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**OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**  
**SHEILA SIMON – LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**



# **CLASSROOMS FIRST COMMISSION**

## **Stage I Report**

**January 23, 2012**

House Bill 1216 was signed into law on August 23, 2011 as Public Act 97-0503, creating a commission to research issues affecting school districts. The commission is now known as the Classrooms First Commission.

# The Classrooms First Commission

PA 97-0503 created a commission charged with recommending ways Illinois school districts can improve student learning opportunities and reduce duplicative administration costs. The text of the bill is found in Appendix A.

The commission is chaired by Lt. Governor Sheila Simon and represents educators, parents, and policymakers from rural, suburban and urban areas:

## **Statewide Elected Officials**

Lt. Governor Sheila Simon, Chair  
Sen. David Luechtefeld, Illinois Senate Republicans  
Sen. Linda Holmes, Illinois Senate Democrats  
Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia, Illinois House Democrats  
Rep. Roger Eddy, Illinois House Republicans

## **Stakeholder Groups**

Linda Riley Mitchell, Illinois State Board of Education  
Jerry Harrison, Illinois Education Association  
Daniel Montgomery, President, Illinois Federation of Teachers  
Dr. Michael Johnson, Executive Director Emeritus, Illinois Association of School Boards  
Jason Leahy, Executive Director, Illinois Principals Association  
Ava Harston, Assistant Director, Chicago Teacher's Union  
Dr. Michael Jacoby, Executive Director, Illinois Association of School Business Officials  
Dr. Brent Clark, Executive Director, Illinois Association of School Administrators  
Patrick Rocks, General Counsel, Chicago Board of Education  
Jimmy Gunnell, President, Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education  
Jonathan Goldman, Director, Parent PAC  
Dr. Paul Swanstrom, High School District Organization of Illinois  
Tom Scates, representative from rural school district  
Vickie Nissen, representative from suburban school district  
Regional Superintendent Larry Pfeiffer, Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools

## **Staff—Office of the Lieutenant Governor**

Dr. Lynne Haeffele, Senior Director for Education Policy  
Crystal Olsen, Policy Advisor  
Justin Stofferahn, Policy Advisor

## Commission Process

The commission's work will be completed in three stages. During Stage I, the commission reviewed current research and held public hearings across the state, which drew more than 400 attendees. The commission collected testimony from nearly 80 individuals and gathered additional ideas from 470 online survey submissions. This public input will guide the next stage of the commission's deliberations.

### **This report summarizes the findings and input from Stage I.**

The commission began Stage II of its work in January 2012 and has formed smaller working groups focused on the following issues: shared services, within-district efficiency, and realignment. Throughout January, February and March, the work groups will meet to develop a set of draft recommendations, to be released for review in April 2012.

Stage III will begin with release of the commissions draft recommendations. The public will have the opportunity to comment on these recommendations through a second round of public hearings across the state or by submitting comments online. After collecting public input on the draft recommendations, the commission will present a final report and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by July 1, 2012.

# Commission Goals and Process Guidelines

**At the September 29, 2011 Commission meeting, members stated their goals for the Commission's work; all stated goals are reflected in this document. Members present:**

Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon,  
Chair  
State Senator David Luechtefeld  
State Senator Linda Holmes  
State Representative Linda Chapa LaVia  
State Representative Roger Eddy  
Regional Superintendent Larry Pfeiffer,  
IARSS

Linda Riley Mitchell, CFO, ISBE  
Patrick Rocks, General Counsel, CPS  
Brent Clark, President, IASA  
Ava Harston, CTU  
Tom Scates, Rural Representative  
Vickie Nissen, Suburban Representative

Michael Johnson, Director, IASB  
Jason Leahy, Director, IPA  
Paul Swanstrom, HSDO of IL  
Jimmy Gunnell, President, IAASE  
Dan Montgomery, President, IFT  
Jerry Harrison, IEA  
Calvin Jackson (for M. Jacoby),  
IASBO

## **Goal 1: Improve educational opportunities for public school students.**

- Improve educational programs, eliminate those that are ineffective or outdated, and encourage innovation; also consider extra-curricular activities and enrichment programs
- Assure opportunities for teacher learning and support
- Assure that “efficiencies” benefit students
- Consider equity of opportunities; recommend ways for districts to ensure adequate service levels regardless of district/school size or location
- Identify and share best practices among districts for high-quality educational delivery (including non-traditional methods such as distance learning and partnerships)

