Agenda Topic: Proposed Amendments – Part 260 (Reading Improvement Program)

Materials: Recommended Amendments

Staff Contact: Mike Dunn

Purpose of Agenda Item

To present the proposed amendments for the Board’s initial review and secure authorization to distribute them for public comment.

Expected Outcome of Agenda Item

A motion authorizing the staff to publish the proposed amendments in the Illinois Register to elicit public comment.

Background Information

These amendments implement Public Act 92-25, which was enacted in June of this year. That Act made changes in the activities that are allowable for funding under Section 2-3.51 of the School Code (Reading Improvement Block Grant Program) and also changed the requirements for districts’ measurement and reporting of students’ reading performance.

Although funds under this program may still be used in grades K-6, the focus of the program has been altered. More emphasis has been placed on early reading intervention and the early identification of students with reading difficulties, as well as on professional development for teachers. All programs of support, whether for very young students or for those in grades 3 through 6, are required by the new legislation to be based on scientific research and best practice and to provide on-going training for the teachers in the program. One-quarter of the funds a district receives may be used for classroom reading materials.

All these programmatic specifications are given in the law and are therefore not repeated in the rules. Instead, changes are needed mainly in the portions of the rules that describe the requirements for methods of measuring students’ reading performance. Due to legislative changes enacted in 1998, districts are ineligible for continued funding if they do not demonstrate that they are making “performance progress,” and they are required to seek approval from the State Board for the methods
they propose to use to show their progress. This year’s changes require them to use methods that permit measurement of the reading growth of students who receive direct instruction as a result of these grant funds, as well as to show the impact of the staff development activities funded under this grant. Section 260.55 shows the major portion of these changes, while the other portions of the rules are being brought into conformance with them. Several other technical changes are also included.

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

*Policy Implications:* Before presenting these amendments to the Board for its consideration, staff sought advice and feedback from a group convened especially for this purpose. The group represented the holders of various types of positions in school districts that have responsibilities related to this program (superintendents, curriculum coordinators, and principals). The participants were selected to be representative of large and small districts; urban, suburban, and rural districts, and a variety of geographic locations. No changes were identified as necessary. We believe these amendments reflect the implications of the recent legislative changes.

*Budget Implications:* This rulemaking has no budgetary implications for the agency.

*Legislative Action:* None needed.

*Communications:* Please see “Next Steps” below.

**Superintendent’s Recommendation**

Direct the dissemination of the proposed amendments to Part 260 for public comment.

**Next Steps**

With the Board’s authorization, staff will submit the proposed amendments to the Administrative Code Division for publication in the *Illinois Register* to elicit public comment. District superintendents will be alerted via the Superintendent’s Bulletin to the opportunity to comment on these rules.