Agenda Topic: Academic Early Warning List

Materials: Rules and Regulations

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Purpose of Agenda Item
To update the Board on the status of the Academic Early Warning List.

Expected Outcome(s) of Agenda Item
Approval to implement an academic early warning list for 01.

Background Information
In the fall of 1998, the Illinois State Board of Education placed 70 schools on the Academic Early Warning List. Schools were placed on the Academic Early Warning list based on two years of Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) testing data. The warning list was suspended in 1999 while the state assessment system changed to the new state assessment, Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and Prairie State Achievement Test (PSAE). In 2000, the warning list was suspended by the Illinois State Board of Education.

The rules and regulations stipulate that a school that does not meet the state standards for two consecutive years as a result of the state assessment be placed on the Academic Early Warning List. The suspension of the Academic Early Warning list in 2000 required the Illinois State Board of Education to adopt emergency rules. The emergency rules adopted in June, 2000, stipulate that no school be placed on the Academic Warning list based on a single year of ISAT data. Thus, the first consideration of school performance designations based on the ISAT data is the fall 2001 and uses the 2000 and 2001 test results.

The Illinois School Code stipulates that schools not meeting standards of academic performance may be placed on an academic watch list after serving for 2 years on the Academic Early Warning List. A school placed on the Academic Early Warning List...
shall remain on the list but avoid placement on the Academic Watch List as long as it makes adequate yearly progress (AYP). “Adequate yearly progress” means a rate of increase in the proportion of scores meeting State standards that would be sufficient in order for the school to meet State standards after five years. AEWL schools that do not make adequate yearly progress are then subject to an onsite visitation to determine whether extenuating circumstances exist as to why a school should not be placed on an academic watch list. School districts with one or more schools on the academic watch list are required to submit a revised School Improvement Plan for removing each school in the district from the academic watch list and for improving student performance in that school. In addition, the Code states that a school district that has a school on the academic watch list shall have a school improvement panel appointed by the State Superintendent of Education. It is the role of the school improvement panel to:

1) assist the school district in the development and implementation of a revised School Improvement Plan and amendments thereto, and
2) make progress reports and comments to the State Superintendent of Education pursuant to rules promulgated by the State Board of Education, and have the authority to review and approve or disapprove all actions of the board of education that pertain to implementation of the revised School Improvement Plan.

The State Board suspended the Academic Early Warning List in 1999 and 2000 due to changes in the state assessment. There were 70 schools that were on the list in the Fall of 99. Schools were not placed on the watch list in 2000 because of the change in the state assessment which resulted in the change in the measuring stick for adequate yearly progress. For example, because of the difficulty of the ISAT compared to the IGAP, an AEWL school that had to make AYP of 3% per year on the IGAP measure, might suddenly have to make 8% per year on the ISAT measure. This situation is analogous to changing from a Fahrenheit to a Celsius scale midstream.

Federal accountability regulations required ISBE to continue to identify schools with fewer than 50% of their students meeting standards. For these schools, ISBE has used the test data that were available to make the determination and set the improvement targets based on adequate yearly progress. Last fall, the number of schools identified for “Title I School Improvement” increased dramatically from previous years. This increase was directly related to the increased rigor of the ISAT in measuring the Illinois Learning Standards. The identification of additional schools resulted in the implementation of a comprehensive system of support that leveraged school improvement resources from many different funding streams and targeted districts for assistance based on the length of time they had schools identified for improvement.

This system of support was presented to the Board in December 2000 and updated monthly during this past year.

**Issues**

*Availability of two consecutive years of state trend data.*
With the transition from ISAT to IGAP in 1998-99 and the suspension of the warning list in 2000, two consecutive years of trend data for schools using the same assessment instrument has not been possible until now. Starting this fall, two consecutive years of assessment data are available for elementary schools. Two consecutive years are not available for high schools. Therefore, a list issued this fall will include only elementary schools.

Furthermore, because this will be the first time these schools will be identified based on their ISAT performance, improvement targets based on ISAT must be set. Schools will have adequate yearly progress targets established based on the 2000 and 2001 ISAT administration. The adequate yearly progress standard calls for schools to reduce the number of students who do not meet standards over two years. Elementary schools, that fail to make adequate yearly progress based on the 2001 ISAT will be eligible for the academic watch list in fall, 2003.

High schools will have two consecutive years of trend data with the 2002 administration of the PSAE. Districts with schools that fail to meet standards for two consecutive years can have their schools be identified for the AEWL in fall, 2002. Those districts with schools that do not make adequate yearly progress will have those schools eligible to be identified for the Academic Watch List in fall, 2004.

**Disconnect between State and Federal accountability designations**

As noted before, ISBE has continued to identify schools for “Title I School Improvement” in spite of assessment changes. Issuing a new Academic Early Warning List will create a ‘disconnect’ with the federal list because districts with schools identified under the federal requirements are already in the process of demonstrating adequate yearly progress gains. For them “the clock started ticking” with their designation. These schools will now have two different progress benchmarks. The first will start from the date when they were first identified for Title I School Improvement. The second will be based on their AEWL designation. This is a relatively small concern because it amounts to a one year difference in the timeline for making adequate yearly progress.

