

Illinois SCHOOL BOARD *Newsbulletin*

August 2009 / Issue No. 688



Niles North High School, 9800 North Lawler Street, Skokie, is certifiably green.

District 219 first to enlist its schools for 'green' certification

Niles Township High School District 219, Skokie, is the first Illinois district to register schools for operations and maintenance certification under the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design for Existing Buildings. Two district high schools will be used to demonstrate how existing buildings can be operated and maintained to reduce their impact on the natural environment.

To achieve certification of the two high schools as models for other Illi-

nois schools, District 219 will work with Legat Architects to analyze the building systems, operations, and maintenance of both high schools, which total over a million square feet.

Based on analysis of the existing building at Niles North and Niles West high schools, the architects will provide strategies and suggest improvements to achieve certification. The process is expected to impact a variety of approaches and practices, rang-

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Leaders call for sweeping reform

Advance Illinois study seeks performance pay approach for schools

The Obama administration's economic stimulus bill – which provides for one of the largest allocations of federal funding to schools in U.S. history – lists four key areas states must focus on if they hope to receive a significant share of the bill's \$4 billion in competitive grants. Those four areas of focus are: using student data to drive instruction; raising academic standards; turning around those schools that are weak, and improving teacher and principal quality, especially in schools with the greatest need.

Answering this federal call for reform was a group called Advance Illinois, which released its school reform proposals earlier this summer in the report: *We Can Do Better: Advancing Public Education in Illinois*. The organization is a statewide, education reform group co-chaired by former Gov. Jim Edgar and former U.S. Commerce Secretary William Daley.

Their recommendations – including calls for better teachers, tougher

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 ready for
 construction**

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Certification of nutrition program going electronic

The Direct Certification Program is a simplified method of determining student eligibility for free meals through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs or free milk under the Special Milk Program without completing a Household Eligibility Application. In addition, students directly certified to receive free meals or milk are not subject to verification.

Effective with the school year 2009–2010, a NEW Electronic Direct Certification Program will be implemented statewide. Last school year, 10 school districts were selected to pilot an electronic program. With its success, a statewide electronic program was developed. For further guidance see <http://www.isbe.net/nutrition>.

August workshops will provide training on the Electronic Direct Certification Program as well.

NOTE: *The eligibility certificates mailed to students receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, Food Stamp Program) and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) will no longer be mailed, according to the state board.*

ISBE committee reviews three budget scenarios

During a committee meeting at the June 17-18 meeting of the Illinois State Board of Education, it was noted that the governor's office had asked the agency to present three sets of budgets. One was based on a \$150 million budget (the original budget is \$173 million); one was based on a \$100 million budget; and one was a 50 percent budget, with a 25 percent reserve.

The governor also asked for three versions of the \$150 million budget—basically a status quo plan.

New study finds good teaching is enhanced by new technology

Providing evidence of the significant opportunities that are available to use technology to improve teaching and learning, the U.S. Department of Education in June released an analysis of controlled studies comparing online and face-to-face instruction. Analysis of numerous controlled studies showed that online learning can enhance good teaching.

A systematic review of the research literature from 1996 through July 2008 identified over 1,000 empirical studies of online learning. Of these, 46 met the standard for quality that was required for the studies to be included in the analysis. The analysis showed that “blended” instruction – combining elements of online and face-to-face instruction – had a larger advantage relative to purely face-to-face instruction or instruction conducted wholly online.

The analysis also showed that instruction conducted wholly online was more effective in improving student achievement than purely face-to-face instruction. In addition, the report noted that the blended conditions often included additional learning time and instructional elements not received by students in control conditions.

“This new report reinforces that effective teachers need to incorporate digital content into everyday classes and consider open-source learning management systems, which have proven cost effective in school districts and colleges nationwide,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “We must take advantage of this historic opportunity to use American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to bring broadband access and online learning to more communities.

“To avoid being caught short when stimulus money runs out, school officials should use the short-term fed-

eral funding to make immediate upgrades to technology to enhance classroom instruction and to improve the tracking of student data,” Duncan added. “Technology presents a huge opportunity that can be leveraged in rural communities and inner-city urban settings, particularly in subjects where there is a shortage of highly qualified teachers. At the same time, good teachers can utilize new technology to accelerate learning and provide extended learning opportunities for students.”

Few rigorous research studies have been published on the effectiveness of online learning for K-12 students. The systematic search for this report found just five experimental or controlled quasi-experimental studies comparing the learning effects of online versus face-to-face instruction for K-12 students. For this reason, caution is called for in generalizing the study's findings to K-12 schools, mainly because the results are mostly based on studies in other settings, such as in medical, career, military training, and higher education.


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Illinois
SCHOOL BOARD
Newsbulletin

**Illinois Association
of School Boards**

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James Russell, Associate Executive Director
Gary Adkins, Editor
2921 Baker Drive
Springfield, Illinois 62703-5929
(217) 528-9688
One Imperial Place
1 East 22nd Street, Suite 20
Lombard, Illinois 60148-6120
(630) 629-3776
www.iasb.com


**ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

Policy-setting resolutions cover myriad issues

Below are the 19 policy-setting resolutions for IASB that school boards have submitted for consideration by this year's Delegate Assembly. The assembly meets every year during the Joint Annual Conference to vote on resolutions that, if passed, are adopted as part of the Association's position statements.

