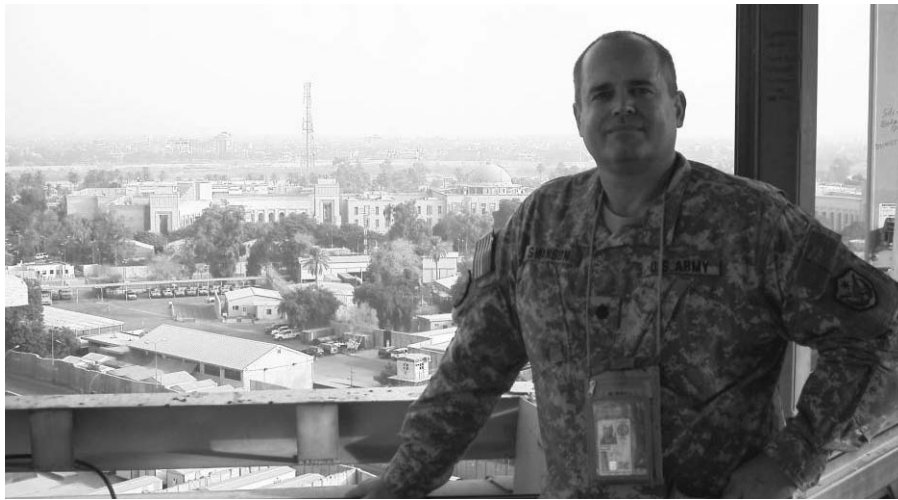


Illinois SCHOOL BOARD *Newsbulletin*

November 2008 / Issue No. 679



U.S. Army Lt. Col. Dan Swanson served on a school board from Baghdad, Iraq.

BoardBook® service for 'agenda building' offered to districts

The Illinois Association of School Boards announced on Oct. 15 that it has established a partnership with the Texas Association of School Boards to make its online board agenda building service available to IASB member districts.

BoardBook® is a web-based software application that is designed to streamline the preparation, distribution and publication of board agenda packets. It allows participating districts to electronically distribute the agenda, post selected materials online and conduct paperless meetings.

In addition to the savings for printing and copying costs and reduced staff time, BoardBook® offers a direct link to a variety of IASB resources, including resources for running effective meetings and pertinent legal requirements regarding board meetings, such as the Open Meetings Act. In addition, a district may link its own resources, such as its board policy manual, staff directory and annual calendar.

"School board members are only

Army officer maintains service on local school board while in Iraq

Call to duty, and service above and beyond the call of duty. That may well describe Army Lt. Col. Dan Swanson, who is also a member of the **AIWood CUSD 225** Board of Education, Woodhull. He completed an 11-month tour in Iraq from July 2007 to June 2008, while retaining an active position on his local school board.

During those entire 11 months, he was kept closely informed on board action by Superintendent Shannon Bumann, both by phone and e-mail. Bumann sent Swanson copies of board agendas, minutes, memos, proposals,

and other board items. "I had them scanned in and sent them via e-mail," explained Bumann. "He was very diligent in keeping up with board business, and while we did not go into having him vote from Iraq, we talked on the cell phone almost daily and he let us know how he felt about agenda items. The board was very respectful in weighing his views."

Upon his return, Lt. Col. Swanson presented the AIWood District a flag flown at Phoenix Base, International Zone, Baghdad.

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International standards eyed on 'what kids need to know'

Illinois is joining more than 30 other states in the American Diploma Project (ADP) to better prepare students for college and the workforce. Illinois joins California, Florida and 30 other states in reviewing and revising what students need to know and should be able to do in order to be successful in both college and their careers.

Illinois will be among the first group of states to not only use national benchmarks, but also look at what other countries require of their students. Once completed, it is expected that Illinois Learning Standards will be more focused, easier to understand and more rigorous.

Thirty-three states are currently participating in the project. Standards will be revised by 2010 in Illinois.

ADP is an initiative of Achieve, Inc., a non-profit group created by the nation's governors and business leaders to help raise academic standards.

USDA warns about impact of soaring commodity prices

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has alerted states that due to higher commodity prices schools will have significantly less purchasing capabilities for school year (SY) 2009.

Schools are still entitled to the same amount of Planned Assistance Level (PAL); however, that same PAL value will only buy 80 percent of what it would before the escalating commodity prices. The USDA has already started to delete commodity orders and schools should expect a 20 percent reduction in commodity food they will receive.

For questions or concerns, contact the Illinois State Board of Education's food distribution program staff at 217/782-2491.

ISBE rewards teacher of the year among 150 Excel award winners

Linda Smerge, a teacher at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School in Cicero SD 99, has been named Illinois Teacher of the Year. She was honored at the annual Those Who Excel/Illinois Teacher of the Year banquet on Oct. 18 in Peoria.

Smerge said she decided to leave a lucrative law practice after 13 years because of a feeling something was missing in her life. After what she describes as an intensive self-evaluation, she said she finally realized that her true calling was in the classroom.



Linda Smerge

"Linda's passion and commitment to teaching are firmly rooted in her belief that all children can learn and that she has the ability to help them make a better life for themselves," said Deputy State Superintendent of Education, Susan Morrison. "Linda's dedication and her ability to bring out the best in everyone around her will make her an excellent representative of our teachers across the state."

Smerge said there were many bumps in the road during her transition from the law to the classroom, but her overwhelming desire to make a real difference in children's lives kept her focused on her goal. In August 2001, Smerge joined the faculty at Wilson School, accepting the challenge of a first and second grade special education classroom.

