

Illinois SCHOOL BOARD Newsbulletin

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School Board Members Day: time to salute

IASB recently made available a packet of materials for school district superintendents, district secretaries and school public relations specialists to help districts organize the activities celebrating “School Board Members Day” on Nov. 15.

This annual day of observance was designated by state lawmakers to help build community awareness and understanding about the crucial role elected school boards play in a rep-

resentative democracy.

The packet of Illinois-specific materials from IASB included such things as a news release for distribution to local media, a tip sheet of suggested activities, a sample letter to community groups, and sample editorials and mar- quees, as well as public service



announcements.

“This represents a terrific opportunity to help acknowledge the public servants in every school district who make the time to share their vision and voice about the future of public education,” said IASB Executive Director Emeritus Michael D. Johnson.

All of the materials can be downloaded for free from IASB’s Members-Only website, <http://members.iasb.com>.

New salary disclosure law mandates reports on compensation

New act requires schools to post bargaining pacts

School leaders need to be aware of some new salary disclosure laws impacting Illinois schools. The first such measure, PA 96-434, effective Aug. 13, requires school districts to annually prepare an itemized salary compensation report for every employee holding an administrative certificate and working as an administrator. The new law requires the district superintendent to post that information on or before Oct. 1 of each year.

The resulting Administrators’

Salary Compensation Report must be presented publicly at a regularly scheduled school board meeting, must be posted on the school district website, and must be submitted to the Regional Office of Education.

Additionally, this new law on salary disclosure requires school districts to post all collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) on their websites.

The report must include the base salary, pension contributions, retirement increases, cost of health insurance and life insurance, paid sick and vacation day payouts, annuities, and any other form of compensation paid to the school administrator.

The second such new law, Public Act 96-266, does not take effect until Jan. 1, 2010. It requires boards of education to report the base salary and benefits of district employees, including district superintendents and teachers, to ISBE by July 1 of each year (the “ISBE Compensation Report”).

Based on preliminary word from ISBE, it is likely that this information will be submitted on a form created and distributed by ISBE, or possibly on the Teacher Service Record form as an additional data field.

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ISBE to hold budget hearings in multiple locations

The Illinois State Board of Education's Finance and Audit Committee is holding a series of hearings on the state's FY 2011 budget over the coming weeks and months.

Those school leaders wishing to participate may sign-in upon arrival, but must provide 15 copies of written testimony and cost estimates (including a detailed budget) for programs discussed, and address how programs relate to the state board's strategic plan goals:

Goal 1: Every student will demonstrate academic achievement and be prepared for success after high school.

Goal 2: Every student will be supported by highly prepared and effective teachers and school leaders.

Goal 3: Every school will offer a safe and healthy learning environment for all students.

Check the calendar on the ISBE website, <http://isbe.net/calendar/default.htm>, for updates to the following list of remaining hearings:

- Oct. 28 at the Crowne Plaza, Springfield: 1-3 p.m.
- Nov. 5 in the Board Room, CCSD 21, Wheeling: 6-8 p.m.
- Dec. 9, Lincoln School Multipurpose Room, Mundelein: 6-8 p.m.

School district library grant applications available

The FY 2010 School District Library Grant Program (the School Library Per Capita Grant) application is available online at http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/what_we_do/schoolpercapgrant.html. The deadline is Nov. 20.

For questions call the Illinois State Library at 800/665-5576, ext. 1, or e-mail Ron Winner: rwinner@ilsos.net.

Consistent gains registered on ACT, overall scores rise on 3 of 4 subjects

The class of 2009 in Illinois schools maintained or made gains in all subject areas tested on the ACT from 2008 to 2009, increasing its composite score for the third year in a row. Illinois students posted the highest composite score of the seven states nationwide in which 90% or more students take the ACT.

"This continued, gradual improvement on the ACT is promising news. When we made the switch to testing all of our students with the ACT, not just those who are planning to go to college, we saw a sharp drop, but we are making up for that now with this steady improvement," said State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch. "Other states have seen what we're doing here in Illinois and are also moving toward universal testing to better prepare all students for the next steps after graduation. We need to keep the momentum going toward better preparation by developing learning standards that truly challenge our students and prepare them for competing against the best in the world."

Illinois students made gains or maintained achievement in three of the four subject areas from 2007 to 2008:

Subject	2008	2009
English	20.4	20.5
Mathematics	20.7	20.7
Reading	20.6	20.8
Science	20.5	20.7

Illinois' composite scores for the past five years have increased a half point. This beats the national average, which has increased by only 2-tenths of a point during the same timeframe. However, Illinois is still behind the national composite score, which was 21.1 in 2009.

Although ACT is designed for students who plan to attend college, Illinois requires all 11th graders, unless they're exempt, to take the ACT as

part of the required state testing under the federal No Child Left Behind Law. Illinois' composite average of 20.8 ties it with Colorado for the highest composite average of states with 90% or more graduates tested. Other states with 90% or more of their graduates taking the ACT include Tennessee, Wyoming, Michigan, Kentucky and Mississippi.

The number of Illinois graduates taking the ACT has increased by more than 7,000 since 2005, with nearly 144,000 taking the test in 2008.


Illinois is currently updating its learning standards and is a leader in the drive for internationally benchmarked standards. Illinois was one of the first states to join the Common Core Standards Initiative, a state-led process to develop a common core of standards in English language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. The initiative, under the leadership of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) aims to better prepare students for college and career.