Resolutions were due on June 24. The resolution subject is followed by IASB division, sponsoring district, and a brief description:

Consolidation into Unit Districts, Lake Division, **Barrington CUSD 220**, calls for legislation that would promote the consolidation of all school districts into unit districts.

Funding Mandated Programs, Blackhawk Division, **United Township High SD 30**, calls for legislation that prohibits the passage of unfunded educational mandates.

Prevailing Wage Act, Wabash Valley Division, **Jasper County CUSD 1**, calls for a reaffirmation of Position Statement 5.05 calling for the repeal of the Prevailing Wage Act.

School Board Member Training, South Cook Division, **Dolton West SD 148**, calls for the Association to reaffirm the mission of the IASB regarding the professional development of school board members.

School Board Election-at-large, 2 Rivers Division, **Greenfield CUSD 10**, calls for legislation that deletes the provision whereby a majority of voters in each congressional township of a school district must vote to move to an at-large election of school board members.

Prairie State Achievement Examination, Wabash Valley Division, **Palestine CUSD 3**, calls for the Association to urge the State Board of Education to change the format of the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) that is administered to all 11th graders in the state.

School Funding Task Force, Corn Belt Division, **Olympia CUSD 16**, calls for the creation of a task force to study

public school funding with the goal of developing a more reliable financial foundation for educational opportunities for children.

Support Staff Recognition, North Cook Division, **Township High SD 211**, calls for the Association to recognize and support the importance of the role of school counselors, psychologists, and social workers.

Property Tax Cap, DuPage Division, **Wheaton Warrenville CUSD 200**, calls for amending current IASB Position Statement 2.32 (Property Tax Cap) regarding the federal inflation indices that are used.

National Learning Standards, Kaskaskia Division, **Carlinville CUSD 1**, calls for IASB to support the development and implementation of national K-12 learning standards with the rationale that national learning standards will create more equitable opportunities for students nationwide through common goals and assessments.

Home School Student Assessment, Kaskaskia Division, **Carlinville CUSD 1**, calls for the Association to recommend that all home school students be required to take the same assessment tests as those required for public school students.

Strike Prohibition, Kishwaukee Division, **Consolidated School District 158**, calls for the Association to promote legislation that would forbid public school employees from striking.

Board Member Interest in Service Contracts, South Cook Division, **Hoover-Schrum SD 157**, calls for the Association to seek to allow board of education members who offer services outside of the school district for which they serve as a board member to be allowed to provide those services to the school district for which he or she serves through the normal competitive bidding process.

Board Member Reimbursement For Lost Wages for Meetings, South Cook Division, **Hoover-Schrum SD 157**, calls for the state to allow board of education members to be reimbursed for

lost wages for attendance at board functions such as conferences, workshops, emergency board meetings, etc.

Administrator Salary Caps at 50%, South Cook Division, **Hoover-Schrum SD 157**, calls for the state to cap administrator salaries including superintendents, principals, assistant principals, business managers and directors at no more than 50 percent of the original hire or contracted start date.

Student Academic Advancement, South Cook Division, **Hoover-Schrum SD 157**, calls for the Association to seek to prohibit school districts from holding children back due to their age if academically capable.

ISBE Oversight Agreement, South Cook Division, **Calumet Public SD 132**, calls for the state to intervene, in many ways, in an agreement that was forged between the Calumet Public SD 132 and the Illinois State Board of Education for the creation and duration of an oversight panel.

High School Exams, Central Illinois Valley Division, **East Peoria CHSD 309**, calls for the inclusion of parts of a state-mandated exam as part of graduation requirements – as determined by the local school district.

Polling Places in Schools, South Cook Division, **Orland SD 135**, calls for the Association to support legislation to allow a school building to not be used as a polling place during an election.

The next step in the process is a review of all resolutions by a committee comprised of one representative from each of IASB's 21 divisions. The resolutions committee, chaired by IASB's Vice President, Joe Alessandrini, will meet in August to make recommendations on which resolutions will be submitted. Their report is due to be made in advance of the Joint Annual Conference and will be published and distributed to IASB member districts.

IASB positions can be found at: <http://www.iasb.com/govrel/positions.cfm>.



State School Board Association staff: Policy and board development staff from school board associations across the country share ideas for improved member services.



State School Board Association staff: An historic first: policy and board development staff enjoy an icebreaker activity to kick off their unprecedented day of joint programming.



State School Board Association staff: Futurist David Zach prompts association staff to think about member services to come.

State association policy, training staffers center on better board member services

One hundred and thirty-five school board association staff from 32 state school boards associations plus NSBA attended combined policy/trainers' work-alike conferences co-hosted by the IASB and the California School Boards Association in Chicago June 23-27.

Various work-alike groups from the state associations meet each summer for the purpose of networking and sharing best practices. For the first time this year the AASPS (American Association of State Policy Services) and Trainers' groups coordinated their conferences with one day of joint programming with the hope of bringing policy services staff together with



David Zach keynoted the event and led a workshop.

board development/field services staff to learn, think and talk about how they could jointly provide services to their member districts.

