August 4, 2011

Freedom of Information Office
Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First Street
Springfield, IL 62777-0001

Attn: FOIA Request
Mr. Matt Vanover
Mr. Mark Wancket

Re: FOIA request for documents related to validation studies for Illinois Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)

To Whom It May Concern:

This is a request for information under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act, 5 ILCS 140. I request that a copy of the following documents be provided to me.

The documents requested relate to the Illinois Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) administered during the years 2010-2011.

Documents related to the examinations given during those years may have been created before 2010. Documents responsive to these requests should be produced even if they were created before 2010.

Documents requested include those created by the Illinois State Board of Education and any of its committees, commissions, sub-organizations and sub-parts; documents created by ISBE’s Technical Advisory Council and any other advisory committees or councils; and documents created by the State Teacher Certification Board.

Documents requested also specifically include those created by any vendor or contractor, including but not limited to the Pearson company.

We request:
All reports of validation studies or documents that purport to be validation studies of the ITBS, including but not limited to the documents listed below.

All documents that describe how and why the passing, or “cut-off” scores used in 2010 and 2011 were set for the ITBS.

All documents that describe or show or purport to describe or show what was intended to be accomplished by setting those particular passing or cut-off scores for the ITBS.

All documents that describe or show or purport to describe or show how effective the passing or cut-off scores set for the ITBS for 2010 and 2011 were in achieving what was intended to be accomplished by setting passing or cut-off scores for the ITBS.

All documents that describe why the passing, or cut-off scores for the ITBS, or its constituent parts, were increased in or about September, 2010.

All validation studies or other documents that show or purport to show an association between performance on the ITBS, at or above the passing or cut-off scores for the ITBS in 2010, and performance as a teacher.

All validation studies or other documents that describe or purport to describe any measure of the extent to which the increase in the passing or cut-off scores for the ITBS in 2010 would improve the quality of teachers in Illinois.

All validation studies or other documents that show or purport to show that increasing the passing or cut-off scores for the ITBS in 2010 was “job-related.”

All validation studies or other documents that describe or show or purport to describe or show that setting higher passing or cut-off scores for the ITBS, at the levels set for the ITBS in 2010, would result in selecting students with greater potential to be effective school teachers.

All validation studies or other documents that describe or purport to describe or show that setting higher passing or cut-off scores for the ITBS, at the levels set for the ITBS in 2010, would result in selecting students with personal characteristics or character traits likely to make them more effective teachers.

All validation studies or other documents that describe or purport to describe or show the relationship between setting higher passing or cut-off scores for the ITBS, at the levels set for the ITBS in 2010, and selection of students with skills, abilities, and personal characteristics other than content knowledge (such as, e.g., communication skills, encouraging and nurturing attitudes, motivational skills, ability to communicate the need to improve in a positive manner, ability to maintain class control, ability to multi-task, emotional stability, conscientiousness, and commitment to teaching as a profession) likely to make them more effective teachers.
All documents that describe or purport to describe any measure of the extent to which the increase in the passing or cut-off scores for the ITBS in 2010 would decrease the quality of teachers because the increase in cut-off scores would be over-inclusive in excluding people from possible certification as teachers -- excluding people who have other valuable skills and potential for performance as teachers, not measured by the ITBS.

All documents that describe or purport to describe any measure of the extent to which the increase in the passing or cut-off scores for the ITBS in 2010 would improve the quality of students in teacher certification programs in Illinois.

All documents that describe or purport to describe any measure of the extent to which the increase in the passing or cut-off scores for the ITBS in 2010 has improved the quality of students in teacher certification programs in Illinois.

All documents that describe or purport to describe any measure of the extent to which the increase in the passing or cut-off scores for the ITBS in 2010 would decrease the quality of students in teacher certification programs in Illinois because the increase in cut-off scores would be over-inclusive in excluding people from participation in those programs who have other valuable skills and potential for performance as teachers, not measured by the ITBS.

All documents that describe or purport to describe any measure of the extent to which the increase in the passing or cut-off scores for the ITBS in 2010 has decreased the quality of students in teacher certification programs in Illinois because it has excluded people from participating in those programs who have other valuable skills and potential for performance as teachers, not measured by the ITBS.

All documents that relate to the creation and membership and activities of a panel created by ITBS in 2010 to advise it with respect to establishment of passing or cut-off scores for the ITBS, including the identity of the members of the panel and their contact information; the materials given to panel members to review; instructions given to panel members; the work product of panel members; and the recommendations resulting from the work of the panel.

All documents that describe or purport to describe the reasons why the cut-off scores for the ITBS effective in or about September, 2010 were not set at the levels recommended by the panel assembled by ISBE.

All validation studies or other documents that describe what the ITBS was intended to measure.

All validation studies or other documents that report on or describe the efficacy of the ITBS in measuring what it was intended to measure.

A copy of the ITBS administered in November, 2010, including all sub-parts, answer keys, and instructions to graders.
A copy of the ITBS administered in January, 2011, including all sub-parts, answer keys, and instructions to graders.

All documents that describe or show how individual questions on the ISBE administered in 2010 and 2011 were determined to be job-related to the job of being a teacher in Illinois.

I would like to obtain copies of these records. I understand that the Act permits a public body to charge a reasonable copying fee not to exceed the actual cost of reproduction and not including the costs of any search or review of the records. 5 ILCS 140/6. I am willing to pay fees for this request up to a maximum of four hundred dollars ($400.00). If you estimate that the fees will exceed this limit, please inform me first and provide an estimate of the total copying costs to be incurred, before copying and producing documents.

I look forward to hearing from you in writing within seven working days, as required by the Act, 5 ILCS 140(3). Please contact me if you have any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Paul Strauss
Co-Director of Litigation