Agenda Topic: Federal Relations

Materials: Comparison of Bush Education Plan to Current Illinois Status (Under Separate Cover)
          Washington Education News

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Purpose of Agenda Item

● To discuss the plan by President Bush, No Child Left Behind, and what that means for Illinois education. If or as changes are needed in Illinois policy or law, those parameters will be noted.

● To consider a statement to our Congressional delegation regarding the plan.

Expected Outcome(s) of Agenda Item

● State Board members will better understand the President’s Plan and provide direction to the Superintendent and staff for next steps.

Background Information

President Bush introduced No Child Left Behind on January 22, 2001 (as noted in the February 2001 Washington Update News, with web site). The plan is available at [http://www.ed.gov/edp/nclb/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/edp/nclb/index.html) and copies will be available at the meeting as well.

Agreement with the Plan

Governor Ryan has endorsed the plan, stating that it gets an “A”, an “A” that stands for accountability.

There are many significant elements within the President’s Plan which the State Board of Education should heartily endorse as they support the Board’s system and leadership goals and priorities. These include:

● Setting and achieving high standards and accountability for all, including annual testing of students

● Improving literacy, especially through promoting reading and early reading skills
• Improving teacher quality
• Improving the instruction of mathematics and science
• Supporting the movement of students to English fluency
• Promoting parental options and innovative programs, such as charter schools
• Encouraging safe schools for all students, including reporting procedures
• Supporting the use of technology for teaching and learning
• Providing Impact Aid, particularly with an increased funding level
• Encouraging freedom within the realm of accountability
• Increasing IDEA funding

President Bush’s education plan pays particular attention to meeting the needs of poor and minority children. The plan holds real promise for closing the achievement gap and providing help where it’s needed the most.

**Points for Discussion**

While Illinois has addressed nearly all of the issues outlined in the plan, there are a few areas warranting further discussion which have potential implications for future policy.

*Parental Choice/Opportunity Scholarships*

“Schools and districts that have not made adequate yearly progress [AYP] for one academic year will be identified by the district or state as needing improvement. Immediately after identification, these schools will receive assistance to improve performance. If the identified school still has not met AYP after two years, the district must implement corrective action and offer public school choice to all students in the failing school. If the school fails to make AYP after three years, disadvantaged students within the school may use Title I funds to transfer to a higher performing public or private school, or receive supplemental educational services from a provider of choice. All non-public providers receiving federal money will be subject to appropriate standards of accountability…” Additionally, states that fail to make AYP for their disadvantaged students will be subject to losing a portion of their administrative funds.

While the State Board has addressed school improvement and assisting schools in need of assistance, there is no policy regarding use of Title I funds for transfer to a public or private school or supplemental educational services.

Some states have voucher policies or laws; others do not. In Florida, if schools continue to show academic failure, families must be offered a choice of another public or a private school. A recent report shows schools with low achievement have improved their performance. California voters defeated a ballot initiative for vouchers a couple of years ago. Maine does not have a policy on vouchers, and has a specific state statute that prohibits sending a student from a public school to a non-public school.
**Safety**

The plan consolidates and simplifies funding for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program and the 21st Century Learning Centers Program. School districts would be able to use federal dollars on after-school learning opportunities and drug and violence prevention activities. "...In order to receive funds for this program, states must develop a definition for a "persistently dangerous school" and must report on safety on a school-by-school basis...Students in persistently dangerous schools would be provided the option to transfer to a safe alternative...Also, teachers will be empowered by the states to remove violent or persistently disruptive students from the classroom. In order to receive funds from this program, states must adopt a zero-tolerance policy for violent or persistently disruptive students.”

At some point, ISBE would need to develop a definition of "persistently dangerous school." The implications of schools being labeled as "persistently dangerous," remembering the response from parents and communities regarding schools that were labeled “at-risk or failing” as part of the AEWL process should also be considered.

The second issue is that of reporting on “safety on a school-by-school basis.” Currently, while there are a number of unrelated reports that collect data about firearms, weapons, drug use and crimes committed at schools, there is not a single report that could be used for this purpose.

Additionally, a state policy for addressing “violent or persistently disruptive students” currently does not exist, although there are some local policies in place and a model IASB policy available.

**Testing Implementation**

The plan “…establishes annual assessments for every child in Grades 3-8...in reading and math...” While Illinois currently has reading and math ISAT exams in grades 3, 5 and 8, and the State Board is on record endorsing annual testing in reading and math for grades 3-8 relating to the school designation system, such a system would need to be enacted into law and then implemented in the next two-three years in order to be in compliance, should the plan become law. SB 667 by Senator Cronin (2001) proposes annual ISAT testing in reading, writing and mathematics for grades 3-10.

Of course annual assessments for every child would mean every child. For LEP students, the plan says “…States need to ensure that LEP students meet standards in core content areas that are at least as rigorous as those in English.” The current IMAGE exam would address reading achievement. The State Board is currently working on alternative language versions for math, so that area should be addressed by the time this area of the Plan would become law. How Illinois would ensure meeting standards in core content areas beyond reading and math would need to be delineated.
Cost for annual testing will likely be an issue but not for FY02. Exactly what the federal government would contribute to test development and annual testing is unknown at this time. Illinois currently spends $16.5 million on testing, while some other states spend much more (California, $44 million, Texas, $26 million, Florida, $22.4 million).