Futurist David Zach provided the keynote address and facilitated a workshop for the joint day of programming.

Twenty-three IASB staff participated, including staff from policy services, field services, TAG, board development, and executive searches.

"Providing new and improved services to IASB members was the impetus for our efforts in co-hosting and participating in this event," said Angie Peifer, IASB's Associate Executive Director for Board Development.

The combined policy/trainers work-alike group met at a dinner on Thursday evening featuring entertainment by the Jones Lyric Chorus from Chicago Public Schools' Jones College Prep High School.

Workshop added on governance and school law

The August new board member workshops (The Basics of Governance and Law on Board Meetings and Practices and The Basics of Finance) in Oak Brook have sold out, so in order to meet member needs IASB has added to its workshop offerings. The newly added Basics of Governance and Law on Board Meetings and Practices sessions will be held on September 25 and 26 at Northern Illinois University, Naperville. Registration may be completed online at <http://www.iasb.com>, or by calling 217/528-9688 or 630/629-3776, ext. 1103.

Newly elected school board members who have not had an opportunity to attend The Basics of Finance workshop this summer will have another opportunity in November when the workshop will be offered as a pre-conference workshop on Friday, November 20th. Additionally, an abbreviated version of the governance overview, School Board Leadership, will also be available as a preconference workshop in November.

2009
IASB • IASA • IASBO
Joint Annual
Conference
November 20 • 21 • 22

IASB mourns passing of former president, top executive, Sampson

Wayne L. Sampson, 67, former executive director of the Illinois Association of School Boards and former president of the Association's board of directors, died on July 21, 2009. He served as executive director of IASB from 1989 until his retirement in 2000.



Wayne Sampson

current mission statement: "...excellence in local school governance and support of public education."

According to IASB Executive Director Emeritus Michael D. Johnson, "Wayne provided the foundation for the success of IASB through his calming manner, sense of humor and insight into what people and school boards needed. He was responsible for setting up many of the programs in their present form at IASB, which serve school districts and allow them to save money such as in Illinois Energy Consortium. He established an attitude of continual improvement at the association."

To read more about his career and life, visit <http://www.iasb.com/press/sampson.cfm>.

As chief executive at IASB he became a major force behind the formation of the Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance. During his tenure he introduced the legally referenced policy subscription service (PRESS), and led adoption of the Association's

Division meetings this fall will 'cover the waterfront' of concerns

A wide range of topics—from school funding matters to the latest communications ideas—will be covered at division meetings this fall throughout IASB's 21 divisions. Besides presentations on hot topics and legislation, awards of recognition from IASB's Master Board Member Program and LeaderShop Academy will be handed out at the meetings.

IASB board members are encouraged to attend one or more of the association's 21 division meetings. Updates on the following list of fall division meetings can be found on the IASB Web site at www.iasb.com/calendar/calendar.cfm.

September 15 – Wabash Valley Division Dinner Meeting, Hutsonville CUSD 1, Time to be announced.

September 24 – Illini Division Dinner Meeting, Arthur CUSD 305, Time to be announced.

September 24 – Southwestern Division Dinner Meeting, Waterloo CCSD 5, 5:30 p.m. Registration

October 1 – Egyptian Division Dinner Meeting, Woodlawn CCSD 4, Time to be announced.

October 1 – Abe Lincoln Division Dinner Meeting, Pleasant Plains CUSD 8, Registration 5:30 p.m.

October 5 – Shawnee Division Dinner Meeting, Anna CCSD 37, Time to be announced.

October 7 – Central IL Valley Division Dinner Meeting, Dunlap CUSD 323, 6 p.m. – Dinner

October 8 – Corn Belt Division Dinner Meeting, Ridgeview CUSD 19, 6 p.m. – Dinner

October 14 – Blackhawk Division Fall Dinner Meeting, Geneseo CUSD 228, 6 p.m. – Dinner

October 28 – Kaskaskia Division Dinner Meeting, Carlinville CUSD 1, 6 p.m. – Time to be announced

November 3 – Two Rivers Division Dinner Meeting, Quincy SD 172, 5:30 p.m.

November 3 – Western Division Dinner Meeting, Abingdon CUSD 217, 6 p.m. – Dinner

NEWS FROM IASB

Support professionals training event is Sep. 24 in Springfield

A reminder: a conference in Springfield on Sep. 24 will aim to help school district administrative professionals, including board secretaries, superintendents' assistants, business office staff, and building office staff. This event will be held at the Crowne Plaza, with registration and continental breakfast from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m., and the main events running from 8 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

Four breakout sessions will cover 20 different major topics, including:

- electronic board meetings;
- student records;
- Freedom of Information Act;
- electronic records;
- Open Meetings Act;
- budgeting;
- employee benefits management;
- time management;
- relationship-building; and
- many other concerns encountered by support professionals.

The new conference is co-sponsored by IASB, IASBO, IASA, IPA and IGFOA (Illinois Government Finance Officers Association).

Registration information and complete program is available online at <http://www.illinoisipc.com>.

Journal will feature tips on collective bargaining

The September/October issue of *The Illinois School Board Journal* will feature the first of a two-part series by George Kohut on how to avoid pitfalls when bargaining contracts with teachers. The article is part of IASB's updated book *Collective Bargaining and the Illinois School Board Member*, by Ronald R. Booth.

