



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

A newsletter from the Illinois State Board of Education



February 2011

Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

On Jan. 17, the State Board approved a proposed FY 2012 budget recommendation that calls for approximately a 3.5 percent increase in state funding from FY 2009 levels. This recommendation would allow the per-pupil FY 2011 General State Aid Foundation level of \$6,119 to increase to \$6,416 per pupil but it falls short of the Education Funding Advisory Board's recommended \$8,360 Foundation Level. State funding for education was reduced in FY 2010 and FY 2011 by nearly \$450 million.

Prior to making this recommendation, the State Board conducted a series of six public budget hearings around the state last fall where citizens, local and state politicians and candidates were invited to voice their priorities. Nearly 200 people attended those hearings and almost 300 more sent written testimony calling on the Board to restore, maintain or expand funding for General State Aid and specific programs. In addition, the Board considered the recommendation of the Education Funding Advisory Board, which, after more than a year of meetings and analysis, recommended a \$4 billion increase to education. This increase would provide for a Foundation Level of \$8,360 per-pupil. The EFAB recommendation also included an increase in the per pupil amount of the Supplemental General State Aid Poverty Grant to better help students from low-income families.

MISSION

The Illinois State Board of Education will provide leadership, assistance, resources and advocacy so that every student is prepared to succeed in careers and postsecondary education, and share accountability for doing so with districts and schools.

While the ISBE did take into consideration the incredible work that EFAB did in producing their report, Board members did not feel asking for such an increase in education funding at this point in time was a realistic option. However, Board members do feel strongly that Illinois must increase its commitment to education funding, even if it is a modest 3.5 percent increase from FY 2009 levels.

In addition to an increase to GSA, the proposal would increase mandated categoricals, including the restoration of transportation funding that was cut in FY 2011. Other components of the recommended budget include:

Legislative Liaisons: For questions or inquiries, contact Nicole Wills (nwills@isbe.net) or Cynthia Riseman (criseman@isbe.net) in the Governmental Relations Division at 217-782-6510 or by fax at 217-782-3097.

- A \$3.5 million (5.5 percent) increase for Bilingual Education to help districts provide Early Childhood Bilingual Services.
- A \$2.3 million increase to improve teacher and principal preparation, which would include efforts to increase diversity. These dollars would be used to match \$2 million in private funding the agency has secured from foundations for programs to improve the quality of teaching and school leadership.
- A \$900,000 increase in the amount of funding for feasibility studies as districts consider consolidation or another form of reorganization to increase efficiency.

A full chart of the recommendations can be found at http://isbe.net/budget/FY12_budget_recommendation.pdf.

I look forward to discussing the State Board's FY 12 budget recommendation and other issues with you during the spring session.

Thank you all for your work on behalf of Illinois students.

Chris

2011 ISBE Legislative Agenda

At the Jan. 17 State Board meeting, the Board approved a 2011 legislative agenda. These initiatives are being discussed both internally at ISBE and externally with education stakeholders, and Governmental Relations staff will discuss these issues with legislators in the upcoming weeks. These initiatives include:

- Revamping the Educator Certification System (Article 21 of the School Code);
- Further alignment of Financial Oversight Panels and School Finance Authorities;
- Revisions to the Textbook Loan Program;
- Removing bilingual education from the Educational Services Block Grant for Chicago;

- Permanently terminating the General State Aid Hold Harmless program;
- Applying the Alternate Double Whammy formula to all Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) to school districts statewide; and
- Less Red Tape/Clean-up.

For further explanation of the legislative proposals, please see http://isbe.net/gov_relations/pdf/leg_proposals_11.pdf.

Board Members Selected to Serve on National Committees

Four State Board members have been selected to serve on several National Association of State Boards of Education committees and a study group to assist in steering the development of

Legislative Liaisons: For questions or inquiries, contact Nicole Wills (nwills@isbe.net) or Cynthia Riseman (criseman@isbe.net) in the Governmental Relations Division at 217-782-6510 or by fax at 217-782-3097.

education policy at the national level. Jesse H. Ruiz, Dr. Christopher J. Ward, Lanita J. Koster and Dr. David L. Fields will work with other state education leaders, federal lawmakers, national policymakers and education reform experts.