This classroom was a new concept, combining students with a wide array of disabilities, and although materials had been ordered, they didn't arrive in time for the opening of school. But Smerge's energy and determination prevailed. She was able to ensure her students were engaged and on task by continuously changing

activities to maintain their interest.

As Illinois Teacher of the Year, Smerge will have the opportunity to share her knowledge and expertise outside the classroom. She will spend the 2009 spring semester speaking at teacher workshops, educational conferences, and civic/community meetings. She will receive a lifetime tuition waiver to state universities and a one-semester paid leave to pursue coursework or develop an educational project that will benefit students statewide. In addition, she will represent Illinois at the NASA Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama and in the National Teacher of the Year program sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers and ING. Linda will also receive products from SMARTer Kids.

Teacher of the Year finalists comprise all teachers given the Award of Excellence. Finalists sit for a videotaped interview as part of the selection process. The Teacher of the Year serves as the state's ambassador for teaching and talks at length with other Illinois teachers about her experiences and views on the profession.

Illinois SCHOOL BOARD Newsbulletin

Illinois Association of School Boards

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ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

ISBE honors education contributors via Those Who Excel

Five board members and a full board chosen

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) singled out five school board members and one entire school board for their outstanding service to schools at the 34th annual Those Who Excel/Teacher of the Year banquet on Oct. 18. One highlight of the awards banquet held in Peoria was the announcement of the Illinois Teacher of the Year for 2008-2009 (see story on p. 2).

One school board member winner received the top-level Excel award from ISBE, the Award of Excellence. That winner was: Teri L. Ehrenhardt, a member of the **Eureka CUSD 140** Board of Education.

Three school board members won the Award of Merit. They were: Tony J. Brunson, **Rich Township High School District 227**, Olympia Fields; Donald Shannon, **Kildeer Countryside Community Consolidated School District 96**, Buffalo Grove; and Juanita Wells, **Aurora East School District 131**, Schaumburg. Brunson is also an IASB leader in the Association's South Cook Division.

As mentioned, one entire school board also received the Award of Merit, as the **Schaumburg CCSD 54** Board of Education was honored as a team, not only for their work at board meetings, but also for their involvement in many aspects of District 54. They regularly visit schools and community activities, which is no small feat in a district with 27 schools that serve seven communities.

The district's honorees are: Charlotte Kegarise, Board President; Karen Strykowski, Board Vice President; Teresa Huber, Board Secretary; Peggy Brothman, Board Member; Bill Harper, Board Member; Barbara Hengels, Board Member; and Melissa Hutchison, Board Member.

One other board member honored in the school board category of the Excel Awards was Debra Shipley, **Naperville CUSD 203**. She received

an Award of Recognition.

More than 150 award recipients were singled out for their outstanding service to education at the 34th annual Those Who Excel/Teacher of the Year banquet. One hundred and sixty-two outstanding teachers, administrators, student support personnel, educational service personnel and community members took center stage on Oct. 18 when they were honored by the State Board.

In addition to school board members, other school leaders were honored as well. The list of school administrators winning the Award of Excellence, for example, included seven names. Excellence category winners included: Daniel E. Cates, **Township High School District 211**, Palatine; Supt. Peter F. Flynn, **Freeport District 145**; Supt. Harry D. Griffith, **Lake Forest Elementary District 67**; Linda S. Hanson, **Mt. Vernon District 80**; Supt. Larry D. Lilly, **Mattoon CUSD 2**; Kathleen Murphy, **Naperville CUSD 203**; and Jeanie Probst, **Highland CUSD 5**.

A total of eight school administrators won the Award of Merit, namely: Christopher L. Brake, **Chicago District 299**; Carla Cumblad, **Arlington Heights Elementary District 25**; Kathleen Dugan, **Indian Springs District 109**; Supt. Thomas W. Many, **Kildeer Countryside CCSD 96**, Buffalo Grove; Raymond A. Scheiter, **Quincy District 172**; Gregory M. Sherwin, **Adlai E. Stevenson High School District 125**, Lincolnshire; Crystal Steker, **Lake Zurich CUSD 95**; and Catherine M. Wright, **Edwardsville CUSD 7**.

The list of school administrators winning an Award of Recognition included the following seven names: Julia B. Daoverspike, **Aurora East District 131**; James J. Greenwald, **Granite City CUSD 9**; Asia Gurney, **Des Plaines CCSD 62**; John Hodge, **Oak Park Elementary District 97**; Supt. William Kendall, **Bremen Community High School District 228**, Midlothian; Fredric C. King, Jr., **Schaumburg CCSD 54**; Kathryn Klein, **Summit Hill District 161**, Frankfort; and Geraldine

I. Sullivan, **Mascoutah District 18**.

"We are honoring these individuals for their outstanding contributions to schools throughout the state," said State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch. "They represent the thousands of people who support our schools daily to help all our students become successful life-long learners."

Candidates are nominated by their local schools and people in their communities. The nomination includes a brief biography of the nominee, his or her philosophy of education, professional development and community involvement and their opinions of the state's most pressing educational needs. Letters of recommendation are also required.

A committee of peers chooses the award winners. The committee represents statewide education organizations and includes former award winners.

The categories for recognition are:

- Classroom teacher
- School administrator
- Student support personnel
- Educational service personnel
- School board member and/or community volunteer
- Teams—which recognizes groups of teachers and administrators; citizen committees; civic organizations; parent organizations; school boards; booster clubs and others that have a significant impact on teaching and learning in a school or district
- Early Career Educator

All three levels of awards were presented at the banquet. There were:

- 43 recipients of the highest award level, Excellence
- 56 recipients of the Award of Merit
- 63 recipients of the Award of Recognition

A complete list of award recipients can be found online at <http://www.isbe.net/news/2008/twe09.pdf>.

