Purpose of Agenda Item

- To inform the Board about the Spotlight Schools designation, a rewards program for 28 high performing schools being launched this month in partial fulfillment of the requirement for rewards, as well as sanctions, to be included in the state accountability system.
- To provide the Board with an opportunity to participate in the first awards ceremony.

Expected Outcomes of Agenda Item

The Board will understand the criteria for designation of Spotlight Schools and the importance of their accomplishments.

Background Information

History of the Project
In December 2001, the State Board of Education commissioned research to be done by Glenn “Max” McGee at Northern Illinois University (NIU). Results of McGee’s study of high poverty, high performing schools were presented to the Board in June 2001. One of the report’s recommendations was to develop an awards program for these extraordinary schools. In 2003, NIU Outreach proposed development of an awards program to be aligned with requirements of the new accountability system. ISBE agreed and the name “Spotlight Schools” was chosen. On October 14, 2003, the Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division completed identification of the award winners, based on final Illinois Report Card data and on criteria developed with NIU.

Selection of Spotlight Schools
A number of national organizations, such as U.S. Department of Education and Education Trust, have identified high poverty, high performing schools. ISBE’s standards are among the most rigorous, largely due to alignment with NCLB. Spotlight Schools are Illinois public schools that offer open enrollment, which excludes schools with restrictive admissions. The 28 Illinois Spotlight Schools meet the following criteria:
At least 50% low income in 2002 and 2003;
At least 50% of students met or exceeded standards in reading and math in 2002;
At least 60% of students met or exceeded standards in reading and math in 2003;
Made "Adequate Yearly Progress" in 2003, as required by "No Child Left Behind"
  • At least 40% meeting and exceeding standards in both reading and mathematics
  • 95% participation rate in state assessments for all students and each subgroup
  • Attendance rate of at least 88% for elementary and middle schools and 65% for high schools

Characteristics of Spotlight Schools
Research by McGee in 2001 cited the following common characteristics of high poverty, high performing schools:
  • Exemplary principals who are leaders of learning, who are resourceful and who model leadership daily
  • A hard working, devoted staff that has the highest expectations, demands excellence, and REALLY believes each student can succeed
  • Early literacy programs that focus on prevention and early intervention
  • Policies, programs, and services to include parents in the school and to educate parents in both parenting and in academic skills
  • Access to good nutrition and health care for all students
  • School-wide professional development on a single topic related to school improvement planning
  • Sharing of local and state assessment data and systematic use of that data to improve teaching and learning
  • Frequent celebrations and ceremonies
  • Strong connection to early childhood programs
  • Access to books in the classroom and formal recognition of reading progress
  • Ready access to a host of after school, before school and Saturday programs
  • Summer school for most students
  • Technology used to enhance learning and for analyzing and charting data
  • School improvement plans focused on a small number of improvement initiatives that are embraced, supported, and sustained by the entire school community.

Spotlight School Awards and Related Activities
On October 23, 2003, the Superintendent will present Spotlight Schools awards to seven high poverty, high performing schools located in northwestern Illinois.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berrian School</td>
<td>K-3</td>
<td>Quincy District 172</td>
<td>John Tignor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackhawk Elementary</td>
<td>P-4</td>
<td>Freeport District 145</td>
<td>Donna Benton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dewey Elementary</td>
<td>K-3</td>
<td>Quincy District 172</td>
<td>Patricia Rokusek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earl Hanson Elementary</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>Rock Island District 41</td>
<td>Debra Desser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harding Primary</td>
<td>K-3</td>
<td>Monmouth District 38</td>
<td>Sue Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Elementary</td>
<td>K-3</td>
<td>Quincy District 172</td>
<td>Patricia Viniard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whittier Primary</td>
<td>K-4</td>
<td>Peoria District 150</td>
<td>Sharon Kherat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional awards ceremonies will be held at locations throughout the state to honor the Spotlight Schools winners. Legislators, community leaders, regional superintendents, education organizations, higher education institutions, and the media are being invited to attend and to celebrate the accomplishments of these schools. NIU will conduct
additional research into what makes these schools so different and is encouraging research and support activities by others. For instance, the Illinois Principals Association will help to build an active learning network for the Spotlight Schools Principals.

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

**Policy Implications**
- The Spotlight Schools awards reinforce the Board’s long-time commitment to publicizing and reducing the achievement gap.
- Analysis of data about the Spotlight Schools will help the Board to understand the progress and challenges of closing the achievement gap.
- Universities and education partners can help identify and disseminate the factors that make the Spotlight Schools so unusually successful.
- The new Illinois Accountability System requires a system of rewards to balance the system of sanctions. Discussion of additional rewards programs will be scheduled for a future agenda.

**Budget Implications**
The Innovative Practices component of federal “No Child Left Behind” funding is supporting the Spotlight Schools awards program along with resources of Northern Illinois University.

**Communications**
The Spotlight Schools demonstrate to educators and communities across the state that all students in all kinds of circumstances can achieve high standards. This message deserves broad dissemination. The awards also present an opportunity to emphasize “good news” of outstanding accomplishments by schools with limited resources and a majority of low-income students during a period when media attention tends to focus on the AEWL and lists of schools not making Adequate Yearly Progress.

**Superintendent’s Recommendations**
- The Board will join the Superintendent in congratulating the 28 winners of the Spotlight Schools awards and celebrating their accomplishments in Rock Island and at other events across the state.
- The Superintendent to take steps to develop a rewards system for high performing schools of all kinds, as required by the new state accountability law.

**Next Steps**
Board members will receive additional information about Spotlight Schools events and activities.