Construction funds bonanza contained in federal programs

The U.S. Department of Education has finished refining its guidelines for distributing the \$100 billion earmarked for schools in the American Recovery and Reinvestment (ARRA) Act. The tax-related provisions of the economic stimulus package provide \$24.8 billion in bond authority to states and local governments for school infrastructure through two primary programs: a new Qualified School Construction Bonds program and the expansion of the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZABs) program. Both are zero-interest, tax credit bond programs.

Illinois schools are due to receive new school construction funding for calendar year 2009 of \$498.685 million. Of this total, \$254.25 million is earmarked for Chicago District 299, and \$244.435 million is allocated for the balance of the state under the Qualified School Construction Bond program.

Qualified School Construction Bonds are a new category of tax credit bonds for use in the construction, rehabilitation, or repair of public school facilities or for the acquisition of land on which a public school facility will be constructed. Federal law authorizes the amount of qualified school construction bonds that may be issued by state and local governments at \$22 billion (\$11 billion allocated initially

in 2009 and the remainder allocated in 2010).

The economic stimulus package stipulates that from the \$22 billion allocation of bond authority to states and local governments for 2009 and 2010, there will be a forty percent direct allocation to the nation's 100 largest school districts, plus 25 districts determined by U.S. Secretary of Education as in need. The remaining sixty percent of the bond allocation goes to states, based on a proportion of the prior year's Title I

“Additional information regarding participation in this bond designation program will be provided in the near future.”

grant funding for disadvantaged students under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

As an issuer of a qualified school construction bond, the county/school district would pay the principal only to the bondholder. This is a zero-interest bond program that allows the bondholder to receive a return on investment as a credit against its federal tax liability. The rate of the federal tax credit is set by the Treasury Department (Tax credit = principal x credit rate).

Under the program, 100 percent of bond proceeds, including investment earnings, must be spent on qualified purposes within three years of issuing bonds.

Up to two percent of bond proceeds can be used to pay costs of issuance. None of the bond proceeds can be used for a reserve fund. The current maturity limit of tax credit bonds is 13 years, per the Treasury Department.

The ARRA provides for national allocations of \$11 billion for each of calendar years 2009 and 2010. The Internal Revenue Service notice (IRS Notice 2009 – 35) provides that Illinois' share of these allocations for calendar year 2009 is \$254.25 million for the City of Chicago School District 299, and \$244.435 million for the balance of the state. The allocations for calendar year 2010 have yet to be made by the IRS.

Additional information regarding participation in this bond designation program will be provided in the near future, according to State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch. In the meantime, information about ARRA guidelines is available at: <http://isbe.net/arra/default.htm>.

QZAB bonds, on the other hand, can be used to finance school renovations, equipment purchases, devel-

See CONSTRUCTION on page 7

Repairs, preventative maintenance not allowed under federal funding rules

The Illinois State Board of Education reports it has received many questions about what are acceptable or unacceptable expenditures under federal rules in terms of maintenance buildings costs. For example: Is repair work covered? Can you use the funds to pay a janitor's salary?

The 2003 federal handbook defines “maintenance of buildings” as “activities associated with keeping buildings at an acceptable level of efficiency through repairs and preventative main-

tenance.” Expenses associated with maintenance of buildings are not acceptable under ARRA General State Aid funds.

Therefore, maintenance costs not acceptable under ARRA General State Aid funds include expenditures such as window replacement, roof repair/replacement, electrical repair and maintenance personnel, and painting.

The federal handbook also includes “Operation of Buildings,” as activities

concerned with keeping the physical plant clean and ready for daily use. This includes operating lighting and HVAC systems and doing minor repairs. Also included are the costs of building rental and property insurance. These expenditures are acceptable under ARRA General State Aid funds.

Therefore, some acceptable operational expenditures for ARRA General State Aid funds include janitorial services, janitorial salaries and utilities.

CONSTRUCTION *from page 7*

oping course material, and training teachers and personnel at a “qualified zone academy.” None of the proceeds, however, can be used for new construction or land acquisition. In general, a “qualified zone academy” is any public school (or academic program within a public school) that is located in a federally designated empowerment zone or enterprise community (per U.S. Housing and Urban Development designation), and is designed to cooperate with businesses to enhance the academic curriculum and increase

graduation and employment rates. Schools are also eligible to take advantage of the QZAB program if at least 35 percent of students enrolled are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches. In order to use the QZAB program, a school district must have written commitment for a 10 percent match from a private business.

Build America Bond (BAB) Program is a new category of taxable bonds available to school districts for the construction, rehabilitation, or repair of public school facilities and other

purposes. Bonds designated as BAB’s provide either a tax credit to the bond holder in lieu of part of the interest, or reimburse the issuing district for a portion of the interest paid. There is neither a national or state volume cap regarding such bonds; that is, there is no limit on the amount of such bonds that can be issued.

Additional information concerning Build America Bonds may be obtained from a financial advisor or from the IRS web site. See: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/n-09-26.pdf>.

GREEN *from page 1*

ing from recycling, energy use, and water consumption, to green cleaning, water-efficient landscaping, and site maintenance programs. The possibilities could extend to purchasing environmentally-friendly products, using renewable energy, or buying locally-farmed food.

Vuk Vujovic, Legat Architects’ director of sustainable design, said, “LEED EB O&M provides a unique opportunity to optimize the buildings’ performance. The result can be substantial energy savings, healthier indoor environments, and a more sustainable building operation. Our goal is to create a benchmark model that would encourage other school districts in Illinois to pursue the LEED EB O&M certification for all of their

existing facilities.”

The registration is just the latest District 219 collaboration with Legat Architects responding to the district’s longstanding commitment to energy-efficient, environmentally-sensitive design. A 12-year-long partnership has included studies, programming, new construction, and renovations.

In May 2009, Niles West opened a 7,200-square-foot classroom addition designed for green certification. The building features a Green Education Room where students can compare energy consumption for the lighting in three rooms: one using normal power, one with a daylight harvesting system, and one powered by solar panels on the roof.



Niles West High School, 5701 Dakton Street, Skokie, is a model of green construction, as well.

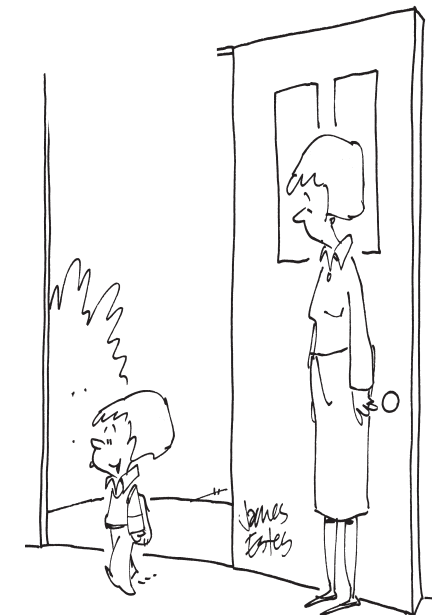
TECHNOLOGY *from page 2*

Studies of earlier generations of distance and online learning courses have concluded that they are usually as effective as classroom-based instruction, according to federal education officials. The studies of more recent online instruction included in the new meta-analysis found that, on average, online learning, at the post-secondary level, is more effective than

conventional face-to-face instruction.

The study was conducted by the Center for Technology and Learning, SRI International under contract to the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Policy and Program Studies Service, which commissioned the study.

The full report can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opepd/ppss/reports.html#edtech>.



“Our music teacher has been telling us to sing good and loud — she says we’ve got the loud part down pat!”

REFORM *from page 1*

standards and more innovation – were timed to make a splash with state leaders as the latter waded through tough budget negotiations. The mix of ideas from Advance Illinois focuses on “affordable” fixes, such as raising state standards, giving principals more hiring and firing authority, and tying teacher pay directly to student performance.

One key proposal calls for a new incentive fund modeled on the federal “Race to the Top Fund.” Like the federal fund, the state program would award competitive grants to districts and schools that advance good ideas for fixing their own unique problems.

But the group left it unclear how big such a fund should be or who should control the decision-making mechanism. Their executive director, Robin Steans, says she’s looking forward to working with state legislators on the issue.

“The need has never been more acute, as our student achievement is slipping dangerously,” said Steans. “The opportunities have never been greater, as the federal stimulus is pointing us toward aggressive reform.”

Co-chairman Edgar said he also welcomes the “elephant in the room”—the \$4 billion federal Race to the Top fund—as an agent of change.

“Education Secretary Arne Duncan has warned us that Illinois may not have implemented enough reforms yet to get some of those federal funds. That is why we must show we are willing and capable of changing our ways when it comes to education,” said Edgar.

To make its case for “radical change,” Advance Illinois claims that just one in four Illinois students will graduate from high school truly ready for college or a career. Supporting this view is the fact that more than 70 percent of graduates quickly take the next step into two- and four-year colleges, but at least 28 percent of those students immediately take remedial English or math courses, according to a 1997 study by the National Center for Education Statistics. In a more recent study, the



Robin Steans



Jim Edgar

Center found college transcripts show that during their careers in higher education, 53 percent of students take at least one remedial class in English or mathematics.

“We hurt our young people most by low expectations,” he continued. “We can and must do better. Every student has the right to a diploma that means something. We do children a great injustice by failing to prepare them to succeed in a highly competitive world,” Edgar added.

To that end, Advance Illinois wants a major overhaul of teacher tenure and evaluation, based on much more rigorous and value-added measures of student performance. Principals, principal preparation programs and teacher training should likewise be evaluated on student outcomes, the report argued.

Giving principals more control over hiring and firing of teachers is also on the group’s radar, a changeover that experts say may require changes to the state’s education laws.

Insiders say such recommendations are likely to ruffle feathers with teacher organizations, which fought to include rules limiting the use of test scores in teacher evaluations as the state works toward a new student data system.

“Advance is just one of the voices, along with IEA, IFT and other stakeholder groups, whose ideas on education improvement must be heard and debated,” said IEA spokesman Charlie McBaron.

Steans contends the state currently wastes nearly \$400 million a year compensating teachers with advanced degrees via higher salaries, despite a lack of evidence that advanced degrees lead to better student learn-

ing. Supporting the view that such incentives are a waste of money is a 1987 study, “Characteristics associated with effective public high schools,” conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California, and published in the *Journal of Educational Research*. The dollar figure for Illinois comes from the ISBE, according to Advance Illinois.

Studies even have shown that master’s degrees have a slightly negative impact on student achievement. Two such studies were published in a journal called *Economics of Education Review*: “Do school and teacher characteristics matter?” (1994), and “The impact of school resources on the learning of inner city children” (1984).

Advance Illinois also urges better data to drive student instruction and verify progress, which coincides with a recent announcement by the State Board of Education that it has won a \$9 million federal grant to build a data system to track student performance from preschool through college.

To save money on the group’s suggestions in this area, the Advance Illinois report also backs a rollout of an online platform for administering state tests, allowing schools to test kids later in the year to better gauge how much they have learned. It would also provide nearly instant feedback to educators, supporters say.

The group also suggests the state commit to the following by 2020:

- Increase the state’s proficiency rates in reading and math on the NAEP (National Assessment of Education Progress) from 30 percent to 50 percent
- Increase the graduation rate from 75 percent to at least 85 percent
- Increase the number of students who take college- and career-prep coursework from 45 percent to 70 percent
- Close the achievement gap to less than 10 percentage points

Advance Illinois also recommends

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tracking progress against aggressive measures to match the achievement of the most successful states. Illinois must lower achievement gaps and raise graduation rates, the group says. Now landing in the middle rank of U.S. performance, Illinois should aim to end up among the top five states across a range of measurements, including academic proficiency, student achievement and educational attainment.

The group's proposed reforms correspond to criteria the federal government will use to award additional education stimulus dollars on a competitive basis starting this fall. These reform steps should be implemented regardless of the stimulus, but — taken seriously — could trigger significant federal dollars for cash-strapped Illinois schools, according to the report.

“Not all new funding means more money out of the pockets of Illinois taxpayers, and Illinois should actively pursue federal funds,” said Edgar.

The recommendations are said to be based on nearly a year of consultation with experts across the nation, research into successful reforms elsewhere and dozens of meetings and public town hall sessions with parents, educators, academics and community leaders across Illinois.

Since the Advance Illinois report was issued, Secretary Duncan has admitted that the state has made some remarkable strides. This spring, legislators increased the number of charter schools allowed in the state, and the Illinois State Board of Education won a \$9 million federal grant to build a data system to track student performance from preschool through college and took the lead in assembling a group of 45 states that are now developing national academic standards.

Duncan said Illinois can compete for much of the new federal money that will soon be available, but it will take more of the kind of progress that has been demonstrated in recent weeks. He made the latter remarks at a conference in Chicago on June 18, a conference sponsored by Advance Illinois

to coincide with the release of the group's year-long study.

Copies of that study are available on the Advance Illinois website at: <http://www.advanceillinois.org/>.

Stears, who has education degrees from Brown and Stanford Universities, also has a law degree from the University of Chicago. She has taught in public schools in Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco, is a director of a Lawndale charter school, and is a member of a local school council in the Chicago public school system. She has served as a board member of education policy organizations; and founded several start-up organizations. Stears has significant experience in public school reform, and has led efforts designed to develop and retain high quality teachers, support intensive school-based instructional strategies, bring additional social supports to students in at-risk neighborhoods, and increase college readiness and access.

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The group's board of directors includes: Ellen Alberding, president, The Joyce Foundation; James Bell, president & CFO, The Boeing Company; Lewis Collens, Professor of Law and President Emeritus, Illinois Institute of Technology; Miguel del Valle, City Clerk of Chicago and former chair of Illinois Senate Education Committee; John Edwardson, chairman, president & CEO, CDW Corporation; Joseph Fatheree, 2006-2007 Illinois Teacher of the Year, Effingham High School; James C. Franczek, Jr., president, Franczek Radelet P.C.; J. Dennis Hastert, former Speaker of the House, U.S. House of Representatives; Timothy Knowles, Lewis-Sebring Director, Urban Education Institute, University of Chicago; Sylvia

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Highlights of the report

Effective educators

- Evaluate and accredit teacher training based on the quality of programs and graduates
- Evaluate educators based on performance, and impact on student achievement
- Award tenure and certification based on performance
- Give districts serving at-risk children more control and flexibility to hire effective teachers

Expectations and supports

- Adopt internationally benchmarked college- and career-ready standards
- Revise assessments, agree on a mechanism for measuring student growth, etc.
- Raise graduation requirements to match college and career requirements
- Make cutting-edge curricula and formative assessments available to teachers
- Provide parents with early, relevant information about student development and progress

Empower local innovation, demand accountability, results

- Create a State Innovation Fund to support districts that creatively tackle priority issues
- Build a world-class data system
- Develop approaches to constructively intervene in failing schools

Court allows tuition reimbursement to parents for special ed

Federal law permits tuition reimbursement to parents who unilaterally place their child in private school when the child has never previously received special education services in public school.

That is what the Supreme Court said this past June in the somewhat controversial case of *Forrest Grove School District v. T.A.*, 557 U.S. ___ (2009).

The case originates from Oregon, where in 2003 a teenage student left his public school in accordance with a private psychiatrist's recommendation. The public school had determined that he was not eligible for IEP. As a result, the student enrolled in a private school costing \$5,200 a month to attend.

His parents requested an administrative hearing to seek school reimbursement under the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) to pay for his private school tuition. The dispute concerned whether parents must first allow their child to use the public school's special education program before they can unilaterally move their child to a private school program and seek tuition reimbursement. The interests of the parents, student, and school were honed as the case proceeded through the appellate process.

The school argued that the IDEA requires parents to work collaboratively with the school district before being able to obtain a publicly funded private education. Schools should be given a chance to devise a program for the child before having to make costly reimbursements for private programs. The school was concerned that the precedent may be used as a means to a government-funded private school education. This decision could conceivably allow and facilitate more public to private crossovers to occur and consequently create a sub-



Edward Milas

DEVELOPMENTS IN SCHOOL LAW

stantial increase in costs.

The parents argued that they should not have to wait years to find the best program for their child who is already in high school and needs help now.

Here, the question for the Court was whether the IDEA requires parents to try the public school program first. Nearly 25 years ago, in *School Comm. Of Burlington v. Department of Ed. of Mass.*, 471 U.S. 359 (1985), the Court authorized private school reimbursement when a district failed to provide a proper education and a more suitable private option existed. This decision expands *Burlington*.

The Supreme Court concluded that the school must reimburse the student's parents if it cannot adequately address or fulfill his educational needs. This conclusion did not just focus on the adequacy of a proposed IEP but the school's failure to provide an IEP at all. The Court held the Act does not allow the student's parents to be left without relief and

be provided no access to services altogether.

School officials should take note of this decision because:

It underscores the importance of the Child Find laws and need for school officials and parents to find quick and cooperative solutions to a student's educational needs. Ultimately, both the school and parents have a child's best interest in mind creating a dual responsibility.

A quick identification of special education problems seemingly provides the potential to avoid complex and expensive legal issues, but most importantly allows the child to receive the proper help in either the public or private system.

Edward Milas is a volunteer legal intern in IASB's office of general counsel for the summer of 2009. He attends Loyola University Chicago School of Law and starts his third year in the fall. He also has several other legislative, policy and education experiences.

Obama releases details of school reform grants

On July 24 in preparing to dole out \$4.35 billion to states and school districts, President Obama challenged school boards and others across the country to bring about education reforms.

President Obama joined Secretary of Education Arne Duncan for an event to outline the criteria for school districts and states to receive the remaining economic stimulus funds. Specifically, Obama unveiled details of what states and school districts need to do to be eligible for the "Race to the Top" grants.

"I am issuing a challenge to our nation's governors, school boards, principals, teachers, and business-...", the President said. "If you set and enforce challenging standards

and assessments, if you put outstanding teachers at the front of the classroom, if you turn around failing schools, your state can win a race to the top grant."

The National School Boards Association's Economic Stimulus Resource Center provides updates for school leaders interested in race to the top grants. It is available online at: <http://www.nsba.org/MainMenu/Advocacy/FederalLaws/FederalFunding/Stimulus.aspx>.

Also providing direction is the U.S. Department of Education's draft guidance at <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2009/07/07242009.html> concerning "Race to the Top" funds and applications for states to complete the second round of State Fiscal Stabilization Fund endeavors.

NEW HEADLINES

Antioch (June 23, *Chicago Tribune*) Despite objections from several parents who find its language rude, an award-winning book will be kept on the reading list at Antioch High School while an alternative will be offered for those who request it. In response to concerns, though, Community High School District 117, Antioch, will form a committee each March to review future summer reading assignments. The committee, which will include parents, would decide whether parents should be warned if a book contains possibly objectionable material, officials said.

Chicago (June 29, *Chicago Sun-Times*) A typical public school in Chicago loses more than half its teachers within five years and about two-thirds of its new ones. A study released June 29 by the University of Chicago indicates that teacher turnover is especially severe in high-poverty city schools, about a hundred total, where half of all teachers disappear after only three years. Many schools “are likely stuck in a cycle of teacher loss that is hard to break,” with about 100 schools losing nearly a third of their teachers a year, on average, the study found. In response, Chicago District 299 CEO Ron Huberman said he plans to extend teacher mentoring to all new teachers, and he is exploring paying top teachers extra to come and stay in high-need schools.

Cook County (July 2, *Chicago Tribune*) Investigators raided the home and office of the Cook County regional schools superintendent on July 1, carting out laptop computers, cell phones and boxes of files. Officials with the Cook County state’s attorney’s office confirmed that they have launched a criminal investigation into Supt. Charles Flowers’ office. The investigation comes in the wake of a state audit that found Flowers’ office was nearly \$1 million in debt after, among other irregularities, he

made personal charges on an office credit card and gave a \$6,000 advance to a relative he hired to work for him.

East St. Louis (June 19, *The Associated Press*) A bank employee is accused of stealing more than \$166,000 from work to cover money taken from a school’s charity account. A federal indictment alleges Michelle Knebel was a bookkeeper for the Highland School Charitable Foundation when she began stealing from it a decade ago. When the foundation decided in 2007 to close its account, she allegedly made transfers from the CD accounts of other customers to replenish the charity’s account.

Galesburg (June 30, *The Register-Mail*) Galesburg District 205 will begin random drug tests of high school athletes and students in extracurricular activities in the fall. The board voted 4 to 1, with two absences, to implement a policy that aims to help curtail drug use in the school, said board member Barry Swanson. “I think it’s something we definitely need to do,” he said. “It’s something that’s going to help kids in the long run because I think there are times when kids, like it or not, need an excuse not to use.”

Naperville (June 17, *Chicago Tribune*) Indian Prairie CUSD 204 officials say planning for a new school is forcing change. The district redrew school boundaries and then ruled in October that only juniors and seniors in redistricted areas would be able to remain in their original schools. That meant more than 850 incoming freshmen and nearly 900 sophomores who would have attended one school would head to a different school. School officials said about 144 students would be separated from older siblings. Letting the younger ones stay, they said, would prove too costly, requiring more than six new teachers and costing at least \$360,000.

Northfield (July 1, *Glenview*

Announcements) Northfield Township High School District 225 will contest a recent state appellate court decision that the district’s newsletters concerning the successful 2006 referendum are “electioneering communications” and seemingly subject to state election laws. The lawsuit, if successful, could have broad-ranging implications for state taxing bodies in that it could redefine elected government boards as “local political committees” subject to election requirements when spending money to disseminate information about referendum questions. The appellate court’s May 22 decision in the case of *Citizens Organized to Save the Tax Cap (COST) v. District 225 School Board and the individual trustees* reversed a 6-2 dismissal of the lawsuit in August 2007 by the state elections board.

Rockford (June 23, WIFR radio) The Rockford school board recently rejected proposals for two new charter schools. Concerns centered on legal issues regarding the two proposals and their financial impact on the district. Rockford’s total charter school count remains at three, but all of those schools serve elementary-age students. Some community members say they are disappointed there are still no charter options for middle and high school students.

Statewide (June 17, *Peoria Journal Star*) School leaders from across the state pleaded with state education officials on June 17 not to cut essential funding. The legislature has adopted what many are calling a “50 percent” budget for most education programs and is leaving it up to the Illinois State Board of Education where to direct more than \$400 million. “Realistically, the board simply cannot cut every program by half,” state Superintendent Christopher Koch wrote in a recent letter to school superintendents throughout the state.

New law may help schools ride out current economic recession

A new law will give Illinois school districts added flexibility to borrow money, perhaps with an eye to helping districts ride out the current economic recession.

Signed on June 26 by Governor Patrick Quinn, it allows districts to issue notes and bonds by using anticipated revenue for the current fiscal year or 50 percent of the amount due next year.

The borrowed money would have to be repaid “exclusively from the anticipated revenues within 60 days after the revenues have been received.”

H.B. 999, jointly sponsored by Rep. Roger L. Eddy (R-Hutsonville) and Rep. William B. Black (R-Danville), allows a district to establish a line of credit with a bank or other financial institution instead of only with a bank, as was already allowed. It provides that the line of credit amount can’t exceed 95% of the amount of property taxes most recently levied for educational, operations and maintenance, transportation, or other tax levy purposes or any combination thereof (instead of just for educational and building purposes).

The bill provides that money thus borrowed must be applied to the purposes for which the tax or any combi-

nation of the taxes may be levied (instead of the purposes for which they were obtained). And it allows a school board to anticipate revenues due in the current fiscal year or expected to be due in the next subsequent fiscal year and issue notes, bonds, or other obligations and, in connection with that issuance, establish a line of credit.

In addition, it allows other educational entities or a regional superintendent of schools to anticipate revenue due in the current fiscal year or expected to be due in the next subsequent fiscal year and issue notes or other obligations and, in connection with that issuance, establish a line of credit in a specified amount under certain conditions. The bill was effective immediately upon being signed.

Quinn said the legislation, now Public Act 96-19, will allow schools to keep up with their bills during the recession.

Descriptions of other bills now on the governor’s desk are contained in the 2009 edition of IASB’s *Digest of Bills Passed*, compiled by the Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance. It was recently published and sent to school districts, and it will eventually be available on the Association’s website, <http://www.iasb.com>.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 15 – Professional Advancement Seminar - Seeking the Superintendency, IASB Springfield office, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

September 15 – Wabash Valley Division Dinner Meeting, Hutsonville CUSD 1, Time to be announced

September 17 – Professional Advancement Seminar - Seeking the Superintendency, IASB Lombard office, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

September 24 – Southwestern Division Fall Dinner Meeting, Waterloo CUSD 5, 5:30 p.m. – Registration

September 24 – Education and Government Finance Support Professionals’ Conference, Crowne Plaza, Springfield, 7 a.m. - 3 p.m.

September 24 – Illini Division Fall Dinner Meeting, Arthur CUSD 305, Time to be announced

September 24 – Education and Government Finance Support Professionals Conference, Crowne Plaza, Springfield, 7 a.m. - 3 p.m.

September 25-26 – Basics of Governance & Law on Board Meetings and Practices, NIU, Naperville, Thur., 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.; Fri., 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.