**Continuity in practice**

The 70 schools on the Academic Early Warning List that were initially identified included 43 high schools with the remaining 27 consisting of middle and elementary schools. These schools will continue to be on the AEWL under the proposed structure unless they have more than 50% of student scores meeting standards. However, they will become eligible for the Academic Watch List based on the above.

**Requirements of the watch list statute related to membership and role of SIP**

The statute requires that the State Superintendent appoint a school improvement panel in districts with schools on the Academic Watch List. The school improvement panel 1) assists the district in the development and implementation of a revised school improvement plan; 2) makes reports and comments to the State Board of Education; and 3) reviews and approves or disapproves the board of education’s actions pertaining to the implementation of the revised school improvement plan. Whereas the powers
and duties of a Financial Oversight Panel are clearly spelled out in statute, there is no such listing of specific powers and duties of the state appointed School Improvement Panel. These will need to be written, published and disseminated before schools are placed on the watch list in 2003.

System of support for Early Warning List schools

ISBE has been providing some form of assistance to districts with schools on the Academic Early Warning List since 1996. More recently, ISBE has implemented a system of support for schools identified for Title I School Improvement. This system is grounded on the belief that support should be:

- Tiered to provide the most support for those districts needing the most help;
- Leverage state federal and local dollars to improve performance.

As part of providing assistance to low achieving schools, ISBE has formed partnerships with districts that have schools identified for four consecutive years. These districts are required to develop and implement a performance agreement specifying the types of interventions and supports they will implement to improve performance in the entire district with an emphasis on the schools most in need of assistance. A total of 12 districts currently receive this level of support. All other districts are eligible for assistance through a variety of interventions funded through state and local dollars. All of these interventions have a strong track record or hold promise for improving student performance in low performing schools. Specifically, all districts (with elementary schools) are entitled to receive state summer bridges funds. Districts were also eligible to apply for Reading Excellence Act and Comprehensive School Reform grants this past spring. Additionally, ISBE provided training and grant writing assistance to any of the districts that were interested in applying for federal 21st Century Learning Communities grants (for academic extended learning opportunities).

In order to accommodate the large number of schools eligible for the state system of support, ISBE is reconstituting the Quality Assurance program. A new process focused on the development, implementation and monitoring of district school improvement plans will be pilot-tested this year. Beginning with the 2002 school year, the revised Quality Assurance process will focus on providing support to districts with one or more schools on the Academic Early Warning List. The goal of the revised process is to build the capacity of the school district to improve their low-performing schools through the development and implementation of a continuous improvement process with an emphasis on the Illinois Learning Standards. The continuous improvement process will be fashioned using the Education Criteria for Performance Excellence of the Baldrige National Quality Program. The process will include an assessment of the district's existing plans and capacity for improving its low-performing schools. A report will be provided to the district that provides feedback on the results of the assessment. The results will be used to develop or revise a district continuous improvement plan for its low-performing schools. This plan will, in effect, serve as a performance agreement between the district and the Illinois State Board of Education. Periodic monitoring visits will be conducted to evaluate the district's progress in the deployment of its plan.
Timelines – Chart A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Warning List Status</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>List suspended in the Fall of 1999</td>
<td>The change to ISAT makes trend data unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>List suspended in the Fall of 2000</td>
<td>ISAT results from 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>List reinstated in the Fall of 2001</td>
<td>ISAT results from 2001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Recommended Timelines and Action

Elementary and middle schools – recommended timelines

1. Schools on warning list in 1998 and that meet standards based on the 2001 ISAT results (50% or more scores meeting or exceeding standards).

   Action: remove from academic warning list

2. Schools on warning list in 1998 and fail to meet standards based on the 2001 ISAT results -

   Action: remain on warning list for 2001, and can be placed on the watch list in fall, 2003. These districts will be notified by letter of the need to make AYP.

3. Schools that do not meet state standards in 2000 and 2001 based on ISAT results -

   Action: placement on the warning list in fall 2001 and can be placed on the watch list in fall, 2003. These districts will be notified by letter of the need to make AYP.

High schools

High schools will not have two consecutive years of PSAE data until the 2002 administration of the test.

1. Schools on warning list in 1998 and meet standards based on PSAE results in 2001 (50% or more student scores meeting or exceeding) -

   Action: remove from warning list
2. Schools on warning list in 1998 and fail to meet the standards based on the 2001 PSAE -
   Action: remain on warning list for 2001 and can be placed on the watch list in fall, 2004. These schools will receive a letter informing them of the need to make AYP and the timeline for watch list placement.

3. Schools that do not meet state standards in 2001 and 2002 based on PSAE results -
   Action: placement on the warning list in fall 2002 and can be placed on the watch list in fall, 2004.

4. Schools that do not meet state standards in 2001 -
   Action: These schools will receive a letter informing them that if they do not meet standards next year, they will be placed on the AEWL.

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

Communications
Develop an implementation plan for public awareness.

Policy
Adopt School Designation System and accompanying rules and regulations.

Legislative
Revisit statute as needed, especially to spell out the powers and duties of the state appointed School Improvement Panel.

Budget
Currently more federal than state funds for districts with low achieving schools focus on helping districts build capacity.

**Superintendent’s Recommendation**

Direct staff to begin preparing the AEWL and prepare a detailed analysis of school improvement efforts for those schools that have been identified previously on the warning list..

**Next Steps:**

Prepare list.

Prepare letters to go to schools.

Prepare recommended changes to statute for School Improvement Panel.