TO: Illinois State Board of Education
FROM: Robert E. Schiller, Superintendent
Lynne Haeffele Curry, Director

Agenda Topic: Discussion Item: System of Support

Materials
Powerpoint Presentation (at Board meeting)

Staff Contact(s): Don Full
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Purpose of Agenda Item

To provide background information to the Board in preparation for an in-depth discussion of the state’s System of Support plan at the April Board meeting.

Expected Outcome(s) of Agenda Item

The Board will have the necessary information to lay the groundwork for detailed policy discussion in April.

Background Information

The 1994 reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) required that states provide Title I schools with a system of assistance designed to bolster school improvement. Illinois provided a variety of services that constituted a “mosaic” of assistance, but did not institute a systemic approach.

With the advent of the Academic Early Warning List (AEWL) in 1997, the need for targeted assistance to academically challenged schools increased. ISBE began to conduct school and district analyses designed to provide useful information for revising school improvement plans and implementing them in the AEWL schools. ISBE staff were assigned to schools and districts in various regions of the state, giving on-site technical assistance, approving and monitoring school improvement plans. Since 1997, the number of schools on the AEWL has climbed from 57 to 715, due largely to the switchover to the Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) in 1999 and the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) in 2001. These tests are based on the Illinois Learning Standards, and are more rigorous and demanding than the previous IGAP tests.
Once again, the numbers of schools and districts classified as needing improvement are expected to climb, based on the new accountability requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB). In February 2003, the Board adopted criteria for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) calculations, setting state targets for achievement that climb every year. These targets apply not only to all students (for reading and math), but also to all subgroups of students with a group size greater than 40. The AYP calculations are performed at both the school and district levels. Thus, even if a school has too few students in a subgroup to count for AYP calculations, a large district will almost certainly have enough students in the that subgroup to make the calculation. Based on current trends in the performance of student subgroups, it is highly likely that districts as well as schools will appear on future AEWL lists.

With these new developments, it becomes clear that ISBE will not have the staff capacity to conduct the types of on-site, “hands-on” assistance it has offered in the past. Yet schools and districts will continue to need this type of support. Staff will offer an outline of a regionalized delivery system plan that is taking shape with the assistance of Regional Offices of Education and other parties. Redefining ISBE staff roles is an important component of the process.

A more in-depth, detailed presentation and discussion will take place at the April 2003 Board meeting.

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

*Policy Implications*
Shifting the System of Support from a centralized (ISBE) to regionalized configuration will require the Board to adopt policies over time that allow and support this shift.

*Budget Implications*
Funding for System of Support activities comes from both state and federal sources. An estimate of current and future costs for the system will be available in April.

*Legislative Action*
Legislative language addressing the accountability requirements for NCLB is being included as part of ISBE’s shell bill for NCLB changes. The proposed language allows the Superintendent to delegate some of his oversight to one or more designees.

*Communication*
The shift to a regionalized System of Support will require close communication with the affected school districts and the public.

*Next Steps*
Continue the design process with partners and prepare materials for the April Board discussion.