Illinois
SCHOOL BOARD
Newsbulletin

**Illinois Association
of School Boards**

This newsletter is published monthly by the Illinois Association of School Boards for member boards of education and their superintendents. The Illinois Association of School Boards, an Illinois not-for-profit corporation, is a voluntary association of local boards of education and is not affiliated with any branch of government.

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**ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

IHSA announces plans for fall drug tests

Performance-boosting drug testing continues

The Illinois High School Association (IHSA) announced on Sep. 17 that it will continue its Performance-Enhancing Drug Testing Program this fall.

The IHSA has posted a brief video on the IHSA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee homepage, which can be viewed at <http://www.ihsa.org/multimedia/video/ped.htm>. It addresses the current status of testing for the fall, as well as the ramifications of future testing under HB 272.

The IHSA became the fourth state association to provide performance-enhancing drug testing a year ago, when it combined to test nearly 700 students from all IHSA sports.

Last January, HB 272 was filed by Representative Jack D. Franks, (D-Woodstock). The bill called for more extensive performance-enhancing drug testing by the IHSA, including the testing of 1,000 students per year, testing of at least one student from 25 percent of the IHSA's membership schools, and random testing during the school year. The bill, which was signed into law on Aug. 7, also

provides the IHSA with state funding to finance the program in the future. The Illinois Department of Public Health will oversee the structure and implementation of the new testing program.

The IHSA has yet to receive a definitive timeline or structure from the Illinois Department of Public Health and will subsequently implement its own testing for the fall, with the expectation that the new program will be in place by early 2010 in time to provide testing for the IHSA's winter and spring sports.

The IHSA's Fall 2009 Performance-Enhancing Drug Testing Program will be structured in the same manner as a year ago.

- A consent form must be signed by every student and their

parent/guardian to be eligible for state postseason participation.

- Fall testing will occur at select IHSA state series tournaments.
- Testing will be conducted by the National Center for Drug-Free Sport.
- Member schools will receive notification of their testing prior to the event.
- Member schools will be notified of test results after the IHSA receives results.

The IHSA says testing this fall was important from a continuity standpoint for schools and, most importantly, to continue to offer a deterrent for student-athletes in the state from using performance-enhancing drugs.

SALARY *from page 1*

To comply with PA 95-707, requiring districts to "list" CBAs online, some superintendents were considering posting bargaining agreements online, with compensation information for both school administrators and teachers. Some said teachers would bear the brunt of this fallout, rather than administrators. But school

attorneys urged caution, noting it would be unwise to surprise bargaining representatives across the table with the unannounced release of teacher compensation information not yet required by law. The legislature, as reported above, has now mandated posting the bargaining pacts online.

'Walk Across Illinois' fitness program benefits touted

Some schools across the state allegedly are becoming physical activity utopias. These schools are filled with physically active students engaged in fun, standards-based curricular activities. Children there of all abilities have a sense of belonging. Administrators champion healthy school environments and parents and educators are even joining in the fun of a physically active routine. The Walk Across Illinois School Fitness Program is said to be making all of this possible, and advocates say it is perfect for any school or classroom.

The Walk Across Illinois School Fitness Program offers elementary

schools a free interdisciplinary approach that increases students' physical activity in school and at home. Participating students are motivated to walk, or do the physical activity equivalent of, 375 miles along one of Walk Across Illinois' unique, grade-specific virtual journeys. The journey takes students through 25 historic communities.

The Walk Across Illinois School Fitness Program includes an interdisciplinary, standards-based classroom curriculum, which engages students in in-depth weekly lessons about each location on their virtual walk. The program provides the curricula (for P.E. and classroom teach-

ers), teacher training, physical activity tracking tools and ongoing professional support. All program materials are provided free of charge.

"Students are having fun, learning and being physically active," said Walk Across Illinois program director Dan Persky. "This program combines everything kids need for fitness."

The School Fitness Program is one of several Walk Across Illinois programs that help students and teachers use physical activity to improve their health, our environment and the communities of our state. Registration is free. For more information, visit <http://www.walkacrossillinois.org>

Resolutions Committee backs adoption of two proposals

Changes eyed on ISBE pacts, election provisions

IASB's resolutions committee, chaired by IASB Vice President Joe Alesandrini, recently recommended the adoption of two of 12 submitted resolutions. One proposal would limit the power of state oversight panels or finance authorities; the other would soften the requirements for a school district to choose board members at large.

The committee met on Aug. 7 in Oak Brook. Members opposed several of the proposed resolutions over concerns related to the erosion of local control, which the committee suggested would be furthered by the proposals. Some other resolutions were rejected because the committee did not fully understand the proposal's intent, and the sponsoring district had not sent a representative along to explain. Still other proposed resolutions were rejected because their purpose was considered contrary to existing positions of the Association.

The committee met to review resolution proposals submitted by member districts for possible adoption at the IASB Delegate Assembly. It will meet on Saturday, Nov. 21 from 10:30 a.m. to noon. Resolutions adopted there will set policy for IASB for the coming year.

Each year IASB's 21 divisions vote to choose a resolutions committee chairman, who serves on the statewide committee. The committee is empowered to recommend the approval or disapproval of proposed resolutions, and to determine which resolutions are presented to the assembly.

Committee decisions may be appealed, but appeals must be submitted by member districts in writing to the committee at least eight days before the assembly's meeting.

A Report to the Membership summarizing the resolutions, and the IASB Resolutions Committee's recommendations on each, was mailed to member districts in late September.