ISBE Chairman Jesse H. Ruiz of Chicago was chosen to serve on the NASBE Governmental Affairs Committee. As a member of the committee, Ruiz will help plan for federal education policies. Ruiz was appointed to the State Board of Education in 2004 and reappointed in 2007.

ISBE Vice Chair Dr. Christopher J. Ward of Shorewood was chosen to serve on NASBE's Teacher Preparation, Evaluation, Continuation and Compensation Study Group. A report on the group's findings along with recommendations for state policy will be released in the fall. Ward was first appointed to the State Board in 2004.

ISBE board member Lanita J. Koster of Chicago will serve on NASBE's Public Policy Positions Committee. The committee solicits public policy positions from among the association's membership. Koster was appointed to the State Board of Education in 2008.

ISBE board member Dr. David L. Fields of Danville was selected to serve on NASBE's Distinguished Service Award Committee, which selects state board members to honor for outstanding contributions to education. Fields was appointed to the State Board of Education in 2004 and reappointed in 2007.

Information on General Assembly Scholarships

Article 30 of the Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/30) provides each member of the General Assembly annually with two four-year scholarships to award to residents of his or her respective legislative district. These four-year scholarships, which effectively serve as waivers

of tuition, may be offered to one nominee for the full four years or, instead, offered to two or four nominees for a two-year or one-year tuition waiver at any of the following institutions: Chicago State University, Eastern Illinois University, Governors State University, Illinois State University, Northeastern Illinois University, Northern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University, University of Illinois and Western Illinois University.

Tuition waivers for which no nominations are made prior to the start of the academic term do not immediately lapse. A legislator may nominate a resident of his or her district at anytime prior to the expiration of the legislator's current elected term. Notably, however, there is no carryover of tuition waivers from legislative term to legislative term. All tuition waivers for which no nomination has been made prior to the end of an elected term immediately lapse. See 105 ILCS 5/30-9.

A letter detailing further information will be sent to each district office in the coming weeks. We recognize that some legislators choose not to give any General Assembly scholarships, and may wish to disregard this information.

Principal Preparation Program Rules

PA 96-0903 made changes to the School Code with respect to principal preparation programs. The purpose of the legislation is to strengthen the individuals that enter in to principal preparation programs, in addition to strengthening the requirements of the actual programs themselves.

The law charges ISBE with establishing standards and requirements for principal

Legislative Liaisons: For questions or inquiries, contact Nicole Wills (nwills@isbe.net) or Cynthia Riseman (criseman@isbe.net) in the Governmental Relations Division at 217-782-6510 or by fax at 217-782-3097.

preparation programs developed by higher education institutions and not-for-profit entities. The law also directs each principal preparation program to determine criteria for admitting candidates, to require that candidates complete an internship and receive training in evaluation of staff; and to establish partnerships with one or more school districts or certain recognized non-public schools. The act authorizes ISBE to adopt rules necessary to implement and administer such programs.

Proposed rules were published Oct, 8, 2010, in the Illinois Register for public comment. There were over 140 comments and five key issues were raised through the public comment process. Based on the public comment, some changes were made to the rules and at the December Board meeting, the Board heard further public comment, discussed the written comments submitted, and made changes based on the comments and concerns. The five primary issues raised include: curricular requirements, prior experience of building principals serving as mentors, prior experience of teachers entering principal preparation programs, the use of adjunct faculty by principal preparation programs and funding issues.

The State Board adopted the proposed rules at its January meeting. Due to a request by the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) to extend the time for the second notice period, JCAR's review of the proposed rules has been delayed until the March 8 meeting.

Illinois teacher a finalist for National Teacher of the Year

Annice Brave, the 2011 Illinois Teacher of the Year, has been named one of four finalists for National Teacher of the Year. This is the 61st

year that the Council of Chief State School Officers has sponsored the National Teacher of the Year program. The winner will be announced in the spring.

An English and journalism teacher at Alton High School, Brave was chosen 2011 Illinois Teacher of the Year last October from a field of eight finalists. She has been teaching for 23 years and was the first teacher in Alton Community Unit School District 11 to earn National Board Certification. She also serves as chair of the English department.