ISAT trends higher for Illinois elementary students

But scores are flat at the high school level

Illinois grade school students are showing real academic improvement according to statewide testing results released recently. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) saw progress on the state averages for the 2008 tests, which were given to students in grades 3-8 and 11 this past spring. Looking at testing trends for the 2008 tests shows elementary student performance continues to improve.

“When we look at the long-term trends we’re very encouraged by what we’re seeing with our elementary student progress. We’re seeing across-the-board improvement in the trend data, in some cases more than a 20-point improvement in just six years worth of data,” said State Superintendent of Education Christopher Koch.

“The student performance at the high school level is a concern, where

7 were tested in science. Students in grade 11 take the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE), which tests students in math, reading and science.

The statewide average percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards on all state tests increased slightly from 73.8% in 2007 to 74.8% in 2008. Overall student performance on the ISAT increased 78.7% in 2007 to 79.1% in 2008, while the average percentage of students meeting and exceeding standards on the PSAE stayed virtually unchanged from 52.6% in 2007 to 52.5% this year. Students with disabilities whose participation in ISAT or the PSAE would not be appropriate take the Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA). The state average on IAA increased from 59.1% to 66.3% in 2008.

In past years some students classified as English Language Learners (ELL) took the IMAGE exam, however that is no longer an option. In

order for Illinois to meet federal guidelines under the No Child Left Behind Act, the ISBE had to eliminate the IMAGE and instead those students were tested using the ISAT or PSAE with accommo-

dations. The elimination of IMAGE negatively impacted the test scores of certain school districts, especially those with large clusters of ELLs.

PSAE Statewide Averages Percentage Meets/Exceeds:

	Reading	Mathematics	Science
2003	56.4%	53.3%	51.3%
2004	56.8%	53.1%	52.9%
2005	59.5%	52.8%	52.5%
2006	58.4%	53.6%	50.8%
2007	54.1%	52.7%	51.0%
2008	53.3%	53.0%	51.2%

we’re seeing flat scores in math and science and, in fact, a decrease in reading. The Board is making improvement at the high school level a focus; we’ve reviewed our state standards and we’re joining the American Diploma Project so that we can begin to establish consistency between standards, curriculum, assessments and college entry expectations,” Koch added.

The most recent tests were given in March and April. Students in grades 3-8 took the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) in reading and mathematics while students in grades 4 and

Grade 5

2003	68.3%
2004	71.8%
2005	73.1%
2006	78.6%
2007	82.5%
2008	81.4%

Grade 6

2006	79.1%
2007	81.4%
2008	82.6%

Grade 7

2006	76.1%
2007	79.4%
2008	80.4%

Grade 8

2003	53.1%
2004	54.4%
2005	54.3%
2006	78.2%
2007	81.3%
2008	80.4%

ISAT Reading Statewide Average Percentage Meets/Exceeds:

Grade 3

2003	62%
2004	65%
2005	66.6%
2006	70.7%
2007	73%
2008	71.7%

Grade 4

2006	72.9%
2007	73.7%
2008	73.2%

Grade 5

2003	60.4%
2004	60.9%
2005	59.8%
2006	68.5%
2007	69.7%
2008	73.5%

Grade 6

2006	72.8%
2007	73.4%
2008	79%

Grade 7

2006	72%
2007	73.4%
2008	77.7%

Grade 8

2003	63.7%
2004	67.1%
2005	72.7%
2006	79.2%
2007	81.8%
2008	81.4%

ISAT Math Statewide Average Percentage Meets/Exceeds:

Grade 3

2003	75.7%
2004	79.2%
2005	79.2%
2006	85.6%
2007	86.8%
2008	85.1%

Grade 4

2006	84.8%
2007	86.4%
2008	84.6%

See ISAT on page 5

Each high school dropout costs taxpayers \$221,000

Students who drop out of school in Illinois are slicing one-third to one-half from their earning power, and each such student will provide our society with \$221,000 less in tax revenue, according to a new research-based analysis.

A state task force released the report in October, based on research commissioned from and conducted by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Boston's Northeastern University. The state panel, which included IASB's Deputy Executive Director Michael L. Bartlett, was charged with determining how to reduce the dropout problem in the state. The group determined earlier this year that there were

nearly 230,000 dropouts in the state.

The new analysis was released in support of the state panel's plan to triple the number of dropouts who re-enroll in Illinois schools. The plan, submitted to the Illinois General Assembly in January, calls for more money for programs to reduce the number of dropouts.

The five-year plan would cost \$31 million the first year, and \$166 million in the fifth year. The goal would be to graduate 11,000 former dropouts by the plan's fifth year.

Joe McLaughlin, a co-author of the new report by the Center for Labor Market Studies, who analyzed Illinois data, said he thinks dropouts commit

"economic suicide" when they leave school. Dropouts earn hundreds of thousands of dollars less in pay, he said, and pay back much less in taxes to society. Meanwhile they collect more from government support programs like welfare and unemployment, and end up in prison in far greater numbers than their better-educated classmates, costing states much more than a little prevention might cost.

Dropout rates for school districts and high schools are listed online at the Illinois State Board of Education's Web site, <http://www.isbe.net>. Click on "Report Cards" and search by school or district name.

ISAT from page 4

The School Report Cards were provided in record time for the second year in a row to school districts statewide – the earliest release in the 22 years of the school report cards. ISBE has produced the Report Card since 1986 for every public school and district in the state. In contrast, state report cards have been produced only since 2002, as required by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. Report cards now include the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) School Status information required under NCLB.