The two resolutions that received

a "do adopt" recommendation are as follows:

ISBE Oversight Agreement, submitted by **Calumet SD 132**.

Be it resolved that the Illinois Association of School Boards shall work to modify state statutes governing Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) school district oversight panels or finance authorities. Statutory changes should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Unless called for by the local school district, an oversight panel or finance authority shall not be imposed without a rigorous set of criteria proving the school district will not or can not serve the needs of its students, staff and community;
- Clear benchmarks and goals shall be included in the establishment of an oversight panel or finance authority and once substantially met the oversight panel or finance authority shall be dissolved;
- Progress toward benchmarks and goals must be reviewed and shared with the school district under oversight on a regular basis including any reasons or criteria for inability to make progress. Review should also recommend any modifications needed to achieve success;
- Due process and review by the Attorney General must be afforded school districts when appropriate; and
- ISBE authority to establish oversight panels or finance authorities shall not be broadened to facilitate imposition of a panel or authority or to expand their oversight once put in place.

The submitting district rationale: The Board of Education of Calumet Public School District No. 132 entered into an Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) on June 6, 2006 wherein a voluntary partnership was established between the parties. The agreement provides that the ISBE will assist the school administration in planning and operations to help comply with regulatory require-

ments; improve education in the best interests of the school district and its students; and, achieve the district's educational mission. The original term of the agreement ended on June 30, 2008, but it additionally provides that the "term shall automatically be renewed for three additional one year periods unless the ISBE determines, based upon a review of the district's compliance with regulatory requirements and the terms and provisions of this agreement, further oversight is unnecessary." The ISBE renewed the term of the agreement for an additional one-year period based on its interpretation that the school district's annual goals were not met.

The ISBE has still not yet informed the school district as to whether it has made any determinations regarding the district's progress with its annual goals and whether it plans to continue oversight in the remaining two-year period (2009-2011). Our board is concerned that even if our district reaches most or all of its annual goals, the ISBE will renew the agreement for the remaining years.

The members of our Board of Education are concerned that if, in the ISBE's judgment, the annual goals are not met the agreement will be renewed at the detriment to the public image of the school district and the community and students it serves, and public confidence in the Board of Education and the school district's administration will erode without cause, as few if any school districts meet 100% of their annual goals and expectations.

The resolutions committee rationale: The district is working under the auspices of a State-sponsored School Finance Authority. The committee agreed with the submitting district that the imposition, structure, intervention, decision-making and duration of a school board imposed oversight panel or finance authority must be fair to the local board of education,

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RESOLUTIONS *from page 4*

administrative team, and teachers. IASB lobbyists have been working against legislation forwarded by the Illinois State Board of Education that would further expand ISBE power over school districts that might be eligible for a Financial Oversight Panel or a School Finance Authority. This proposal would clarify the Association's direction on the issue.

School Board Election At-Large, submitted by **Greenfield CUSD 10**

Be it resolved that the Illinois Association of School Boards shall support legislation that would modify the current requirement of Section 10-10.5 of the School Code that a majority of voters in each and every congressional township comprising a school district vote in favor of a proposition for the election of board members at large and without restriction by area of residence within the school district.

Submitting district rationale: The School Code restricts membership of boards of education in many school districts by congressional townships. Those township restrictions are, in many instances, anachronisms dating from the original creation of the school district and are not currently a source of voter identity. Many school districts and county clerks, as local election officials, are unable to identify boundaries between congressional townships and often confuse congressional townships with political townships.

Current law allows for voter approval of a proposition for the election of board members at large and without restriction by area of residence only upon passage of a majority of those voting on the proposition in each congressional township comprising the school district, including any congressional township of less than 100 inhabitants. Such passage restrictions make it virtually impossible for such a proposition to pass, even when the majority of voters in the school district have voted in its favor. In many instances, the current congressional township restrictions

make it very difficult to find qualified candidates for the board and often prevent the election of the best prepared and most qualified individuals to serve as school board members. Revising current method for allowing the election board members at large and without restriction by area of residence within the school district, whether by simple majority of all voters, a majority of congressional townships voting, or some other method, would make it easier for qualified candidates to be elected and would allow the majority of voters in the school district to decide whether congressional township restrictions should continue.

Resolutions Committee Rationale: This resolution calls for the Association to support 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. Currently, if one congressional township fails to approve the ballot question, the school district must still elect its members by the residency restrictions.

The committee struggled with the balance of allowing a school district to more easily facilitate school board elections and allowing each voter to have his or her vote count on Election Day. At the end of the debate, it was the consensus of the Committee to support the proposal.

For more information, contact your division representative to the resolutions committee or phone IASB governmental relations at ext. 1132.

Conference planning tool to go online

A personal conference planner to customize your conference activities is available on the Members-Only website at <http://members.iasb.com>. Staff members also were working to add some new features, including sample pre- and post-conference news releases and an outline to help boards with sharing and reporting their conference experiences with their community.

To obtain this Member-Only conference information, it is necessary to register on the website using your seven-digit Member ID number and last name. The Member ID number appears on mailing labels of all materials sent to IASB members, it begins with a "2." Members will also be asked to set up an account with an e-mail address and a password of their choice.