“...Progress on state assessments will be confirmed by state results on an annual sampling of 4th and 8th grade students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in math and reading...Congress would fund administration of the test.” Illinois participated in NAEP in 2000. The future look of NAEP, and its various potential uses, is unknown.

Technology

“E-rate funds and technology grant funds will be consolidated and distributed to schools through states and local districts based on need. This will also ensure that schools no longer have to submit multiple grant applications and incur the associated administrative burdens to obtain education technology funding...” These funds would be distributed to states and local districts with targeting toward high-need schools, including rural schools and schools serving high percentages of low-income students.

The impact would be mixed, with the final analysis dependent on the details of the language as enacted and any implementation plans. Clearly, schools and districts will welcome the intent to simplify the program and reduce the administrative burden to receive E-rate funds. The current program is too bureaucratic at the federal level, and becoming more of a burden than benefit for schools, especially those schools in the lowest discount levels. Schools will also applaud the flexibility to spend on a wider variety of technology needs. These program reforms should move forward regardless of whether the program is block-granted or remains in its current form.

Along with the benefits, there are some very clear downsides for Illinois, as LEAs would could receive fewer E-Rate funds than in years past -- as much as 20-60% less.

For example, taking the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund (TLCF) as a guide, that allocation is done by accounting for the total number of K-12 students, plus an additional component for low-income. As such, Illinois receives approximately 4.5% of the total national fund. If we use the current pot of $2.2 billion in E-Rate monies as the total national pool, then Illinois should receive a block grant of about $95-99 million. In contrast, Illinois received $161 million in Year 2 E-Rate funds and in Year 3 we received $117 million, so Illinois would lose between $20-$70 million.

There is also a need to factor in how much will go to libraries and non-public schools, and statewide network consortia like the Illinois Century Network (ICN). In all, ISBE would need to have or set specific directives on dividing monies in order to maintain equity.
In short, Illinois has had great success with the E-rate Program, especially for the poorest districts, and the non-public schools. Illinois' biggest victories under the current program have been with the poorest schools and districts, which have the most to gain. Staff have made concerted efforts to maximize their use of the E-rate Program and expedited the use of technology within their districts accordingly. Among the victories in Years 1, 2 and 3 are East St. Louis ($7.3 million); Chicago Public Schools ($255.6 million), and the South Cook Consortium Schools ($3.4 million).

In a nutshell, the impact of the program would be determined by how Congress and the DOE develop the language of the law and the rules for distribution of funds.

Data Issues

Teacher Quality
Expecting teacher quality to improve, the plan says “...States will be accountable for ensuring that all children are taught by effective teachers and for developing a plan to ensure this goal will be met.” Further, to empower parents with teacher quality information, the plan says “…local districts, upon request, will be required to disclose to parents information about the quality of their child’s teacher, as defined by the state.”

Definitions would need to be set and a system established, should the language of the plan be enacted.

Report cards
“...States will be required to report student assessment results to parents…..reported to the public disaggregated by race, gender, English language proficiency, disability and socio-economic status.” The Illinois report cards will display disaggregated performance in 2001. It will be done by all, low income, male, female, race and ethnic categories. The school report cards are available electronically through the ISBE website, and the site would have to be maintained and operational.

State Agreements or Performance Objectives

“A charter option for states and districts committed to accountability and reform will be created. Under this program, charter states and districts would be freed from categorical program requirements in return for submitting a five-year performance agreement to the Secretary of Education and being subject to especially rigorous standards of accountability...” This could be a major accountability issue, should the language of the plan or similar language be enacted. Large unit districts may seek to access this option in order to have more flexibility. They would also be reporting directly to the USDE rather than to the ISBE in this regard.

Linked to moving limited English proficient students to English fluency, as part of their application for funds, the plan says “...states will set performance objectives to ensure LEP children achieve English fluency within three years...States that do not meet their performance objectives for LEP students could lose up to 10% of the administrative
portion of their funding for all ESEA state-administered formula grant programs.” We need to understand how this aligns with the IMAGE exam, and how performance objectives align with meeting state standards.

Additionally, the President’s plan calls for a new consolidated federal application by ISBE regarding ESEA. The last plan was submitted in June 1996 and involved a significant amount of staff time in creation.

**Analysis and Implications for Policy, Budget, Legislative Action and Communications**

Comments were offered with each issue above, so there is no additional analysis.

The immediate impact on FY02 would relate to funding for annual testing. Other issues will likelier have a state FY03 impact as education is forward funded at the federal level and the 2001-2002 school year funding was appropriated in December 2000.

**Superintendent’s Recommendation**

The Superintendent recommends that the Board authorize the preparation of a statement about the plan to the Congressional delegation.

**Next Steps**

The Board will engage in dialogues as needed. While the US Senate has completed work at the Committee level, the full Senate will be discussing other issues prior to acting on the education bill (e.g., campaign finance reform). The Senate and House will not be taking final action until at least May.

Attachments (Washington Update News for March 2001)