NCLB requires all states to measure each public school's and district's achievements and establish annual achievement targets for the state. The larger goal is for all students to meet or exceed standards in reading and mathematics by 2014.

The Report Card offers a wealth of useful and important information for students, schools and districts, as well as parents and family and community members including overall student performance; performance on state assessments; student demographics; and financial information.

New bill would ban trans fats from school cafeterias: Experts cite major health risks

A piece of legislation stalled in the Illinois General Assembly aims to eliminate trans-fatty foods in school cafeterias. Trans fats have been linked to obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol, all of which can lead to cardiovascular disease and stroke, experts say.

Some food service directors support the idea of the ban, but most say it would take time and money to implement, since schools would have to replace their cooking oils, and in some

cases, get food manufacturers contracting with schools to re-formulate products to meet specifications.

If the idea is approved, Illinois would become the 8th state to join in the fight against trans fats in schools. California, Connecticut, Idaho, Indiana, North Carolina, Oregon and Texas have already passed similar provisions.

It is good that everyone is becoming more aware, food service directors say, but schools already are required to meet nutritional guidelines established by the federal government.

Join board members nationwide to lobby members of Congress in Washington, D.C.

Local school board members will have the opportunity to join their peers from across the country at the National School Boards Association's Annual Federal Relations Network (FRN) Conference in Washington, D.C., on February 1-3, 2009. During the legislative conference, participants will learn in-depth about federal issues affecting schools, hear from education experts and polit-

ical pundits, and lobby members of Congress. A new Congress and a new President will take office in January 2009, creating a historic opportunity to set a new federal agenda affecting education for years to come, according to school supporters.

Stop by the Legislative Booth at the Conference to discuss this lobbying event and your participation in the federal advocacy program.

Schools witness hefty decline in superintendent turnover numbers

Illinois public schools encountered a significant drop in superintendent turnover in 2008, according to IASB's executive searches department. Illinois superintendent changes totaled just 98 last year, compared to the 149 superintendent changes that occurred the previous year.

In fact, the number of superintendent turnovers averaged 152 per year from 2002 through 2006.

Key statistical facts on the state's low number of superintendent changes last school year are as follows:

- 98 school districts hired new full-time superintendents
- 65 of the new top administrators are first-time superintendents
- 28 school districts hired experi-

enced superintendents who moved from another Illinois district or from another state

- five school districts hired experienced superintendents who came to Illinois from another state
- 11 school districts have employed retired superintendents as interim part-time superintendents

According to IASB records, various superintendent search consultants assisted Illinois school districts in conducting 53 searches during the year; IASB staff accounted for 30, or about 54 percent of the total. Six independent search firms did 18 searches, ROEs did seven; and one was conducted by a college professor.

IASB expands Executive Searches to incorporate 'team approach'

With IASB conducting well over half of all superintendent searches last year, an expansion of the IASB Executive Searches Department has recently gotten underway. The expansion is designed to free additional time for field service directors to spend on in-district work, including workshops, board self-evaluations and goal-setting.

The new searches department aims to provide member districts with distinct advantages when it comes time to replace a district superintendent. For example, the department will provide not only a qualified lead consultant to work closely with the district, but an entire team of professionals now will be available to help with searches.

"Our consultants will work very closely with the field services directors who can boast in-depth knowledge of districts and staff in this state and beyond," said Executive Searches Department Director Donna John-

son.

According to Johnson, there are other advantages to using the IASB executive searches, such as:

- IASB searches are customized to meet individual district needs
- IASB advertises each search, and receives and evaluates applications and interviews semi-finalists
- The IASB search team sets up interviews with finalists and the school board and offers assistance to the board in preparing the interviews
- Confidentiality is maintained
- Prices are competitive and districts get a "will not exceed" price quote
- Services continue after the search for up to one year, including a workshop at no added cost, to help the new board-superintendent team
- IASB will reopen the search if the board is not satisfied

"Our reputation is based on client satisfaction, which is guaranteed," said Johnson.

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Swanson, of rural Cambridge, had retired from the United States Army in January 2001 after serving his country for 23 1/2 years. Yet he said he felt compelled to come out of retirement to help out in the Iraq war.

He said he worked with a lot of great Americans who were in the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, National Guard/Reserves and other government agencies and contractors.

Swanson said Iraq is an amazing place. "While over there, I built a network of new friends, friends I will keep in touch with whether they are still over there or they have come home.

Most of the time Swanson worked seven days a week.

"The days were long, but there was always a lot to do," Swanson stated. "Most people worked long hours. You never had time to just sit around, but if you did, you really appreciated the care packages sent from home."

With the support of his family, church, friends and neighbors, and local school leaders, he said the time passed quickly.

"I couldn't have done this without all of their support," he said.

In July 2007, Swanson had left for Fort Benning, Georgia, where he quickly regained his Army mindset. But he did so without shedding his school board membership.

And he stayed on board even after he arrived in Iraq, although he says he missed the people back home as well as the conveniences of home, such as a cold drink of water and air conditioning. Due to the hot weather, drinking water was important because it was hard to stay hydrated.

The days were often long, he says, but working long hours, the days seemed to pass quickly. Contact from home, the care packages, cell phone calls, and e-mail, all helped, including the calls from the school district.

Superintendent Bumann was happy with Swanson's board participation throughout that year in Iraq: "It worked out better than anybody thought it would. It was just like he was next door," Bumann concludes.