Attorneys share special ed procedures for free

The Illinois Council of School Attorneys and IASB have revised their *Special Education Procedures* with new language regarding revocation of consent. The IASB website now contains:

- NEWLY REVISED September 2009, *Section 10, Subsection H. Revocation of Consent for Special Education and Related Services*
- NEWLY REVISED September 2009, *Special Education Procedures Assuring the Implementation of Comprehensive Programming for Children with Disabilities*

All documents may be downloaded free of charge because the participating Illinois Council of School Attorneys' special education committee members graciously donated their time and IASB covered all other costs. Just go to: <http://www.iasb.com/law/icsaspeded.cfm>

Note: ISBE requires districts and cooperatives to have their written assurance letters in by 9/30/09. If your district or cooperative already submitted its written assurance letters before this latest revision it will have to submit another one.

Mt. Vernon board secretary wins Holly Jack award

Janet Miller, a 15-year veteran of the Mount Vernon School District 80 administrative office, is the recipient of a new statewide award for school district secretaries. She will be honored Friday, Nov. 20, 2009, in Chicago.

Miller was chosen to receive The Holly Jack Outstanding Service Award from among 22 nominees. She is administrative assistant to the superintendent, secretary to the board, and office manager for District 80, an elementary school district of 1,500 students located in southern Illinois.

The award was created to honor the memory of the late Holly Jack, a long-time employee of the Illinois Association of School Boards, who served as an IASB administrative assistant and was instrumental in promoting and developing the secretaries' program that is offered at the annual conference. The purpose of the award is to both honor Holly Jack's contribution and memory and to recognize the

extraordinary work and service provided by secretaries who serve and assist their local boards of education.

A committee composed of individuals representing many groups, including the Holly Jack family, reviewed the nominating materials and made the selection on Sep. 9.

"Janet Miller is dedicated to her position of serving her co-workers and the public, takes initiative to find ways to improve herself and the operations of the district, and goes above what is expected of her so that others can be more successful" said Kevin Settle, District 80 superintendent. "These qualities exemplify many of the qualities that Holly Jack brought to her work with IASB."



Janet Miller

Nominations were made by district superintendents and school board presidents. The judges considered the following criteria: performance, initiative, innovation, staff development, self-improvement, passion for public education, and dedication. Letters of support were also accepted.

Settle and District 80 board president Dennis Hoffman noted some of Miller's specific accomplishments, including her work with colleagues across the state, her active membership in various local organizations, her skills as a problem-solver, and her leadership role in the district office move in 2008.

The award presentation will be made at the Joint Annual Conference of the Illinois Association of School Boards, Illinois Association of School Administrators and Illinois Association of School Business Officials. The conference will be held Nov. 20-22 in Chicago and is expected to draw more than 12,000 school leaders and guests.

Conference offers training sessions for board secretaries

IASB this year is bringing back a two-day training strand for school board and district secretaries and clerks or recording secretaries at the 2009 Joint Annual Conference. This comprehensive professional development opportunity will include the following topics:

- Board Meeting Agendas and Minutes
- Electronic Board Packets

- Providing Positive Support
- Tech-Savvy Board Secretary
- Closed Session Issues
- Illinois E-Pay
- Crisis Planning
- District Records
- FOIA's New Provisions
- ISBE Student Information Systems
- Dealing with Difficult People
- Personnel Related Issues

- Networking Session

The sessions will be held on Friday, Nov. 20, and Saturday, Nov. 21, at the Swissotel. There is no additional registration fee for these programs, but participants must be paid registrants for the conference.

Registration for the professional training is available online at:

<http://www.iasb.com/jac09/bdsecwkshp2009.pdf>.

Staff alterations noted in Springfield and Lombard offices

Two staff changes have taken place at IASB: Cindy Rispens joined Field Services Director John Cassel as a secretary in the Lombard office. Rispens has worked for the past 10 years as an administrative assistant for a court reporting agency. She has also served as a refer-

endum committee member in her local school district. She began work with the Association on Aug. 31.

Mike Mulvany joined the production services department in Springfield as a mailroom assistant. Mulvany had been employed with the Illinois Mental Health Collaborative after

his retirement from a 36-year career as a grants administrator with the Illinois Department of Human Services.

For a list of IASB staff or to contact a staff member by phone or email, visit the IASB Web site at: <http://www.iasb.com/whatis/staff.cfm>.

IASB nominating committee slates Alesandrini, Brooks to lead Association

The IASB Delegate Assembly will elect Association officers on Saturday, Nov. 21, during the Joint Annual Conference in Chicago. IASB's nominating committee has endorsed the following slate of officers: Joseph T. Alesandrini, **Pekin CHSD 303**, as president; andCarolyn Brooks, **West Richland CUSD 2**, as vice president.

"It is a tremendous honor to be nominated to lead such a great organization," Alesandrini said.

Alesandrini is completing his second term as vice president of IASB, and has been a member of the Pekin district's board of education since 1985 where he is currently the board vice president. He joined the IASB board of directors in 1997 when he was elected director of the Central Illinois Valley Division. He served as treasurer of IASB from 2005 to 2007, and had previously chaired the association's Audit Committee and Resolutions Committee, and he has served on the Executive Committee since 2003. Alesandrini has also served as a delegate to NSBA Delegate Assemblies in 2008 and 2009.

Brooks was selected by the IASB board to serve as vice president of the association. She is currently board



Joseph Alesandrini



Carolyn Brooks

secretary of the West Richland CUSD 2 Board of Education, in Noble, where she has served since 1995. Her board tenure includes services as the board vice president. She has been director of the Wabash Valley division of IASB since 2005, and has served as IASB treasurer since 2007. She chaired the association's Audit Committee in 2008. She has also served as a delegate at the NSBA Delegate Assembly.

The nominating committee met in August to interview candidates for the leadership positions. The committee is chaired by past president Marie Slater and the members are Ben Andersen, Dale Hansen, Sue McCance and Roger Pfister (Dave Barton and Jackie Mickley are alternates).

The Association leaders elected by school board delegates will assume office at the close of the annual meeting of IASB's Delegate Assembly.

Two division directors depart from the board

Director Carol Farnum, of IASB's Kishwaukee Division, recently resigned from her board seat in **Aurora East USD 131**. A local appointment process is set, and a replacement on her local board is due to be appointed by Nov. 2. A 10-year veteran school board member, Farnum joined the IASB Board in 2003. The Kishwaukee Division elected Karen Carney, **School District U-46, Elgin**, as Director on Sep. 23 to replace Farnum.

Director Barbara Somogyi, of IASB's North Cook Division, has also stepped down from the Association's board. She has served on the **Elk Grove CCSD 59** board since 1981 and is still



Carol Farnum



Barbara Somogyi

on that board. The North Cook Division held an election on Sep. 30 to replace her as the division director and chose Phil Pritzker of **Wheeling CCSD 21**. Somogyi served on the IASB board of directors for a total of 15 years.

NEWS FROM IASB

Clean audit report presented to IASB's Board of Directors

Mark Tomaw, a partner in the auditing firm of McGladrey and Pullen, presented the audit report for fiscal year 2008-09 during the most recent IASB board meeting. Tomaw reported that the audit was once again clean and the association's fiscal house is in good order.

IASB Treasurer Carolyn D. Brooks serves as audit committee chair, and the members are Karen Fisher, Felton Jose, Jr., Tom Neeley and Dane Tippett (Tom Cunningham is an alternate).

The next meeting of the board will be held on Nov. 19, at the Hyatt Regency Chicago. The board also will meet briefly on Sunday, Nov. 22 to re-organize for the year.

IASB welcomes two new member school districts

Two new additions have been added to the list of IASB districts. IASB welcomes **Pope Co. CUSD 1** (Shawnee Division), and **Irvington CCSD 11** (Egyptian Division) to the membership rolls.

Journal features preventive school finance measures

Practicing "preventive medicine" in the handling of finances can help school districts in any wealth category weather downturns in the economy. To learn how, see "Prescription for Financial Health" in the September/October 2009 issue of *The Illinois School Board Journal*.

Annual school calendar can now be downloaded

IASB's Annual School Calendar of legal dates and deadlines for 2009-2010 is available on the IASB website as a PDF at: <http://www.iasb.com/>.

Subscribers to IASB's Online Update service will be told if or when any revisions are made to it.

Districts looked to policies to deal with Obama speech to schools

Many examine policies on curriculum enhancements

Many Illinois school leaders were tuned in to the public outcry from citizens upset that their kids could or could not watch President Barack Obama's Sep. 8 speech to schoolchildren live in school. Some districts looked to school board-established policies to see what kinds of activities and events may be allowed to supplement the curriculum, and whether students can be permitted to opt out of viewing such a speech.

Like many district superintendents, **Monmouth-Roseville CUSD 238** Superintendent Paul Woehlke said he left it up to each classroom teacher to decide whether the president's address fit into their curriculum.

"It's not my intent to impose curriculum on the classroom, that's why it was really the teacher's call whether it suited their lesson planning at all," Woehlke said. "The flip side of that is, if the teacher did decide it was appropriate, we did not prevent it either."

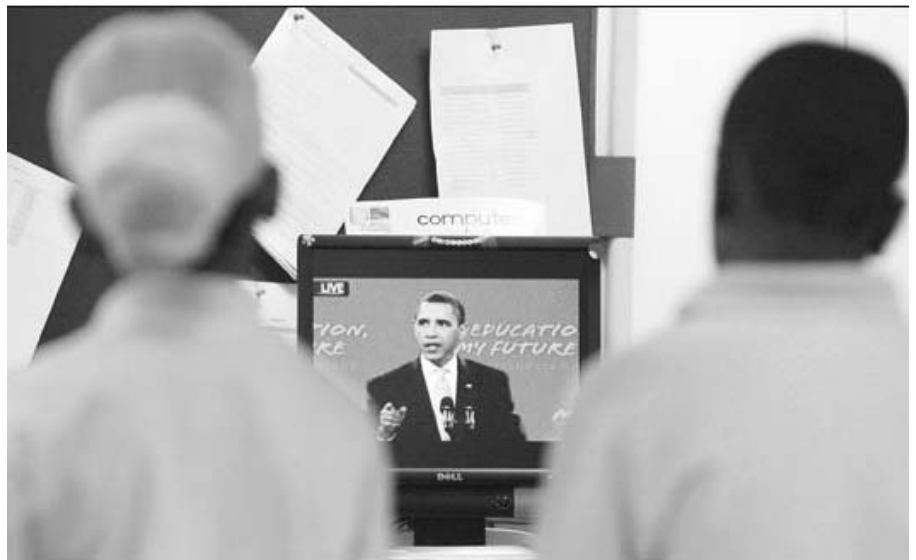
Woehlke added the district already has a written policy and procedures for parents to follow if they object to a particular lesson or classroom activity.

"This did not throw us any curve we were not prepared to deal with," Woehlke said.