It has been more than 40 years since an Illinois teacher was selected as the National Teacher of the Year. The late David E. Graf, a vocational education and industrial arts teacher from Sandwich Community High School was honored in 1968; and, in 1954, Willard C. Widerberg, a seventh-grade teacher at DeKalb Junior High School, was selected.

The National Teacher of the Year program is a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and is sponsored by the ING Foundation and Target. The other finalists are from Florida, Maryland and Montana.

A panel of educators, representing the 14 largest national education organizations, chose the finalists from the 2011 Teachers of the Year representing the United States, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity and four U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. The panel will also select the 2011 National Teacher of the Year. President Barack Obama will recognize the national honoree and all the state winners during an event tentatively scheduled for the week of May 2.

The organizations represented on the 2011 National Selection Committee are American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, American Association of School Administrators,

Legislative Liaisons: For questions or inquiries, contact Nicole Wills (nwills@isbe.net) or Cynthia Riseman (criseman@isbe.net) in the Governmental Relations Division at 217-782-6510 or by fax at 217-782-3097.

American Federation of Teachers, Association for Childhood Education International, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Association of Teacher Educators, National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Congress of Parents and Teachers, National Education Association, National Middle Schools Association and the National School Public Relations Association.

Education Jobs Funds

On Aug. 30, 2010, Illinois received an approved grant award for the new federal Education Jobs (Ed Jobs) Fund program in the amount of \$415,397,841. These funds may be used for compensation and benefit costs to retain, rehire or hire new employees and will be distributed to local education agencies (LEAs) on a reimbursement basis per federal guidance.

As of Jan. 24, 722 of 945 entities eligible have requested \$179,871,803 in Ed Jobs funds. This represents 43.3 percent of the total funds Illinois received. Three hundred seventy-nine of the districts have requested their entire allocation as of Jan. 24 and most, but not all districts, have requested at least some funds. LEAs are encouraged to request funds for eligible costs in the 2010-11 school year but federal guidance allows LEAs to use unexpended funds in the 2011-12 school year. The last date for obligation is Sept. 30, 2012.

Basic Skills Cut Scores

Last year, the State Teacher Certification Board recommended that the State Board of Education

raise the score needed to pass the Illinois Test of Basic Skills, an assessment individuals are required to pass in order to be admitted into an educator preparation program. The recommendation by the Certification Board was made after a panel of experts comprised of teachers, administrators and higher education officials was convened to review basic skills test questions to determine the minimum number an individual would need to get correct.

The Certification Board also recommended that the State Board of Education break the test into smaller subject areas to better inform candidates and their schools about their strengths and weaknesses. A candidate who passes one subject area but fails another will only be required to test again in the subject area they have failed. Breaking these tests into smaller subject areas and allowing a candidate to “bank” those that they have passed allows the candidate the opportunity to improve his or her skills (and score) in the area(s) in which he or she has a weakness.

The State Board of Education reviewed and approved the Certification Board’s recommendations. As the State moves toward new, more rigorous standards for students and raises the bar for teacher and principal preparation programs, we need to do the same with respect to those entering the teaching profession. Research shows that many students graduating from high school today require substantial remediation once they enter college and our goal is to ensure that the prospective candidates entering teacher preparation programs have the necessary skills to succeed.

The Basic Skills test provides students with a benchmark they can use to measure their progress and preparedness, which in some cases will allow them to save time and money by not beginning a course of study for which they have not been properly prepared.

Legislative Liaisons: For questions or inquiries, contact Nicole Wills (nwills@isbe.net) or Cynthia Riseman (criseman@isbe.net) in the Governmental Relations Division at 217-782-6510 or by fax at 217-782-3097.

ISBE thinks the standards for basic skills should be maintained given that student expectations, particularly in the elementary grades, are being raised through the adoption of the Common Core Standards, however we are going to continue to closely examine the results and keep the Teacher Certification Board apprised of pass rates.

Illinois Students Selected for U.S. Senate Youth Program

Two Illinois students, James Konsky from Triad CUSD 2 and William Fernandez from the University Laboratory High School, were selected from applicants across the state to represent Illinois as delegates to the 49th annual U.S. Senate Youth Program (USSYP) in Washington, D.C., in March.

