that occurs off school premises that disrupts the school? Several decisions in this circuit have already upheld the authority of school officials to discipline students for off-campus misconduct. See: *Boucher v. School District of Greenfield*, 134 F.3d 821 (7th Cir., 1998) (upheld expulsion for off-campus speech – an article explaining how to hack into the school's computers); *Gendelman v. Glenbrook North High School*, N.D.Ill., May 21, 2003.

Success in these cases depended on a board policy that provided a jurisdictional statement telling students the circumstances under which the district will take disciplinary action. Rules taking jurisdiction of off-campus misconduct generally survive the test of reasonableness if they are limited to situations having a direct nexus to the school. Ultimately, the decision whether to discipline a student for posting objectionable material on the Internet can be made only after a comprehensive investigation and an inquiry into the degree of nexus to and impact on the school.

School board reporters, editors preparing to enter state contest

Every year at this time, the Illinois Press Association solicits entries from local newspapers to participate in Illinois' only statewide journalism competition. The contest – which is open to newspapers of all sizes and circulation frequencies – is a huge event. Last year's contest drew 4,000 entries from 143 newspapers in 32 different subject categories.

As you may know, one of the categories, "Best School Board Coverage," is sponsored and presented by the Illinois Association of School Boards.

The Robert M. Cole Award, named for the first full-time Executive Director of IASB, recognizes "outstanding coverage of education issues that emphasize the community's connection with its local public school district." Entries are judged on:

- their contribution to public understanding of local school governance
- their support for effective dialogue that helps the community and school board define major public policy issues

Judges also consider enterprise, depth of reporting and clarity of writing. Up to four issues or articles can be submitted.

This contest is not directed at public relations campaigns or school dis-

trict newsletters. Rather, it is intended for general circulation newspapers that cover local districts or schools. Competition for the Cole Award is divided among four separate circulation categories, in order that newspapers of varying sizes can compete fairly.

A school district may have one or more outstanding reporters or newspapers that cover school news, events and issues. If those efforts warrant consideration for this competition, IASB is asking school leaders to encourage them to enter the Illinois Press Association contest. *This does not involve or require a nomination*; however, such a recommendation may influence their decision to enter the contest.

Members of the Michigan Press Association will judge this year's contest on July 20. Deadline for Illinois newspapers to enter the contest is Friday, June 2. Winners will be announced at IPA's annual convention in September.

So contact your local reporter or editor soon if you would like to see them compete for the Robert M. Cole Award in the Best School Board Coverage category.

Questions and details about how to enter the "2006 Better Newspaper Contest" should be directed to the Illinois Press Association, Shari Mulvany at 217/241-1300.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 19-20 – IASB Board of Directors' Meeting,
Crowne Plaza, Springfield

May 25 – Southwestern Division Summer Governing Meeting,
6 p.m., Ramada Inn,
Fairview Heights

June 1 – Illini Division Summer Governing Meeting, 6:30 p.m. –
Dinner, The Historic Lincoln Hotel,
Urbana

June 6 – Two Rivers Division Summer Governing Meeting,
6 p.m., Red Dome Inn, Pittsfield

June 10 – LeaderShop Symposium LeaderShop Academy members only, 8 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.,
Crowne Plaza, Springfield

June 16 – IASB offices closed, all-staff meeting, 8 a.m., Utica

June 18 – Father's Day

June 19-20 – The High School Challenge: Rigor and Relevance Meet Reality, Double Tree Hotel,
Bloomington

July 4 – Independence Day

July 9-12 – National School Public Relations Association Annual Seminar, Chicago

For more information about coming events, see the IASB Web site at www.iasb.com/calendar/



*Lighting The Way To Excellence
In School Governance*

2921 Baker Drive
Springfield, Illinois 62703-5929

Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS