

# Illinois SCHOOL BOARD Newsbulletin

July 2009 / Issue No. 687

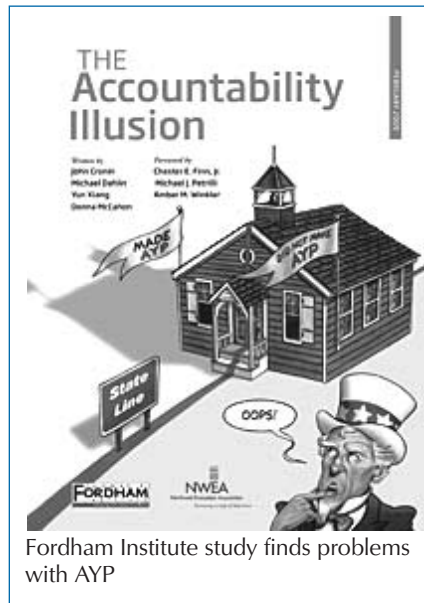
## AYP no sure sign of school effectiveness, report claims

### Districts must decide if student needs are met

Schools nationwide are under the gun to “make adequate yearly progress” (AYP) under the federal No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) and avoid intrusive and embarrassing sanctions. Last year’s round of NCLB testing found that the rising bar of AYP requirements was tripping up an increasing number of Illinois schools.

The list of schools that did not make AYP and were labeled “improvement status” schools under NCLB rose from a total of 511 in 2007 to 558 in 2008, reversing a three-year trend. In percentage terms, 511 of 3,888 Illinois schools (13 percent) were in improvement status in 2007, and this rose to 558 of 3,894 Illinois schools (14 percent) in 2008. Despite the bad news, the 2008 count of such schools remains well below the count of 665 schools that were listed as improvement status schools in 2004.

The bar that schools must clear to make AYP under NCLB varies dramatically by state, according to a recently released Fordham Institute/Northwest Evaluation Associa-



tion report. The report, called “The Accountability Illusion,” shows that a school may make AYP in one state that would not make AYP if it were located in another state.

What is more, whether schools make AYP is as much a product of inconsistent rules set by state education officials as of actual student achievement, the study finds.

See “Ratio of students making

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## Illinois joins push to hammer out common learning standards

Illinois is joining 45 other states to develop common learning standards in English and math for elementary and secondary students, according to ISBE. Called the “Common Core State Standards Initiative,” this multi-state project will be jointly led by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to create a common core of learning standards based on the best evidence, research and academic performance of countries around the world.

“We are excited to use national as well as international benchmarks as we develop better learning standards for students across the country,” said Christopher A. Koch, State Superintendent of Education. “This historic development will provide the foundation for dramatically improving teaching and learning. We’ll be better positioned to prepare our students for the rigor and challenges of college and careers and to bring consistency to standards, curriculum, assessments and college entry requirements.”

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New tools aid in orienting new board members

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## Schools receive \$2.2 million to promote healthy eating

The ISBE announced that 141 schools will participate in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program during the 2009-10 school year.

The 141 schools participating in the federally-funded FFVP will share equally in more than \$2.2 million based on each school's student enrollment numbers. The program requires the same amount, about \$50, be allocated for each student in the participating schools. Program funding runs through June 30, 2010.

FFVP provides all students in participating schools access to a variety of free fresh fruits and vegetables throughout the school day. It allows schools to make available the additional produce anytime during the regular school day, except during breakfast and lunch when the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs are in effect.

A map of the selected participating schools is available online at [http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/pdf/ffv\\_awardees.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/pdf/ffv_awardees.pdf).

## Illinois joins 12 states to develop career-ready courses

Illinois is joining 12 other states to develop rigorous career-ready standards. Illinois, Louisiana and Nevada were the latest to join "The State Leadership Initiative" on June 9. In joining, Illinois committed to modifying curriculum, instruction and assessments to create rigorous and relevant courses.

"It is critical for states to connect standards to curriculum and instruction as it is through the application of knowledge and skills that learning takes place," said Christopher A. Koch, State Superintendent.

For more information about the partnership, contact [info@21stcenturyskills.org](mailto:info@21stcenturyskills.org).

# Deadline nears to seek district waivers from state mandates, rules

Applications for waivers from Illinois School Code mandates – such as modifications to the school calendar or administrative rules – to be decided this fall must be postmarked and mailed to the state by Aug. 14. Applications must be sent to the Illinois State Board of Education to be included in the Fall 2009 Waiver Report, which will be submitted to the General Assembly by Oct. 1.

A district may request a waiver or modification of the mandates of state laws or regulations when the district demonstrates it can meet the intent in a "more effective, efficient, or economical manner or when necessary to stimulate or improve student performance." If the state board fails to disapprove a request, it is deemed granted. But even requests that are turned down may be appealed to the legislature, which sometimes reverses the state's administrative ruling.

By law, waivers cannot be allowed from laws, rules, and regulations regarding special education, eligibility of voters in school elections, or teacher tenure, certification or seniority. Nor can waivers be granted pertaining to No Child Left Behind requirements.

If school leaders are applying for a modification of School Code mandates (such as legal school holidays), or a waiver or a modification of administrative rules, there is no postmark deadline. But approval must be granted before the modification can be implemented.

The process for applying for a modification of the School Code or a waiver or modification of state board rules is the same as applying for a waiver of a School Code mandate.

Applicants are encouraged to submit any petitions that address calendar issues to the State Board before the calendars affected by the requests are submitted for review. Schools need to submit an amended calendar to their Regional Office of Education and have it approved before any calendar

modification can be implemented.

A recent state law also limits term of physical education waivers. Public Act 95-223 took effect on Jan. 1, 2008. It provides that an approved physical education waiver (or modification) may remain in effect for up to two school years and may be renewed no more than two times upon application by the eligible applicant.

Before passage of this law, P.E. applications could be requested for a maximum of five years and for an unlimited amount of time. The law's intent is that an applicant will be limited to a total of six years in which to hold an approved waiver for physical education. The six-year total applies to the district and not to individual waivers; in other words, if an applicant holds more than one physical education waiver (for different grades and purposes), each application will count towards the six-year limit.

School districts and other organizations eligible to apply for waivers should assume that any applications for waivers from physical education requirements are now subject to the


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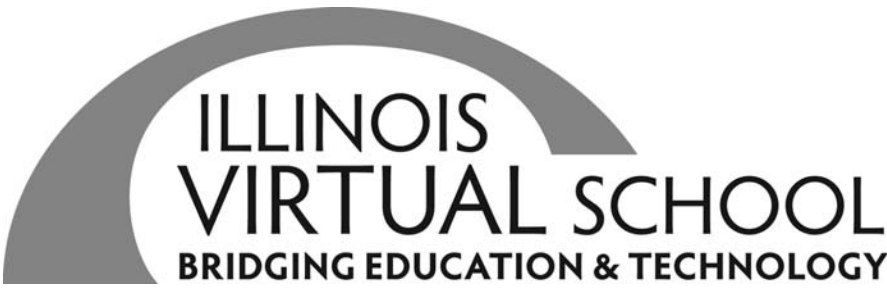
**Illinois Association  
of School Boards**

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**ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION  
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

# State's online school expanding grades, mission



Access to online classes is about to expand beyond high schools because of changes in the Illinois Virtual High School program. It will be renamed the Illinois Virtual School to reflect its new mission of serving all public, private and home-schooled students from fifth grade through high school.

The recently announced expansion is the result of an \$11.7 million state grant awarded to the Peoria County Regional Office of Education in partnership with the Area III Consortium.

The consortium includes 10 other regional offices of education in west-

central Illinois; the Area III Learning Technology Center and Two Rivers Professional Development Center, both based in Edwards; and Western Illinois University.

The virtual school will be managed by the Peoria regional office, according to Superintendent Gerald Brookhart.

"Two Rivers Professional Development Center will develop the infrastructure and management of the virtual school," Brookhart said. "It will improve learning opportunities for students and educators throughout the state."

Cindy Hamblin, director of Area III Learning Technology Center, said 50 teachers are contracted to teach the classes and additional ones will be hired.

"We will begin classes this summer," she said.

The Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA) had previously served as the management agency for the Illinois Virtual High School. But IMSA's role in delivering this service ended on June 30.

For questions about the virtual schools' management transition from IMSA to the Peoria regional office, contact Cindy Hamblin at [chamblin@lta3.k12.il.us](mailto:chamblin@lta3.k12.il.us) or phone 309/680-5800.

Fall courses will be offered through the new IVS system. For questions related to IVS fall registration or general IVS questions, email [ivs-fall@ivs.k12.il.us](mailto:ivs-fall@ivs.k12.il.us).

## WAIVERS *from page 2*

### Summary of Most-Used Waiver/Modification Requests

(March 1995 through March 2009; last revised May 20, 2009.)

Topic	Code Citation	# of Requests	Approved – ISBE	Approved – GA	Denied – ISBE	Denied – GA	Returned
Administrative Expenditure Limits	/17-1.5	273	0	207	0	29	37
Driver Education	/27-23, 24	349	39	288	0	2	20
Holidays	/24-2	3,204	3,018	6	0	2	178
Inservice Training	/18-8.05	181	20	145	0	1	15
Parent-Teacher Conferences	/18-8.05	198	20	166	0	1	11
Physical Education	/27-6	628	158	434	0	7	29
Other	–	918	202	425	2	102	187
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>5,751</b>	<b>3,457</b>	<b>1,671</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>477</b>

Source: ISBE

provisions of P.A. 95-223. A copy of P.A. 95-223 is online at: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=095-0223&GA=095>.

P.A. 95-223 did not change the public hearing requirements for P.E. waivers. Applicants must continue to hold the public hearing to consider the request on a day other than one on which a regular board meeting is held.

The Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance played a key role in pushing for passage of the 1995 state

waiver law. The waiver law requires an applicant with a governing board, such as a school district, to hold the public hearing on a day other than the day of a regular board meeting. Applicants must provide written notification about the hearing to their state legislators as well as to their affected exclusive collective bargaining agent(s) and must publish a notice in a newspaper of general circulation.

More than 5,000 waiver requests have been approved since the waiver law went into effect in March 1995,

and over 100 new waiver requests from school districts are applied for and approved each year.

ISBE suggests that each applicant carefully review requirements outlined in the "Overview for Waiver Process" currently found online at <http://www.isbe.net/isbewaivers/html/overview.htm>.

Application forms and instructions for waivers and modifications are provided by ISBE and can be downloaded at <http://www.isbe.net/isbewaivers/html/application.htm>.

**AYP** from page 1

AYP rises again,” on page one of the June Newsbulletin.

**Elementary Schools**

- Of the 18 elementary schools nationwide that were analyzed, eight would have made AYP in Illinois, but only one would have made AYP in Massachusetts. Meanwhile, 17 of the 18 elementary schools would have made AYP if they were located in Wisconsin.
- In four other states—Michigan, California, Texas, and Arizona—at least 10 of the schools would have made AYP, but in seven states only one or two of the schools would have done so.
- Nearly all the schools in the study sample that failed to make AYP in Illinois are meeting expected targets for their overall populations, but are falling short entirely because of the performance of individual subgroups.
- Only six states, however, exceed Illinois in terms of the number of elementary schools examined in the study that would make AYP in Illinois. Illinois ties with Ohio, each with eight (out of 18) elementary schools making AYP.
- Two sample schools made AYP in Illinois that failed to make AYP in most other states.
- A strong predictor of whether or not a school will make AYP under the Illinois system is whether it has enough students with disabilities (SWD) or English language learners to qualify as a separate subgroup.

**Middle Schools**

- Fewer middle schools would make AYP no matter what state they were located in. Only two of the 18 middle schools chosen for the study would make AYP in Illinois; two or fewer schools would make AYP in 21 of the 26 states examined.
- Middle schools have much more difficulty reaching AYP in Illinois than do elementary schools, primarily because their student populations are larger and they therefore have more qualifying subgroups —

not because their student achievement is lower than in the elementary schools.

- Wisconsin and Arizona would see the most middle schools making AYP — seven and eight respectively. None of the 18 chosen schools would have made AYP, however, in five states — Idaho, Massachusetts, Montana, South Carolina, and North Dakota.

**High Schools**

While the report did not look at high schools, another recent study found high schoolers have made little progress in reading and math since the 1970s. That was the conclusion from researchers who examined trends in results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a national test tracking long-term educational outcomes. NAEP is overseen by the research wing of the U.S. Department of Education.

**Why the difference?**

In many cases in states with large subgroup sizes (i.e. special education) more schools made AYP because they were accountable for fewer qualifying groups of students than in states where the subgroup size looked at for qualifying for AYP were smaller. If a school misses the AYP target for just one subgroup the school does not make AYP.

Even the highest performing middle school in the sample would have failed to make AYP in twenty-one of twenty-six states, mainly due to the performance of its subgroups.

The authors admit, however, that the thirty-six schools selected for the study are not representative of all schools nationwide. So when the report states that one of eighteen (6 percent) chosen elementary schools would have made AYP in Massachusetts it does not mean only 6 percent of elementary schools nationwide would make AYP in Massachusetts.

Furthermore, proficiency scores were not based on each state’s assessment but on the Northwest Evaluation Association’s (NWEA’s) so-called

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment, which was taken by students in each of the states. This single common scale permitted cross-state comparisons. But the report did not examine the impact of NCLB’s ‘Safe Harbor’ provision or other NCLB indicators, such as attendance and test-participation rates on AYP results. Nor was the impact of NCLB’s Growth Model pilot taken into consideration.

**Study conclusion**

*The Accountability Illusion* provides evidence that NCLB rules vary quite significantly from state to state.

“This study proves that the current AYP system under No Child Left Behind isn’t truly working,” said the study’s lead author John Cronin, from the Kingsbury Center at NWEA, a national non-profit education organization. “Results vary wildly and a school deemed ‘fine’ by one state doesn’t pass muster in another state. The current system doesn’t help improve our schools,” Cronin added.

The 2002 law requires states to bring all students in grades 3-8 to grade-level proficiency in reading and math by 2014. However, NCLB leaves key details to the states. They set the definition of proficiency; the rate at which the bar rises each year en route to the 2014 goal; the minimum number of students that comprise a school sub-group in categories such as race, English language learners or students with disabilities; and whether and how to apply a margin of statistical error to achievement results. Since all of these factors vary greatly from state to state, as this report showcases, so do AYP results.

As a result, states differ in the:

- Minimum subgroup sizes they set for student subgroups to be accountable.
- The cut-scores they set for students to be considered proficient.
- The percent of students expected to meet proficiency each year.
- Whether or not they allow confidence intervals.

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According to the report, these variations are the cause for schools being identified “in need of improvement” in one state but not another.

School board members should keep this in mind when evaluating the schools in their districts, according to The Center for Public Education, an initiative of the National School Boards Association.

“Whether or not your schools made AYP, you should use all available data to determine how effective your schools are at meeting the needs of all your students,” said a Center spokesman, adding that “it is up to each community to determine for itself if its student’s needs are being met.”

One place to begin is by using The Center’s “Good Measures for Good Schools” resource, available on the Center’s website at: [http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/site/c.kjIXJ5MPfWtE/b.3501683/k.2064/Good\\_measures\\_for\\_good\\_schools\\_Ataglance.htm](http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/site/c.kjIXJ5MPfWtE/b.3501683/k.2064/Good_measures_for_good_schools_Ataglance.htm). It provides information on 28 indicators of school quality school leaders can use to evaluate their local schools.

The NCLB foundation says such a well-rounded evaluation may provide a better, more accurate picture of how schools are actually performing.

Meanwhile, a foreword to the Fordham study claims that the solution to this dilemma of wide variations in state standards is not to scrap NCLB or to federalize tests and standards. Instead, they argue, the Obama Administration and Congress should create incentives for states to voluntarily sign on to rigorous, comprehensive common standards and tests. Washington should then publish the results for every school but allow states to decide what to do with schools that don’t meet those common expectations. This would ensure greater transparency and reinforce state responsibility. “Best of all,” the Fordham report notes, “it would end the gamesmanship that has characterized the federal-state relationship for the past seven years.”

Illinois education leaders recently joined a nationwide effort to align

requirements for graduates with those of other states, creating a common core of standards nationwide. They say national benchmarks could eliminate the variation now seen in state standards.

Some even claim that a national test could provide a true picture of all U.S. students and increase our global competitiveness. Currently, there is no way to make state-by-state comparisons.

But a uniform set of standards would be a major departure from the norm in a country where, historically, local districts and states set the rules for schools. Currently elected school boards make most of the funding decisions for local schools and set goals to establish appropriate policies to fit their community’s needs.

### **Illinois’ AYP accountability plan**

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires all states to measure each public school’s and district’s achievement and establish annual achievement targets for the state. The larger goal is for all students to meet or exceed standards in reading and mathematics by 2014.

Each year, the state calculates a school or district’s Adequate Yearly Progress to determine if students are improving their performance based on the established annual targets. Through links on the ISBE Web site, you can review the federal law and regulations regarding AYP.

In July 2003, the U.S. Department of Education approved Illinois’ plan for aligning state accountability processes with the new federal law. The plan was developed through consultation with a broad-based task force of education, business, parent and civic representatives.

In August 2003, two statutes modified the School Code to conform with NCLB. One modifies the state testing system (PA 93-0426); the other modifies the state’s Academic Early Warning and Watch List processes (PA 93-0470).

State law (PA 93-0470) now defines consequences for all schools that fail to meet AYP criteria for consecutive years. Title I schools and districts are subject to additional consequences including school choice, Supplemental Educational Services, corrective action and restructuring.

For example, Title I schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years are identified as a School In Need of Improvement.

In year one of School Improvement, the school must develop an improvement plan and offer school choice.

In year two, the school must offer Supplemental Educational Services (SES) in addition to school choice.

In year three, the school district must implement one or more of a list of corrective actions. A restructuring plan is developed when the school or district has not made AYP for a total of 5 consecutive years.

### **Public school choice?**

Under NCLB, if a Title I school does not make AYP for two years in a row, it is said to be “in need of improvement,” and it must offer parents public school choice. Such schools must continue to offer school choice each year until they make AYP for two years in a row. Implementing this NCLB requirement depends on the availability of other schools in the district that are making AYP and their capacity to add students to their enrollment.

If there are no qualifying schools in the district that can accept students, the district must try to make cooperating agreements with nearby districts that do have eligible schools. While a neighboring district is under no obligation to enter into a cooperative agreement, it may choose to, depending on a number of factors, including its enrollment capacity.

### **Supplemental educational services**

Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), Section 1116(e), students from low-income families

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attending schools that do not make adequate yearly progress for three or more years are eligible to receive Supplemental Educational Services (SES). School districts are responsible for funding these services, which must be provided outside the normal school day, through their Title I, Part A funds.

As required by the U.S. Department of Education, ISBE provides assistance to districts with the implementation of the SES requirements and regulates the SES provider services.

**Schools in Corrective Action (CA)**

If, after two years of undergoing school improvement, i.e., after not having made AYP for four years, implementing a school improvement plan, and receiving extensive technical assistance, a school still does not make adequate yearly progress, ISBE and the school's governing district must identify it for Corrective Action (CA). Identifying a school for CA signals the district's intention to take greater control of the school's management and to have a more direct hand in its decision-making. This identification signifies that the application of traditional school improvement methods and strategies has been unsuccessful and that more radical action is needed to improve learning conditions for all students. Taking CA is designed to increase substantially the likelihood that all students enrolled in the school will meet or exceed the state's proficient levels of academic achievement in reading and mathematics.

A restructuring plan must be developed when the school or district has not made AYP for a total of five consecutive years. If the school does not make AYP for six straight years, the district must implement this plan.

Federal Guidance on school restructuring is available online at: [http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/sc\\_hoolimprovementguid.pdf](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/sc_hoolimprovementguid.pdf).

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In addition to Illinois, the other states committed to this state-led process are: Alabama, Arizona; Arkansas; California; Colorado; Connecticut; Delaware; Florida; Georgia; Hawaii; Idaho; Indiana; Iowa; Kansas; Kentucky; Louisiana; Maine; Maryland; Massachusetts; Michigan; Minnesota; Mississippi; Montana; Nebraska; Nevada; New Hampshire; New Jersey; New Mexico; New York; North Carolina; North Dakota; Ohio; Oklahoma; Oregon; Pennsylvania; Rhode Island; South Dakota; Tennessee; Utah; Vermont; Virginia; Washington; West Virginia; Wisconsin; Wyoming. Also participating are the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"We live in a global business place," said Jesse H. Ruiz, Chairman of the Illinois State Board of Education. "We can no longer simply compare our students to those in other states, but must prepare our students to compete with, and work with, their counterparts across the globe."

Some educators have expressed concern that the project will give the federal government too much control of public education, which has traditionally been the province of state and local authorities.

But a state board of education member who lives in Barrington, Joyce Karon, says the project will not rob districts of their ability to set higher goals for their particular students.

"What we'll be looking at are baselines, the elements that everyone agrees must be a part of our education system," Karon said. "That doesn't mean local districts can't go above and beyond, or that they shouldn't."

The Common Core State Standards Initiative will build directly on recent efforts of leading organizations and states that have focused on developing college- and career-ready standards and ensure that these standards can be internationally benchmarked to top-performing countries around the world. The goal is to have a common core of state standards that states can voluntarily adopt. States may

choose to include additional standards as long as the common core represents at least 85 percent of the state's standards in English and mathematics. The second phase of this initiative is to ultimately develop common tests aligned to the core standards developed through the process. Illinois spent more than \$50 million on standardized testing during FY 2009.

The NGA Center and CCSSO will coordinate the process to develop these standards and will create an expert validation committee to provide an independent review of the common core state standards, as well as the grade-by-grade standards. This committee will be composed of nationally and internationally recognized and trusted education experts who are neutral to – and independent of – the process. The college and career ready standards are expected to be completed in July 2009. The grade-by-grade standards work is expected to be completed in December 2009.

But even if the project sails through with few obstacles, schools would not see much impact right away, because each state would have to determine whether to adopt the standards. State officials say the multi-state project leaders hope that an adoption process can be set up early in 2010. State adoption of the common standards would be voluntary.

Even if the standards are adopted that would likely mean revising state tests or ditching them in favor of national tests before school districts would see much of a change, and that would likely be a laborious, protracted process.

What's more, participating states thus far have committed only to working to develop common standards, not to changing their state tests.

Meanwhile, state education leaders are hopeful about the project because U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan has advocated the creation of national learning standards, and he could make federal stimulus money available for that effort.

# Block scheduling advocate says high schools must change

## Sees stress, morale as keys to improving

High school reform has soared to the top of today's agenda on education, drawing the attention of lawmakers, school superintendents, philanthropists, and communities around the state. Stubbornly high dropout rates and the below-par academic achievement of some high school students has caused alarm. These challenges disproportionately impact disadvantaged students, particularly students who attend urban schools and certain rural schools, and some Black and Hispanic students.



Robert Lynn Canady

One comprehensive initiative that has grappled with the challenges of improving less successful urban and rural high schools is block scheduling. It has become increasingly popular, with its emphasis on more time spent in fewer classes. Robert Lynn Canady, a former teacher and a distinguished professor of education and author who is a leading proponent of block scheduling, estimates that more than 50 percent of high schools in the United States use some extended class periods.

Canady spoke on June 15 at the fourth annual High School Challenge Conference in Bloomington, and also led a breakout session on block scheduling during the event on June 16. A professor at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, he argued that traditional 40-minute periods worsen discipline problems, limit teachers' possibilities and create a "factory-like environment" with assembly-line classes.

Canady, author of the book *Block Scheduling: A Catalyst for Change in High Schools*, believes scheduling factors that can increase graduation odds for "under-credited" students include: 1) balancing the workload in core classes that have a large amount of

homework; 2) balancing the workload for teachers who teach these students so these teachers can perform the most productive teaching functions; 3) reducing the amount of "failing time" for these students; 4) providing support/tutorials during school hours; and 5) varying the school hours for core classes.

Canady reviewed several schedules that incorporate these five factors. He cited a variety of the benefits detected in studies of block scheduling, such as:

- School management problems are reduced because students spend less time in highly congested areas, such as in hallways and dressing rooms;
- The amount of class tardiness is reduced;
- Teachers make better use of technology and engage students in more active learning strategies;
- Stress is reduced for both teachers and students because they meet for fewer classes during any one school day or term;
- Time lost to general administrative duties, such as calling roll, setting up and cleaning up and getting students into an academic mode of behavior is reduced.

More importantly, Canady said, without the constant clanging of the bell signifying the need to rush from one class to another, the atmosphere in schools often becomes more relaxed.

"One of the things I feel we can guarantee with block scheduling is that we can change the stress level for both teachers and students," he said. "We're finding attendance goes up in block schedule schools for both teachers and students. How do you explain that if not by morale and stress factors?"

Canady, who has consulted with schools in more than 30 states, said the way block scheduling works is to "take the time we've got and package it differently." What if schools meet for four classes a day for 80 min-

utes each? Plus, we gain back all that transitional time, he argued.

Approximately 400 school administrators, teachers and education officials attended the two-day event in Bloomington. The conference also featured a welcome from Chris Koch, state superintendent, and panel sessions on dual-credit instruction in alliances with colleges and universities, career-prep programs, post-secondary planning, and how to implement Response to Intervention.

Although the phrase "block sched-

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"We're finding attendance goes up in block schedule schools for both teachers and students."

— Canady

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uling" is regularly employed as shorthand in discussions of flexible school scheduling, implementation varies widely. Some schools adopt "4 x 4" scheduling, in which four classes are distributed throughout the day, every day. Under that system, students complete a year's worth of work in a semester and begin the second part of their course load in the second semester. Some schools use "A/B" scheduling in which two blocks of four classes meet alternate days. Other schools adopt "modified blocks" in which some class periods run longer than usual while others continue as 50-minute sessions.

But Canady suggested that high schools not only need to overhaul their lockstep six- or seven-period high school schedule by offering practical alternatives, but also need to revise their school term. He suggested a 75-75-30 plan. That is, two 75-day terms in the fall and winter, followed by one 30-day spring term.

He concluded that dropout rates are improved when flexible schedules are used correctly.



Rooms are still open at the Palmer House



## Newly renovated Palmer House still has rooms for conference

A totally renovated Palmer House hotel is just one of the new features of the 2009 IASB/IASA/Illinois ASBO annual conference in Chicago, Nov. 20-22. Rooms are still available at the hotel — called the oldest continuously operated hotel in the nation — at conference rates, for those attending this year's event.

The Housing/Registration/Conference Program Promotional Packet for the 2009 Joint Annual Conference was mailed to member district superintendents on June 8. The last date for receipt and processing of regis-

tration/housing by IASB Meetings Management is Oct. 16.

It should be noted; however, that hotel housing blocks are normally depleted by Aug. 1.

To obtain housing, both the completed registration and housing form with a check or credit card to cover the registration fee (\$340 per registrant) and the nonrefundable \$150 per room hotel deposit fee for each individual listed on each of these forms must be forwarded to: IASB Meetings Management, 2921 Baker Drive, Springfield, Illinois 62703.

## New board member workshops offered through late August by IASB

Helping new school board members “hit the ground running” toward highly productive board service is a major priority of IASB.

IASB has been challenging itself in 2009, along with its divisions and its member districts, to increase participation in new board member workshops by 20 percent over 2007 participation. All school leaders are being asked to encourage their newly elected board members to attend these sessions.

The Association has offered a cornucopia of educational workshops designed especially for newly elected board members. The Basics of School District Governance focuses on the roles and responsibilities of the school board and its members. The Basics of Law on Board Meetings & Practices focuses on the legal requirements of public school boardsmanship. The Association's Comprehensive Workshop for Board Presidents covers the full spectrum of the board president's duties and work. And a workshop on the Basics of School District Finance teaches new board members about how public school financing works in

Illinois.

Workshops are still being offered through late August. Boards of education typically reimburse members for the reasonable and necessary expenses in attending such training conference and workshops. Tuition is required for each workshop and includes materials and meals. Workshop pricing and registration information is available online by visiting <http://www.iasb.com>.

The remaining 2009 workshops will be offered at the following dates and locations:

**Board Presidents Workshop:** August 7 (Doubletree Hotel, Oak Brook), August 21 (Crowne Plaza, Springfield)

**Basics of Finance:** July 25 (Holiday Inn, Carbondale)

**Basics of Governance, Law and Finance:** August 6-8 (Doubletree Hotel, Oak Brook), August 20-22 (Crowne Plaza, Springfield)

For a complete listing of these events, see the IASB online calendar at: <http://www.iasb.com/calendar/>. For more information call IASB at 217/528-9688 or 630/629-3776, ext. 1103.

## Online registration open for superintendents conference

The annual State Superintendents' Conference will run Oct. 27-28 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield. Roy Romer, former three-term governor of Colorado, will serve as the keynote speaker.

Romer has served as chair of the Democratic National Party, the National Governors Association, and the Educational Commission of the States. He was Superintendent of Schools for the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Michael Geisen, the 58th National Teacher of the Year, will be the featured speaker on October 28. Geisen, a science teacher at Crook County Middle School in Prineville, Oregon, is just completing a year as a full-time national and international spokesperson for education that began on June 1, 2008. Geisen's goal is to ignite passion for learning.

Online registration opened on June 1 at: <http://webapps.isbe.net/ISBEConference/>

Questions and concerns about the event may be directed to ISBE's Leigh Ann Smith at 217/782-4870 or via e-mail at [lsmith@isbe.net](mailto:lsmith@isbe.net).



# New booklet aimed at orienting new board members to board processes, more

Every other year, most school boards gain at least one new member, and some even acquire a new majority of four or more new members. Whenever new members join the governance team — including the hiring of a new superintendent — it is valuable to go “back to the basics,” in order to help orient the newcomers with board governance processes.

To assist boards with this orientation, IASB has made available a new publication, “*Orienting New School Board Members on the way to Becoming a High-Performing Board Team.*” This publication is the work of IASB staff members from field services, board development, policy services, communications and the office of the general counsel. It outlines the “nuts and bolts” work of school boards in a process designed to facilitate conversations about a school district’s identity, purpose and the board processes available to fulfill that purpose.

The orientation process begins with a sample agenda for a 90-minute meeting for the new board members, the superintendent and board president that reviews the following subjects:

- Welcome
- Board-superintendent relationship
- School finances
- Instructional program
- Personnel
- Community relations
- Future issues and assessment

A second sample agenda for a full board meeting is included along with key questions and suggested local documents to help new members answer questions about the district’s identity, including:

- Who are we?
- What do we care about?
- What are we trying to do?

A third suggested agenda for a full

board meeting is included along with key questions and suggested local documents to help new members answer these questions about the board’s governance processes:

- How does this team do business?
- What’s expected around the table?
- Do we have agreement regarding our processes?

All three meetings are designed to be conducted in 90-minute sessions. They can be part of regularly scheduled board meetings or conducted as special meetings. All require compliance with Open Meetings Act provisions.

While the orientation is designed to be self-directed, outside facilitators may also be used. IASB field services directors are available to discuss these materials with the district to facilitate this work for the board and superintendent team.

“*Orienting New School Board Members on the way to Becoming a High-Performing Board Team*” also includes references to materials available from IASB, the Illinois State Board of Education, the Interactive Illinois Report Card, National School Boards Association, and the Center for Public Education. An appendix includes a sample board policy supporting board member development and sample congratulatory letter for new members.

To download the complete document as a PDF file (Adobe Acrobat Reader Required), go to <http://www.iasb.com/training/orienting.cfm>. Sample agendas may also be downloaded separately.

All school leaders are being asked to encourage their newly elected board members to attend one or more of the sessions designed for them. For more details on these events, see the IASB online calendar at: <http://www.iasb.com/calendar>. For other information, call IASB at 217/528-9688 or 630/629-3776, ext. 1103.



## IASB directors to meet in Oak Brook in August

The IASB Board of Directors’ next quarterly meeting, Aug. 27-28, in Oak Brook, is scheduled to include an evaluation of the executive director, board review and assessments of current year activity reports.

Other topics will include:

- Audit Committee meeting
- Nominating Committee meeting
- Revisit mission statement
- Board self-assessment

The meeting includes the board’s annual retreat. The board’s next meetings after the retreat will take place at the Joint Annual Conference at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Chicago, on Nov. 19 and 22, respectively.

## Deadline draws near on board secretaries award

The deadline for submitting documents nominating board secretaries for IASB’s Holly Jack Outstanding Service Award is Aug. 1.

For more information visit the IASB website, <http://www.iasb.com> or contact Anna Lovern, Director, Policy Services, 217/528-9688, ext 1125, email address [alovern@iasb.com](mailto:alovern@iasb.com).

## New superintendents invited to meet at IASB offices soon

New superintendent luncheons are scheduled for IASB offices on Aug. 11 in Springfield and Aug. 12 in Lombard.

The aim is not only to welcome the new top administrators of Illinois districts, but to explain about IASB’s resources, services, and training assistance.

New superintendents are urged to phone IASB to sign up to attend.

# Governor gets bill overhauling FOIA law, further opening records

The Illinois General Assembly recently approved a bill (S.B. 189) to re-write the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The bill was sent to the governor on June 26. House Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago) sponsored this major piece of legislation in the House.

The bill, which has yet to be acted upon by the governor, shortens the time a public body has to comply with a FOIA request, requires a public body to designate a Freedom of Information Officer who must receive annual training, and simplifies exemptions to the Act.

The bill adopted by lawmakers also sets out a number of new definitions and purposes for the Act. Major provisions of S.B. 189:

- Declares that public bodies have the primary duty of providing records in compliance with the Act
- Establishes a presumption that all records held by a public body are open for inspection and copying. The burden of clear and con-

vincing evidence proving exemption otherwise is that of the public body

- Disallows requests from a commercial enterprise to unduly burden public resources or disrupt the duly-undertaken work of any public body
- Expands the definition of “Public Records” to include records to include electronic communications and materials pertaining to the transaction of public business
- Creates a new definition of “Private information” for persons including unique identifiers
- Deletes the current enumerated definition of “Public Records”
- Creates a new definition for “Commercial purpose” to include any information from the public record to be used for sale or advertisement. It further states that requests made by news media, non-profit, scientific, or academic organizations shall not be “commercial purpose” under certain definitions

- States that all records related to the use of public funds are public records available for inspection by the public
- States that certified payroll records with personal information redacted are public records available for inspection by the public
- Establishes a section for proper disclosure of arrest reports and criminal history records
- Requires all settlement agreements entered into by the public body to be available for public inspection and copying

“This is basically an unfunded mandate from the state, requiring a good deal of additional cost and attention from school districts without adequate reimbursement,” said a school management spokesman.

A complete analysis of SB 189 from a school management perspective has been drafted by the Governmental Relations Department of IASB and is posted on the Association’s web site at: <http://www.iasb.com/govrel/SB189FOIAAnalysis.pdf>.

## Board turnover lowest in past 12 years

The turnover rate of Illinois school board members in the April 2009 election was 21.7 percent, and represents the lowest rate seen in the past 12 biennial elections.

Recently compiled IASB membership records indicate that 1,297 new members filled board seats in April 2009 out of a total of 5,967 school board members. That compares to the 1,464 new members elected in 2007, of 5,971 total members, for a turnover rate of 24.5 percent.

Turnover rates among Illinois school board members over the previous 12 elections ranged from a low of 22.0 percent in 1999, when 1,335 new members were elected among the total of 6,076 board members, to a high of 30.4 percent in 1989, when 1,852 new members were elected out of a total of 6,093 board members.

A significant source of board

turnover typically comes from incumbents who decide not to run again. But the April school board election this year saw more incumbents reelected, with 1,762 returned to office, than at any similar election in 20 years, with the exception of 2001, when 1,779 incumbents were reelected. But the percentage of incumbents returned to office in April (57.6 percent) was higher than in 2001 (56.8 percent).

“This seems to suggest voters were more satisfied with the incumbents in school board races than usual,” said Ben Schwarm, IASB’s Associate Executive Director for Advocacy and Governmental Relations.

The newly compiled numbers, showing details for the past 12 biennial elections, are available from the IASB home page at <http://www.iasb.com/training/issue8.cfm>.

## Just one strike called despite several close calls

At least 14 intent-to-strike notices against public schools were filed this school year, apparently with only one actual strike in Consolidated SD 158, Huntley. It began on Sep. 15, 2008, with salary and retirement benefits reportedly being the main issues for 570 certified teachers, and was settled on Sep. 17.

All but two of the 14 districts settled their contracts in 2008; one district settled earlier this year and another remains on notice, including **Madison CUSD 12**, in the Southwestern division. It has a bargaining unit size of 80 unit certified teachers. Notice was filed on Aug. 18, 2008 and was settled on Feb. 2, 2009.

Remaining on notice is **Peoria SD 150** in the Central Illinois Valley division. The bargaining unit represents more than 1,100 members. Notice was filed on May 31, 2009.

# **N**EW HEADLINES

**Arlington Heights** (May 29, *The Daily Herald*) Studying Mandarin Chinese is becoming a national trend, and Arlington Heights District 25 is increasing its participation. Next year all fourth-graders could receive an hour of Mandarin language instruction per week, thanks to a grant that might provide two teachers through the Confucius Institute at Michigan State University. The institute is supported by the government of China. District 25 is now in its second year of offering Chinese in middle school grades six through eight.

**Chatham** (May 29, *State Journal-Register*) Ball-Chatham CUSD 5 middle school eighth-grader Aishwarya Pastapur tied for second place in the national Scripps National Spelling Bee on May 28, misspelling the word “menhir,” which refers to a prehistoric monolith. She had already correctly spelled “deipnosophist,” “tagliatelle,” “goombay,” “xebec,” and “wisent” to become one of three championship-round contestants. The national event began with 293 entrants from around the world.

**Chicago** (May 26, *Chicago Sun-Times*) The number of black students from Chicago District 299 who are headed on to college is rising fast. Five years ago the percentage of black Chicago Public School students going to college lagged 18 percentage points behind the nationwide average, but Chicago schools have nearly closed that gap. Hispanic students also have made steady progress.

**Danville** (June 2, *Champaign News-Gazette*) Although they considered the idea of extending the Danville CCSD 118 teachers’ contract for a year, district officials said both sides likely would go forward with collective bargaining. Danville board members discussed the upcoming negotiations at a special closed-session meeting on June 3. The board examined the proposals to make sure

they followed the direction the board had given the negotiating team and that they were sound, according to Board President William J. Dobbles. The teachers’ contract was due to expire on June 30.

**Joliet** (May 1, *Chicago Southtown Star*) After a lottery to break a three-way tie in the April 7 election, three new Union District 81 board members were finally seated several weeks later. This year’s election for those seats up for election was a bit bizarre. Not one of the four incumbents sought re-election, and not one resident petitioned to be a candidate in this one-school district that draws about 100 students from New Lenox and Joliet townships. So seven residents – including three children of board president John LaRocca – all decided to run as write-ins for the three four-year terms. The race ended with a three-way tie, according to the official canvass. Will County Clerk Nancy Schultz Voots held a lottery to break the tie.

**Naperville** (June 24, *Naperville Sun*) Home school students who want an Indian Prairie School District 204 diploma will have to spend much of their senior year attending an actual high school, but they likely won’t need to worry about their earlier work being rejected. District 204 officials are considering a policy change regarding graduation requirements for part-time students.

**Silvis** (June 2, *Quad-City Times*) A voter-approved plan for a new Silvis District 34 school is waiting on state funding – again. The district is still waiting for money promised by the state to build a new school. Specifically, the district is waiting for millions promised for a new school back in 2002 by former Gov. Rod Blagojevich. School officials received good news last month when close to \$12 million was allocated for the project in a \$28.3 billion capital con-

struction plan lawmakers sent to Gov. Pat Quinn. But as school officials readied to seek construction bids, they learned of the governor’s reluctance to sign the capital bill, which places its promised funds in limbo yet again. “Once again we’re back to nowhere because the state can’t get its act together,” said superintendent Ray Bergles. Gov. Quinn has said he won’t sign the bill until lawmakers approve a balanced state budget which, so far, they have failed to do.

**Statewide** (June 10, *The Southern Illinoisan*) Hoping to save money on transportation and utility costs, some districts are looking at eliminating one day of classes per week. On a 104-10 vote, the Illinois House in late May approved a proposal to form a task force to study the feasibility of a four-day school week. It was quickly endorsed by a Senate panel, but was never brought up for a full vote before lawmakers left town on May 31. State officials say a handful of districts inquired about the concept last year, primarily as a way to cope with high fuel costs.

**Statewide** (June 2, *Chicago Tribune*) Illinois lawmakers have paved the way to double the number of charter schools in Illinois. What is more, the expansion comes with increased accountability. Under the legislation, Chicago District 299 would be allowed 45 new charter schools, five of which would be reserved for schools enrolling high school dropouts. Another 15 new charters would be allotted for the rest of the state. Advocates said the new schools would help address the nearly 13,000 students statewide who wanted to enroll in charter schools but were squeezed out for lack of space. The bill, which awaits Gov. Pat Quinn’s signature, would make Illinois the first state to answer President Barack Obama’s and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan’s calls to raise caps on charter schools.

## Association urges individuals to update records of Master Board Member activities

The Illinois Association of School Boards recognizes and honors board members for the time and effort they devote to self-improvement and leadership activities. “Master Board Member” activities are a means to achieving the Association’s mission of excellence in local school governance.

IASB mailed out a form in June for board members to use so they can be recognized for their efforts in Master Board Member activities. Directions on the form include a summary of IASB programs and activities that qualify for credits toward Master Board Member status. Points are assigned to professional development, division programs and activities, board development, legislative leadership, and IASB and NSBA leadership. Points range from 5 to 30. Credits are awarded through June 30; 60 to 129 points earn Level I status; 130-199 earn Level II status; and 200 plus points earn Master Board Member distinction.

Board members are urged to make a copy for their own records prior to returning the completed document to the IASB offices. The forms must be completed and returned no later

than July 31. Awards will be presented at the IASB fall division meetings and they will be mailed if the award winner is not in attendance.

In addition to the forms that were recently mailed, board members can also access Master Board Member application forms and monitor their personal service and participation records in their own online database at IASB’s Members-Only website. This password-protected site is available at: <http://members.iasb.com>.

Registration is required. This requires the member’s seven-digit Member ID number and last name. The number appears on the mailing label of all materials sent to IASB members, and begins with “2.” After completing this step, members need to set up an account with an email address and a password of their choosing.

The Master Board Member forms and individual database information can be found on the Members-Only site under the tab, “Your IASB Involvement” at the top of that home page.

Forms are available for each school year going back to 1999-2000 and are provided in portable document format (PDF).

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**August 6-7 – The Basics of Governance & Law on Board Meetings & Practices**, Doubletree Hotel, Oak Brook, Thur., 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 pm; Fri., 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**August 7 – Comprehensive Workshop for Board Presidents**, Doubletree Hotel, Oak Brook, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**August 8 – Basics of School District Finance**, Doubletree Hotel, Oak Brook, 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

**August 11 – New Superintendents Luncheon**, IASB, Springfield, 11 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

**August 12 – New Superintendents Luncheon**, IASB, Lombard, 11 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

**August 20-21 – The Basics of Governance & Basics of Law on Board Meetings & Practices**, Crowne Plaza, Springfield, Thur., 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.; Fri., 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**August 21 – Comprehensive Workshop for Board Presidents**, Crowne Plaza, Springfield, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**August 22 – Basics of School District Finance**, Crowne Plaza, Springfield, 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

**August 28-29 – IASB Board of Directors’ Meeting**, Oak Brook Hills Resort, Oak Brook; For more information about coming events, see the IASB Web site at [www.iasb.com/calendar/](http://www.iasb.com/calendar/).