James Konsky serves as a Knights Council representative at Triad High School and as a Junior Board member of the U.S. Senator Paul Simon Museum. William Fernandez is student body president at University Laboratory High School and was selected as one of the top 10 high school journalists in Illinois.

The U.S. Senate sponsors the USSYP, created in 1962, and the Hearst Foundations currently funds the program. The program aims to instill a more profound knowledge of the American political process and a lifelong commitment to public service. Each year the competitive, merit-based program brings 104 outstanding high school students — two from each state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity — to Washington, D.C., for an intensive week-long study of the federal government. The Hearst Foundations provide each of the 104 student delegates with a

\$5,000 undergraduate college scholarship and encourages them to continue coursework in government, history and public affairs.

While in Washington March 5-12, the student delegates will attend meetings and briefings with senators and Congressional staff, the President, a justice of the Supreme Court, leaders of cabinet agencies, an ambassador to the United States and members of the national media.

Anastasia Golovashkina, a resident of Naperville who attends Naperville North High School, and Nora Castrejon, a resident of Chicago, who attends Benito Juarez Community Academy, were chosen as alternates for the 2011 program.

FY 2011 Comptroller Backlog to School Districts

As of Feb. 7, the Comptroller has a backlog of \$1.2 billion in ISBE vouchers for FY 2011. There are over 18,000 vouchers dating back to Sept. 10, 2010, waiting to be processed.

ISBE Board Meetings

The State Board will hold a one-day meeting on Feb. 17 in Chicago at the State Board offices (James R. Thompson Center, 100 W. Randolph, Suite 14-300, Chicago, IL).

The next two-day meeting will be held in Springfield on March 16-17. A calendar of all the 2011 meeting dates can be found at http://isbe.net/board/pdf/2011_board_meetings.pdf.

Legislative Liaisons: For questions or inquiries, contact Nicole Wills (nwills@isbe.net) or Cynthia Riseman (criseman@isbe.net) in the Governmental Relations Division at 217-782-6510 or by fax at 217-782-3097.

School District Reorganization Feasibility Studies Funding

ISBE is accepting agreements for the FY 2011 School District Reorganization Feasibility Studies. Feasibility studies are a tool to be used by school districts that wish to investigate the advantages and/or disadvantages of reorganization options. Interested school districts may submit a proposed agreement with an independent contractor(s) to their Regional Office of Education (ROE). The ROE will submit the agreement to ISBE for approval.

State funding is available on a “first come-first served” basis. Each study will be funded between \$4,500 and \$8,000 based on the number of school districts involved in the study and the combined student enrollment of the districts involved in the study. Any study cost above the state funding will be the responsibility of the participating districts. In order to receive reorganization feasibility study funds in FY 2011, agreements must be approved by both the ROE and ISBE, and studies must be completed and approved for payment no later than June 30, 2011.

Procedures, funding allotment and sample forms are available at <http://www.isbe.net/sfms/html/feasibility.htm>.

Going Green

In an effort to be more environmentally conscious, ISBE will be sending out communications, including budget updates and letters from the State Superintendent, via e-mail instead of through the mail. This effort will both reduce administrative time within the agency and provide cost savings for printing and mailing.

In the future, the e-mail address used for this message will be the one used for all ISBE communications from the State Superintendent, Board and Governmental Relations staff. If you have an alternative e-mail address to which you would like this information sent, or if you change e-mail addresses, please contact Nicole Wills (nwills@isbe.net) or Cynthia Riseman (criseman@isbe.net) in our Governmental Relations Division so that your information can be updated and so that you can receive this information in a timely manner.

Legislative Liaisons and GA Scholarship Questions

For all constituent or bill inquiries, contact Nicole Wills (nwills@isbe.net) or Cynthia Riseman (criseman@isbe.net) in the Governmental Relations Division at 217-782-6510 or by fax at 217-782-3097.

If you have any questions or paperwork concerning General Assembly scholarships, those should be directed to Kim Clarke at kclarke@isbe.net or 217-782-4648.

Legislative Liaisons: For questions or inquiries, contact Nicole Wills (nwills@isbe.net) or Cynthia Riseman (criseman@isbe.net) in the Governmental Relations Division at 217-782-6510 or by fax at 217-782-3097.