September 7, 2011

Anne Hallett
Chicago, Illinois 60613

Dear Ms. Hallett:

This letter is in response to your request for information under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act. Your request was received on 8/23/11.

Your three requests pertain to the Illinois Basic Skills Test.

Request 1 / Item 1 – The data source for the percentages of test takers in each category.

Response to Request 1 / Item 1 – The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) does not possess the requested information. It is maintained by Pearson.

Request 1 / Item 2 – You have asked about data disparities.

Response to Request 1 / Item 2 – This issue was addressed in an e-mail message sent to you by Linda Tomlinson on 7/7/11 (shown below).

"According to Pearson:

'It is not possible to compute accurate pass rates without taking into account the fact that candidates who fail may then retake the test. The proper analysis looks at each candidate’s best attempt to answer the question, ‘what percentage of candidates attempted the test and eventually passed?’ Combining data from separate administrations will result in incorrect conclusions.'

Consider the following example: Suppose that ten examinees take a test. Five pass on their first attempt and the other five fail. Those five failing examinees retake the test and all pass on their second attempt. Thus we have ten examinees, all of whom passed the test, for a pass rate of 100%. If we try to make conclusions by looking only at the results for each administration without taking into account the fact that some of the attempts were retakes, we would incorrectly conclude that there were 10 passes out of 15 attempts, for an incorrect pass rate of 67%.”

Request 1 / Item 3 – You have requested monthly reports which identify race/ethnicity.
Response to Request 1 / Item 3 – The attached file (12-068 – hallett – doc1.pdf) is provided in response to your request. Pursuant to 5 ILCS 140/7 (1)(a), values less than ten have been redacted.

Request 2 – You seek data on the number of test takers by category and numbers of passers in each category who “passed all 4 sub-tests.”

Response to Request 2 – As test result information becomes available, it will be posted at the following location: http://www.isbe.net/certification/html/testing.htm.

Information is contained in the “Testing Reports” section.

Request 3 / Item 1 – You seek “non-duplicative total numbers of test takers by category … who have “passed all 4 sub-tests for June 2011 and July 2011.”

Response to Request 3 / Item 1 – ISBE does not possess the requested information.

Request 3 / Item 2 – You have made an open/ongoing request for the information specified in Request 3 / Item 1.

Response to Request 3 / Item 2 – See previous response.

If you have questions, contact Mark Wancket at 217-782-4648.

Sincerely,

Matt Vanover
Director of Public Information

Attachment