IASB mourns loss of Lombard staff member, friend Holly Jack

Holly Jack, Administrative Assistant to Field Services in IASB's Lombard office, passed away on Oct. 20 after a short illness. A Villa Park resident dear to IASB officers, staff, friends and acquaintances, she was 63.

Born Dorothea Hollis Dobricky in Chicago on Nov. 5, 1944, Holly grew up in Chicago and lived there until 1950, when her parents moved the family to Elmhurst. She later attended York High School, graduating in 1962, after which she attended Western Illinois University for a few years.

She married David Jack in 1966, and the couple moved to Killeen, Texas while David served in the armed services. They then moved back to Chicago for several years before venturing on to Colorado in 1970, where they settled down and raised their family.

She always loved being close to the extended family, and in 1987 the Jacks returned to Chicago, to be close to David's and her own parents and siblings.

Said Cathy Talbert, IASB Associate Executive Director of Field Services/Policy Services: "Her work here was more than a job. It was a career of service to her colleagues and to our association members. We will all miss Holly — her smile, her laugh, her positive attitude and her daily example of giving the best of ourselves to others."

IASB will be dedicating the board secretary training at the 2008 Joint Annual Conference in her name.



Holly Jack

34 Illinois districts represented at NSBA technology and learning (T+L) conference

The National School Boards Association T+L (technology and learning) Conference held at the Washington State Convention Center in Seattle, Washington, Oct. 28-30, featured more than 175 sessions on the latest technology innovations and programs in schools, and administrative offices across the country. Representatives from 34 Illinois school districts attended.

Organizers say T+L provides a unique learning experience for teams of technology directors, superintendents, school board members, administrators, and lead teachers.

Illinois school leaders were among conference presenters at various sessions, including a panel session on Oct. 29 called Mini-Academy: Moving from a Good School System to a Great One Using a New Paradigm for Strategic Planning. Presenters included district technology facilitator Chris

Brown of **Avoca District 37**.

The morning session explored how the district has been able to revolutionize its strategic planning process, leading to measurable and tangible indicators of improvement. It explained how the district's heavy emphasis on technology throughout the new strategic planning paradigm has accelerated the process of improvement.

Other hot topics at NSBA's T+L conference included use of science, technology, engineering, and math education programs; and trends.

Three IASB staff members were among the conference attendees: Executive Director Michael D. Johnson, Deputy Executive Director Michael L. Bartlett, and Assistant Manager for Technology Janice Kidd.

NSBA's T+L Conference is open to all educators whose public school districts are members of their state school boards associations.

NEWS FROM IASB

IASB posts helpful online school calendar for 2008-09

The 2008-2009 School Calendar was recently posted online. The calendar is not distributed in a printed version; however, it is posted online to allow for revisions to reflect any new legislation enacted or the correction of any errors. Click on the link at: <https://www.iasb.com/lax/cal09.cfm>.

New election links available from IASB

Three links have been added to the School Board Elections page, including the 2009 Candidate's Guide, 2009 Local Election Officials Handbook, and the 2009 Elections Calendar: <https://www.iasb.com/elections/>.

Board secretaries will get conference training

IASB has expanded training into a two-day strand for school board and district secretaries and clerks or recording secretaries at the Joint Annual Conference. The 2008 event features a general session on Friday on Managing Your Leader's Time: Secretary as Reflective Practice Partner, plus eight topics on Saturday.

Those eight sessions for board support professionals (participants are asked to choose two) will run concurrently on Saturday, Nov. 22 at the Swissotel, Chicago. There is no separate registration fee for these training programs, but participants must be paid registrants for the conference.

For more information about this in-service strand for board support professionals check out the IASB Web site at <https://www.iasb.com/jac08/confbdsecworkshop.pdf>. Registration is available online at <https://www.iasb.com/jac08/bdsecworkshop.cfm>.

Robert M. Cole Awards honor 14 newspapers for 2008

Fourteen newspapers received awards in the 28th annual Robert M. Cole Awards competition for 2008, including the *Quincy Herald-Whig*, which earned first place in the large daily newspaper category.

The Cole Awards are sponsored by the Illinois Association of School Boards and conducted by the Illinois Press Association to recognize newspapers that are doing an outstanding job of covering local school boards and emphasizing the community's connection with local public school districts.

The Quincy paper joined *The Times*, Ottawa (mid-size dailies), *Breeze-Courier*, Taylorville (small dailies) and *Ledger-Sentinel*, Oswego (non-dailies) in earning this year's first-place awards.

Other winners in the large daily category were the *News-Democrat*, Belleville, which earned both 2nd and 3rd place, followed by the *Northwest Herald*, Crystal Lake, with an honorable mention.

The *NewsTribune*, La Salle, earned 2nd place in the mid-size daily newspaper category, followed by the *Pekin Daily Times*, which earned both 3rd place and honorable mention. Second prize for small dailies went to the *Morris Daily Herald*. Earning 2nd place in the non-daily category was the *Kendall County Record*, Yorkville, with 3rd place going to *The Galena Gazette*, and honorable mention to the *Evansston Review*.

Winning papers' reporters and stories are:

- **Holly Wagner**, *The Quincy Herald-Whig* — "Voters reject plan to boost education rate"
- **Melissa Garzanelli**, *The Times*, Ottawa — "Getting there safely"
- **Jane Long**, *Breeze-Courier*, Taylorville — "Taylorville School Board"
- **Lyle Rolfe**, *Ledger-Sentinel*, Oswego — "Outside the box"

Named in memory of the first



IASB Director of Communications Linda Dawson, center, presents Cole Awards for first place to Jane Long, left, a reporter with the *Breeze-Courier*, Taylorville; and to Jeff Farren, right, Publisher of the *Ledger-Sentinel*, Oswego



Holly Wagner



Lyle Rolfe

executive director of IASB, the Robert M. Cole Award recognizes outstanding coverage of education issues that emphasizes the community's connection with its local public school district.

Winners were announced on Oct. 10 at the annual convention of the Illinois Press Association. Linda Dawson of the IASB communications department presented plaques to first place winners.



Melissa Garzanelli

There were 27 entries for this year's school board coverage awards. Members of the Missouri Press Association judged the contest.

BOARDBOOK from page 1

as effective as their meetings are," says Michael D. Johnson, executive director of IASB. "We are pleased to be partnering with a fellow state school board association to bring our members this valuable, easy-to-use instrument."

BoardBook® is now in use in more than 450 school districts nationwide, according to Tim Curtis, director of BoardBook® for the Texas association.

There is no software to install or set-up fee. Annual subscriptions include personalized staff training,

customization to your district, excellent telephone support service, and online help features.

IASB will be demonstrating its newest member service at the Joint Annual Conference in November. For information about the benefits of BoardBook® or to sign up for a free online demonstration, contact Laurel DiPrima at either IASB office, extension 1245, e-mail ldiprima@iasb.com or Scott Ballew at scott.ballew@board-book.org.

NEWS HEADLINES

Addison (Oct. 6, *The Daily Herald*) A few Addison homeowners are fighting the condemnation of their homes by DuPage High School District 88, Villa Park, in order to obtain land needed to create a drainage pond. To accommodate storm-water runoff on the north end of one school, district officials say they need to acquire four residences and multiple accompanying lots. District 88 already has spent \$700,000 to buy one home that sits on three lots, and \$400,000 to purchase another home and lot. The retention pond is part a larger plan that includes major renovations to two high schools.

Antioch (Oct. 2, *Lake County News-Sun*) The Antioch District 34 Board of Education approved a four-year teacher contract and salary increase on Sep. 30. Under the agreement already ratified by the union, teachers will receive a pay boost of 2.95 percent in the contract's first year, and 2.85 percent for each of the following three years.

Belvidere (Sep. 25, *Rockford Register Star*) "Running Start," a partnership between Rock Valley College (RVC) and Belvidere CUSD 100, would allow juniors and seniors at the two Belvidere high schools to become college students and work toward graduating with an associate degree from RVC. The RVC board approved the arrangement on Sep. 23. Belvidere school board members were initially supportive of the program idea. Students could enroll next fall, but would have to pass a placement test first, and have a 3.0 grade-point average. The degree would cost them nothing because tuition would be paid through the state reimbursement for each student.

Chatham, Rochester (Sep. 28, *State Journal-Register*, Springfield) The Sangamon Area Special Education District is evaluating how the probable withdrawal of its two largest

school districts, Ball-Chatham CUSD 5 and Rochester CUSD 3A, will affect the cooperative's remaining members and staff. The most immediate effect would be financial, as Ball-Chatham and Rochester together pay nearly 35 percent of SASSED's building and administrative costs. Unknown is how much their absence would cost the other 14 districts, and whether any employee layoffs would be needed.

Chicago area (Oct. 2, *Chicago Sun-Times*) Hoping to draw national attention, 1,500 school protesters chanted outside Wrigley Field on Sep. 30, during the Chicago Cubs' baseball playoff game. Under an agreement with the city, school protesters arrived only after the game had begun and left before it was over. Some of the protesters included New Trier students who helped form the Illinois Council of Students to study Illinois' school funding system.

Chicago (Oct. 2, *Chicago Tribune*) Critics long have maintained it is hazardous and unfair to place the burdens of adulthood on immigrant students whose parents do not speak English. But new research indicates many of these young interpreters demonstrate memory and analytical abilities similar to those of the most gifted students. Immigrant's children are commonly asked to bridge linguistic and social gaps between two divergent cultures and languages, constantly shifting back and forth. And new research shows that the process definitely makes these kids smarter.

Chicago (Oct. 8, *Chicago Tribune*) Chicago District 299 CEO Arne Duncan recommended on Oct. 8 that the board approve proposals for starting 20 new schools, including the first Chicago public high school for gay teens. The school would open in the fall of 2009 and 2010. Supporters said a gay high school would help students find a safe school environment because studies have shown gay youth are at

a greater risk for suicide and for dropping out and abusing drugs and alcohol. A 2003 district survey showed gay and lesbian youths are three times more likely to miss school because they don't feel safe. Opponents have called the proposed move a misuse of public funds.

East Alton (Sep. 30, *Alton Telegraph*) Repairs could cost over a million dollars, school officials say, on Eastwood Elementary School gym. The East Alton Elementary District 13 school board held a special meeting on Sep. 29 to discuss news that the school's insurance company had denied its claim for the gym after a magnitude 5.2 quake struck the Midwest on April 18. The company said the earthquake did not cause the gym damage and, therefore, it is not paying. The school district said it will try to recover all the repair costs through the courts.

East St. Louis (Oct. 7, *Belleville News-Democrat*) A state grant program that reimburses parents and guardians who use their own vehicles to transport students to school through hazardous areas is under investigation in East St. Louis District 189. A hazardous area is considered any highway construction, missing sidewalks or any physical danger to students while walking to school. The Illinois Department of Transportation must first confirm the hazard. A high crime area does not constitute a hazard under the program. For the 2006-2007 school year, \$11.9 million was available, which resulted in a payout of \$102.13 per claimant.