Parents around the state spoke out on the issue, and some were critical of school decisions on the matter. A good many more applauded their school district for having relevant policies in place, such as those requiring a careful review in advance of any broadcast before allowing children to hear it in the classroom.

Such an approach was taken at schools in several Chicago suburbs.

Barrington Unit District 220 officials said the decision whether to watch the speech would be up to teachers, parents and students. **Schaumburg Township Elementary District 54** said the viewing was not manda-



Students watch a webcast of the President's remarks to schoolchildren on Sep.8.

tory. **Naperville District 203** said students were allowed to opt out. And **Chicago District 299** school leaders relied upon much the same policy.

In west central Illinois, **Jacksonville District 117** students were among those given the option of viewing or not viewing the president's speech. Superintendent Les Huddle said that optional viewing approach was taken after some parents called the week before the speech with concerns about the presentation.

The message to students was about working hard in school, according to The Associated Press. Some critics contended, however, that the message easily could have been made more political through off-the-cuff remarks, and the president could have used the occasion to push his policy agenda to children.

Some also took issue with suggested discussion topics accompanying the speech, and with optional lesson plans drafted by the department of education urging students to write down things the president has done to inspire them.

The White House eventually revised language in the optional lesson plan to remove this, along with language asking students to "write letters to themselves about what they can do to help the president." The revised lesson plans instead ask stu-

dents to "write letters to themselves about how they can achieve their short-term and long-term education goals."

Some school districts waited to hear parents' feedback about the speech before deciding whether to show it to students.

"We had a couple of parents call, quizzing us about the speech and how we were going to handle it," Huddle said. There was not a steady stream of calls, the superintendent added.

"Some parents called and expressed their opinions," he said. "For the most part, they wanted some sort of choice for their families and students."

The district simply followed its policy for curriculum-related issues, Huddle said.

"Our policy states that our parents have the opportunity to sign permission slips for students to opt out of any part of our curriculum," Huddle said. "Since this is an optional piece of instruction we wanted to provide parents and students with that opportunity."

Permission slips went home with students from schools planning to show the speech; but not all schools broadcast it. Those who opted out of the speech were provided with "an

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Joint Annual Conference registration packets coming soon

A preview booklet for the 2009 Joint Annual Conference is now available to all districts, including a master schedule of all Conference events; descriptions and time slots for 115 panel sessions; descriptions of five full-day pre-conference workshops and four half-day sessions, and much more.

This year's event will be the 77th Joint Annual Conference of the Illinois Association of School Boards, Illinois Association of School Administrators and Illinois Association of School Business Officials in Chicago. This is an important event for Illinois school leaders, the nation's largest state edu-

cation conference, presenting an unmatched opportunity to learn and share important information among colleagues.

A total of 115 panel sessions will be offered over the course of the three-day conference, plus nine pre-conference workshops on Friday, Nov. 20. The conference will also include: a tour of some Chicago Public Schools on Friday; a Carousel of Panels on Saturday; professional development for board and district secretaries on Friday and Saturday; coffee and conversation sessions on Sunday, plus three inspiring general-session speakers, and much more.

Oct. 16 was the deadline for IASB to receive completed registration forms from those who wish to take part in the conference. Registration fees were \$340 until Oct. 16; the cost is now \$365 each.

Housing not already secured will be the responsibility of registrants. That's because, despite contracting for hundreds of additional rooms for this year's event, the participating conference hotels ran out of available rooms several weeks ago.

Conference registration packets and badges will be mailed on Nov. 6 for all registrations received prior to the Oct. 16 deadline.

Report suggests needed improvements to teacher evaluation system

A report released recently from The New Teacher Project faults the public education system in the U.S. for its failure to use any meaningful measure of teacher effectiveness in decision-making aimed at improving student achievement. Since boards have a key role in determining how teachers will be evaluated in the district, the conclusions reached in the report, *The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness*, are summarized briefly here.

This refers to an alleged phenomenon where teachers are largely viewed as interchangeable parts (widgets). Individual strengths and weaknesses are denied, excellence

goes unrewarded and poor performance goes unaddressed. Teacher performance reviews are based on minimal observation by administrators with little training in sound evaluation, and most are rated good or great.

The report is the product of an extensive research effort spanning 12 districts and four states, including Illinois. The four states included in the study, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois and Ohio, employ diverse teacher performance management policies.

The report discusses four recommendations for improving the process for assessing teacher effectiveness:

1. Adopt a comprehensive performance evaluation and teacher development system that differentiates

teachers based on their effectiveness and targets professional development to help them improve.

2. Train administrators and other evaluators in the teacher performance evaluation system.
3. Use performance evaluations in making key personnel decisions including compensation and dismissal. Reward high-performing teachers, not just length of experience and education.
4. Adopt policies to provide "lower-stakes options" for dismissing teachers that are streamlined, fair and efficient.

The full report can be found at <http://www.widgeteffect.org/downloads/TheWidgetEffect.pdf>.

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alternative educational activity that is non consequential, meaning it's not going to be used as a punishment," Huddle said. The activities could include study hall or having students read through books about a president or a presidency.

The White House released the text of the president's address a day in advance so parents and educators could see for themselves whether the message was entirely about learning,

staying in school and taking personal responsibility.

But board members in some districts said they would form a new committee or assign a standing one to review all their policies regarding such situations.

Meanwhile, a few schools reportedly still are weighing the idea of providing school-wide viewings of the taped Obama speech. The written speech was made available to schools

and teachers on Sep. 7, one day before the speech was delivered.

Note: IASB's Policy Reference Education Service, PRESS, provides sample board policies and administrative procedures addressing issues such as curriculum, instructional materials and complaints about curriculum, instructional materials, and programs, among other topics. For more information about PRESS, please visit www.iasb.com/policy.

School year's first teacher strike is called

Ottawa Township High School District 140 has become the first school district in the state to face a teachers' strike this school year.

The negotiations teams from the District 140 school board and the OTHSEA teachers' organization met on Sep. 29 in a last-ditch effort to resolve outstanding issues relative to a collective bargaining agreement between the parties. But while some additional outstanding issues were resolved, the board and the union were unable to reach agreement on key issues of salary

and insurance contributions.

As of Sep. 25, only four other Illinois school districts had received intent-to-strike notices for this school year.

Two school districts that received strike notices this year have already settled their contract disputes. One recent settlement was obtained in **Hononegah Community HS District 207**, Rockton, in IASB's Kishwaukee Division. Notice of teachers' intent to strike was filed on Aug. 17, but a settlement was reached for all of the dis-

trict's 132 teachers on Aug. 19.

Another recent settlement was reached in **O'Fallon Township High School District 203**, in IASB's Southwestern Division, where 147 certified employees filed an intent-to-strike notice on July 31. A contract settlement was reached on Aug. 11.

The most recent new intent-to-strike notices were filed on Sep. 1. Notices were filed in two separate districts on that date, namely:

- **Ottawa Township District 140**
- **Peoria County ROE #15**.

Pre-conference workshops offer full- or half-day options

Registrants for the 2009 Joint Annual Conference can choose from five full-day or four half-day workshops scheduled for Nov. 20 at the Sheraton Chicago. These require a fee (\$210 for full-day workshops; \$135 for half-day workshops, except the half-day diversity workshop, which is \$145), and advance registration.

The full-day workshops will be held from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Registration and continental breakfast will begin at 8 a.m. Breakfast, lunch, breaks and materials are included in the full-day workshop registration fee.

The half-day morning workshops include continental breakfast beginning at 8 a.m., workshops will run from 9 until 11:30 a.m. The half-day afternoon workshops include lunch, beginning at 11:30 a.m., workshops will run from 12:30 until 3 p.m.

Some workshops will qualify participants for School Board Leadership core credits; others are electives.

The full day core credit workshops include:

- **School Board Leadership.** Whether one is a veteran or recently seated, a board member or a superin-

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Judges make design competition selections at IASB's Springfield offices on Sep. 17 for the 2009 EEE awards.

Conference to feature winning school designs from 2009 EEE design competition

Winning school designs will be on display at the 2009 Joint Annual Conference, including photos of completed school projects finished up by architects and other design professionals. Featured designs will be those earning recognition and awards in the 2009 Exhibition of Educational Environments, sponsored by IASB Service Associates.

The selections were made by a blind jury pool of architects and superintendents on Sep. 17 at IASB offices in Springfield. They chose one Award of Distinction (the top winner), four Awards of Merit, and four Honorable Mentions. There were also three Green Award recipients. Winners will be announced at

the first general session of the Joint Annual Conference.

Again this year, the EEE display will be located in the Grand Ballroom foyer of the Hyatt, between the conference registration desk and the bookstore.

This annual design competition seeks entries from firms engaged in any aspect of designing public school facilities, whether such facilities are intended for instructional, recreational, administrative or other use. To be eligible to win, construction projects had to be completed in time for occupancy with the start of school this fall.

More about this event and a list of the 2009 winners can be found at <http://www.iasb.com/>.

NEWS HEADLINES

Chatham (Sep. 14, *State Journal-Register*, Springfield) A Ball-Chatham District 5 middle school is working with mental health professionals to give a voice to what they call the “silent epidemic” of youth suicide. Its effects became all too familiar to the school community after an 11-year-old student took his own life last February. GMS is organizing its first Celebrate Life Week, a series of suicide prevention activities designed to encourage students to talk about their feelings and seek help if necessary. “We want to make sure that nobody ever does that ever again at our school,” said eighth grader Christopher Goetsch, 13. Goetsch is one of five students who volunteered to help coordinate the events.

Chicago (Sep. 8, *Chicago Tribune*) While students at Barrington High School have been working in classrooms for two weeks, most Chicago public school students have not yet begun the school year. The kids in Barrington, like kids all over the suburbs, have had a big head start over the kids in Chicago, who likely won't get the chance to catch up. The kids in Barrington have 180 days in school each year. The kids in Chicago have 170 days. The Barrington kids will spend the equivalent of three and a half weeks more in school each year than the Chicago kids. From 1st grade to senior year, the kids in Barrington CUSD 220 will have 42 more weeks of instruction. That is roughly one school year.

DeKalb (Sep. 3, *Daily Chronicle*) The DeKalb CUSD 428 school board is considering using federal stimulus money to purchase an IBM data warehousing system that would help the district's educators track – and improve – student achievement. The district has received about \$1.5 million in federal stimulus money, Superintendent Jim Briscoe said after a school board meeting on Sep. 2. One of the

allowed uses is to purchase software to track student achievement.

Gurnee (Sep. 10, *The Daily Herald*) Warren Township High School has a plan to end accusations it treated students differently for testing purposes last spring in violation of state and federal requirements. Warren THSD 121 plans to increase academic requirements students must meet to be promoted through their high school career. The higher standards would be broader than only determining eligibility for a state achievement test given to juniors. State officials claimed Warren improperly prevented 150 of 1,000 juniors from taking the Prairie State Achievement Exam because they did not meet higher academic standards for eligibility. District 121 officials stressed the more challenging academic standards were not enacted to prevent poor students from taking the exam to boost annual report card scores, but that the standards were enacted to boost the academic program's rigor.

Harvard (Aug. 31, *Northwest Herald*) Harvard CUSD 50 schools improved in most areas on state assessments in 2009, although the district did not make adequate yearly progress as defined by NCLB. “Our scores are up,” District 50 assessment coordinator Deb Holland said. “We made some great gains in reading and math.” School districts are evaluated in a variety of ways. Even if a high percentage of students score well on a test overall, a district can be deemed as not meeting adequate yearly progress if a subgroup of students – low income, students with disabilities, etc. – does not perform well. This is apparently what happened in District 50.

Madison County (Aug. 26, *Bellefonte News-Democrat*) Madison County superintendents gathered on Aug. 26 to share their concerns about possible tax-cap legislation and late payments from the state. The super-

intendents pointed out that the last state-aid payment for the 2008-09 school year still has not been sent by the state, which means shortfalls of millions for various districts. And at least four of the payments they did receive, they said, came from federal stimulus funds. The superintendents argued that with property values falling, unreliable state aid and the elimination of “hold harmless” funds that used to guarantee schools would not lose funding, they can't take another financial hit.

Marion (Sep. 11, *Marion Daily Republican*) Schools around the country spent time during the week of Sep. 11 learning about the terrorist attacks in 2001. The day, now known as Patriot Day or Remembrance Day, is one of 13 commemorative holidays about which Illinois schools are required to educate students. “It's kind of hard to imagine these kids in our building really didn't have any perspective on living through it,” Jefferson principal John Fletcher said.

O'Fallon (Aug. 31, *Bellefonte News-Democrat*) City leaders have urged Central School District 104 officials to look into the possibility of merging with another local school district to streamline the education system and save money. But District 104 Superintendent Steve Amizich said on Aug. 28 that Central leaders have looked into it and they unanimously decided it was a bad idea. “The consensus was that there was no reason to pursue it at this time,” Amizich said of a meeting where members of a steering committee heard a report from a consolidation expert. The State Board of Education wants schools that have financial problems or weak test scores to look at pooling resources with other districts, but school leaders said neither Central nor a nearby district being eyed for potential consolidation currently have those problems.

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tendent, this workshop will provide an opportunity to think and talk about the role and work of the board.

- **Basics of School Finance.** This one-day workshop will cover the basic knowledge board members need for informed decision-making in key areas of school finance.

The half-day core credit workshop:

- **Superintendent Evaluation: Getting Your Board Ready.** (a.m. session) Interactive participants will learn how to develop a customized performance evaluation process for their district. Board/superintendent teams will share their experiences.

Full-day elective credit workshops:

- **Myers Briggs Type Indicator – A Tool for School Board Excellence.** Participants will learn to enhance their board's ability to make good decisions.
- **Comprehensive Workshop for Board Presidents.** Learn the role of the president relative to the rest of the board and superintendent, keys to effective meetings, parliamentary procedure, managing board conflict, communications, ethics and teamwork.
- **Introduction to Collective Bargaining for School Board Members and Administrators.** Explore what every board member needs to know about collective bargaining – and every

administrator, too. Participants will receive a copy of the new book, *Collective Bargaining and the Illinois School Board Member*, the basic text for this workshop.

Half-day elective credit workshops:

- **From Difficult People to 21st Century Leadership** (a.m. session). Explore the behavior styles that cause conflict in group settings and how to resolve it. This interactive workshop involves learning from both theoretical and practical perspectives and participants will take away practical skills for leadership.
- **Diversity and Inclusion Awareness** (p.m. session). Through engaging, interactive exercises, this half-day workshop will increase “diversity and inclusion” awareness — the first step in the diversity education process.
- **Effective Parliamentary Procedure for Dynamic School Board Meetings** (p.m. session). This workshop will help make parliamentary procedure understandable and useful. It will cover agenda, quorum, the steps in processing a motion and the concept of precedence of motions.

See the IASB website at: <http://www.iasb.com/jac09/PreConWorkshops.pdf>. Online registration is available for these workshops at: https://www.iasb.com/jac09/precon_reg.cfm.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 29 – Kaskaskia Division Fall Dinner Meeting, Carlinville CUSD 1

October 29 – Lake County Division Dinner Meeting, Magee Middle School, Round Lake

November 3 – Two Rivers Division Fall Dinner Meeting, Quincy SD 172

November 3 – Western Division Fall Dinner Meeting, Abingdon CUSD 217

November 19 – IASB Board of Directors' Meeting, Hyatt Regency, Chicago

November 20-22 – IASB, IASA, Illinois ASBO Joint Annual Conference, Chicago

November 20-21 – A Professional Development Opportunity for the Board/District Secretary, Swissotel, Chicago

November 20 – Chicago Schools Tour, Hyatt Regency Chicago

November 20 – Illinois Council of School Attorneys' 23rd Annual Seminar on School Law, Hyatt Regency Chicago, For school attorneys only. Advance registration and fee required.

November 22 – IASB Board of Directors' Meeting, Hyatt Regency, Chicago.