Urbana (Oct. 7, *Champaign News-Gazette*) Many area parents and children joined in the International Walk to School Day activities on Oct. 8. Events included a "walking school bus." A total of 136 Illinois schools took part, according to the national website, <http://www.walktoschool.org>.

Five bond issues, one sales tax hike OK'd in November

Only 11 school districts placed school finance referendum questions on the Nov. 4 general election ballot, including one property tax increase proposition, which fell 15 votes short, and 10 bond issues, only half of which passed. But dozens of additional school districts also would have benefited from nine countywide referenda on sales tax propositions earmarked for school facility purposes.

According to the Illinois State Board of Elections, countywide sales tax propositions for schools were scheduled in the following counties: Adams, Calhoun, Cass, Champaign, Iroquois, Kankakee, Marion, Pike, and Whiteside. Only Cass County's plan passed, but Champaign's may pass yet.

The earmarked sales tax for schools is allowed under a new state law that took effect in January. Revenue from the new one-cent-on-the-dollar sales

tax will benefit all school districts in the county where such questions win voter approval.

Apparently the only district placing a property tax increase proposal before voters in November was **Alwood Community Unit School District 225**. The education fund increase proposition there asked voters this question: Shall the maximum annual tax rate for educational purposes of Alwood Community Unit School District No. 225, Henry, Knox and Mercer Counties, Illinois, be increased and established at 3.45 percent upon all the taxable property of said School District at the value, as equalized or assessed by the Department of Revenue, instead of 2.65 percent, the present maximum rate otherwise applicable to the next taxes to be extended for said purpose? Only 670 voters said yes, compared to 685 no voters.

The 10 bond issues on the Nov. 4 ballot included nine building bond propositions and one working cash fund proposal, which was adopted in **East Aurora District 131**. Five rejected building bond issue propositions would have provided funds for construction or building repairs for: **Bensenville Elementary District 2**, **Bunker Hill CUSD 8**, **Durand CUSD 322**, **Lockport Township High School District 205**, and **Prophetstown-Lyndon-Tampico CUSD 3**.

Building bond issues were approved in **Harvard CUSD 50**; **Mascoutah CUSD 19**; **Warren Township High School District 121**, Gages Lake and **Warrensburg-Latham CUSD 11**.

In addition to this list of finance referendum questions on the general election ballot, a number of other

See **REFERENDA** on page 12

IPA conference goers advised to never give up on any student

Adolph Brown III, founder of the Wellness Group, Inc., recently provided school building administrators with an understanding of the social and economic factors that place youth at risk. And he presented several strategies for effectively supporting teaching and learning for such youth when addressing school leaders during the 37th annual Illinois Principals Association conference in Peoria on Oct. 6.

More than 800 building administrators attended the conference. Attendees participated in workshops and small group sessions designed to inform them of the latest trends and issues in education. They also learned a lot from keynote speaker Brown.

Brown urged principals to inspire and motivate students to succeed by getting their attention and simply relating. He supported this advice by recounting humorous adventures he has had in and outside of the classroom. With in these stories of his own life experiences he delivered a message of hope



Adolph Brown III

and tenacious dedication to kids.

His message was entertaining and passionate, containing serious advice for school leaders, beginning with a listing of the conditions needed to eliminate the achievement gap. His central message dealt with ways to remove barriers from student learning, barriers ranging from poverty to marginalization of groups. He also addressed the barriers to helping students with disabilities.

He said the way to close the achievement gap is by "understanding and becoming culturally sensitive to the

various cultures of youth," and thereby reaching students with appropriate cultural references. He suggested doing this through each student's preferred learning style.

Brown also discussed how to develop courageous conversations with kids, and he detailed strategies to help school leaders relate to all students.

In conclusion, he suggested that: "catching it early" is the key to approaching the barriers to student learning. He proposed coupling that with parental involvement, efforts at teaching excellence, plus strategic partnerships and incentives. Brown concluded with the message: "never give up on any student!"

Keynote speakers also included Christopher Koch, state superintendent, who recognized outstanding individuals in the field of education with the IPA's Awards for Excellence.

The IPA is a professional organization that represents more than 4,000 Illinois principals, assistant principals and deans.

Deadline near for seeking waivers from mandates

The postmark deadline for the Spring 2009 Waiver Report is Friday, Jan. 9, 2009. There are exceptions to this deadline.

First, applications for waivers from legal school holidays are not covered under the state waiver law, and so the deadline does not apply to them. Such applications are considered modifications of the School Code and are approved by the State Board.

Second, applications for waivers or modifications of ISBE's administrative rules are also not subject to the postmark deadlines for waivers of the School Code. However, in all cases, approvals for any of these requests must be granted before the request can be implemented.

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

If school leaders have any questions about the kind of request they will be submitting, they are asked to call ISBE's Rules and Waivers division at 217/782-5270, or email at waivers@isbe.net.

New law limits term for phys ed waivers

Public Act 95-223, which took effect on Jan. 1, provides that an approved physical education requirement waiver (or modification) may remain in effect for a period not to exceed two school years and may be renewed no more than twice.

Before passage of this new law, physical education applications could be requested for waivers lasting a maximum of five years, with no limit on the number of renewals. The intent of the new law is to limit school districts or other applicants to a total of six years of waivers on PE requirements.

The complete text of Public Act 95-223 is online at: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=095-0223&GA=095>

Note that P.A. 95-223 did not change the public hearing requirements for physical education waivers. Applicants still must hold the public hearing to consider the request

on a day other than one on which a regular board meeting is held.

Waiver requests must be submitted to the State Board postmarked no later than Jan. 9, 2009 to be included in the Spring 2009 Waiver Report, which is to be submitted to the General Assembly by March 1 each year.

Applicants wishing to implement requests at the start of the 2009-10 school year should meet the January deadline since waivers cannot be implemented until approval is received. But any application postmarked after Jan. 9 will be included in the Fall 2009 Waiver Report, to be submitted to the General Assembly by Oct. 1, 2009.

A brief overview of all waivers granted to school districts to date is contained in the new ISBE publication, *Summary of Waiver/Modification Requests*. The report is available free online at: <http://www.isbe.net/isbewaivers/pdf/waivermod.pdf>.

Most labor disputes long since settled for current school year

Most of the school districts that received strike notices this year have long since settled their contract disputes. One recent settlement was obtained on Sep. 22 in Wilmette District 39, in IASB's North Cook Region. A total of 340 certified personnel had issued an intent-to-strike notice on September 16.

The most recent new intent-to-strike notice was filed on Oct. 6 in **Kaneland CUSD 302**, Maple Park, where 362 certificated teachers remain without a contract. Schools also face active strike notices in one other district, namely **Madison CUSD 12** (80 certified teachers).

The list of other recent contract settlements includes:

- **Consolidated School District 158**, Algonquin – Bargaining Unit Size: 570 Certified Teachers: Notice Filed: Aug. 12; Settled: Sep. 17
 - **Altamont CUSD 10** – Bargaining Unit Size: 60 IEA/NEA Certified Staff: Notice Filed: Aug. 22; Settled: Sep. 15
 - **Highland CUSD 5** – Bargaining Unit Size: 217 IEA/NEA Certified Teaching Staff: Notice filed: Sep. 3; Settled: Sep. 10
 - **Trico CUSD 176** – Bargaining Unit Size: 66 IEA/NEA Certified Employees: Notice filed: Aug. 20; Settled: Aug. 27
 - **Lebanon CUSD 9** – Bargaining Unit Size: 80 Unit Certified Teachers: Notice filed: Aug. 14; Settled: Aug. 19
 - **DeKalb CUSD 428** – Bargaining Unit Size: 380 Unit Certified Teachers: Notice filed: Aug. 7; Settled: Aug. 18
 - **Sullivan CUSD 300** – Bargaining Unit Size: 60 Unit Certified Teachers: Notice filed: July 17; Settled: Aug. 15
 - **Emmons SD 33** – Bargaining Unit Size: 12 Teacher Assistants and Cafeteria Staff: Notice filed: May 5; Settled: Aug. 13
 - **Pleasant Hill SD 69, Peoria** – Bargaining Unit Size: 17 Certified Staff: Notice filed: March 10; Settled: Aug. 13
- Source: Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) Web site at: <http://www.iasaedu.org/vnews/display.v/ART/2006/05/25/4475d4f21ed64>.

Online handbook provides election forms most sought for April 2009 board balloting

Selection officials looking for the proper forms to file in connection with the April 2009 school board member election need look no further than the Local Election Official's Handbook for the 2009 Consolidated Elections. The booklet provides copies of the election forms and is available online at: <http://www.elections.il.gov/Downloads/ElectionInformation/PDF/LocElecOff.pdf>.

The specific forms available, as listed beginning on page 52 of the Handbook, include official papers for:

- Notice of Obligation Form D-5
- Certification of Ballot (public questions) Form G-1B
- Certification of Ballot (candidates; note: There are 11 different formats

for school board elections. Be sure to select the one that is appropriate for your district.) Forms G-2 to G-12

- Statement of Candidacy Form P-1A
- Loyalty Oath (optional) Form P-1C
- Nonpartisan Petitions (i.e., nominating papers for at-large school board members.) Form P-4
- Petitions (for members elected by district) Form P-7A
- Withdrawal of Candidacy Form P-25

District secretaries and their designated local election officials should also refer to their county clerk for assistance. The state board of elections has a help line: 217/557-0855.

REFERENDA *from page 10*

questions directly impacting school districts were put before the voters. November ballots contained two school district consolidation proposals to create new community unit districts by combining existing community unit districts. One consolidation proposal was approved. It combines **Aledo Community Unit School District 201**, with **Westmer Community Unit School District 203** in the counties of Henderson, Mercer, and Rock Island. The

other was defeated. It would have combined **Meredosia-Chambersburg CUSD 11**, in Brown, Cass, Morgan and Pike Counties, with two other school districts: **Triopia CUSD 27**, in Cass, Morgan and Scott Counties, and **Virginia CUSD 64**, in Cass and Morgan Counties.

The IASB website and later issues of the *Newsbulletin* will cover the November school referendum results in more detail.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November 15 – School Board Members Day

November 20 – IASB Board of Directors' Meeting, Hyatt Regency, Chicago, noon - 4 p.m.

November 21 – Chicago Schools Tour, Hyatt Regency Chicago, meal 8 a.m., tour 8:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

November 21-22 – A Professional Development Opportunity for the Board/District Secretary, Swisshotel Chicago, 10:30 a.m. - 3 p.m., both days

November 21 – Pre-Conference Workshops: Teambuilding and the Board of Education, The Board and Its Superintendent, School Board Accountability, Bridges Out of Poverty, A Comprehensive Workshop for Board Presidents, School Board Leadership, Sheraton Chicago, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Science, Math and Technology Education, Sheraton Chicago, 9 to 11:30 a.m.

Financial Oversight Essentials for School Boards, Pre-Conference Workshop, Sheraton Chicago, 12:30 - 3 p.m.

For more current information, see www.iasb.com/calendar/



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