## **Goal 2: Improve efficient use of educational resources.**

- Include all districts in efficiency recommendations
- Identify ways to reduce costs
- Study streamlining opportunities, intergovernmental agreements, strategic procurement, dual districts, and previous realignments (both within and among districts)
- Improve service delivery efficiencies, including instructional, financial, operational, and administrative services
- Create “stop doing” lists
- Define parameters for realignment/reorganization and for high school size
- Consider within-district school consolidation
- Recommend district criteria where cooperative financial, operational, and administrative services should be considered, and identify best practices in these areas

## **Process Guidelines**

- Meet the legislative mandate and intent of P.A. 97-0503
- As a Commission, be “ready to learn”
- Take a deep look at relevant research and develop an understanding of variables that affect both efficiency and quality
- Respect local control and decision-making authority, and place a priority on local input; listen to all ideas
- Consider impact, especially unintended consequences
- Provide multiple avenues for public input, including comments on draft recommendations
- Assure that recommendations are practical and can be implemented as intended
- Coordinate with related recommendations, such as those from the Streamlining Delivery Systems Task Force

# Research Summary

During Stage I, the Commission studied current research order to acquire background information to guide its deliberations. Research topics included Illinois school district data, in-district efficiencies, shared services, and school district realignment.

## Illinois Data: School District Realignment

The state provides several methods for school districts to realign:

### **New District Formation**

- Consolidation
- Conversion
- Hybrid Formation (Combination of Unit District and Dual District Territory)

### **Annexation**

### **Deactivation**

### **Cooperative High School**

The state supports these realignment efforts with a variety of financial incentives:

### **Deficit Fund Balance**

Compares the reorganizing districts' fund balances for the four operational funds. If there are deficit fund balances, this incentive will pay the difference between the lowest deficit and the other deficits. Paid 1 year.

### **General State Aid Differential**

Compares the General State Aid payment received by newly formed district to the total amount of General State Aid the districts would have received filing separately. Paid each year for 4 years.

### **Salary Differential**

Compares teachers' salaries in their previous district with a comparable category on the highest salary schedule of all districts forming the new district. Paid each year for 4 years.

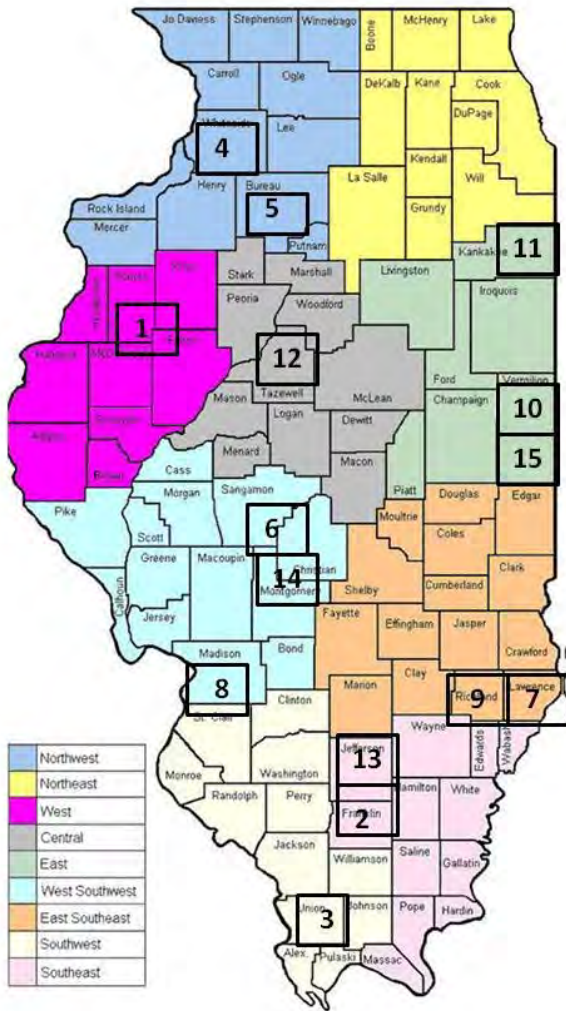
### **\$4,000 per Certified Staff**

Provides \$4,000 based on the new district's headcount of full-time certified staff. Paid 1, 2, or 3 years, based on new district's Average Daily Attendance (ADA) and Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) per pupil.

The graphic on the following page shows districts considering realignment options as of December 2011.

# Illinois Districts Considering Reorganization

(ISBE December 2011 Data)



## Anticipated 2012 petitions and dissolutions:

- 1 Abingdon 217 / Avon 176 / Bushnell-Prairie City 170
- 2 Christopher 99 / Zeigler-Royalton 188
- 3 Lick Creek 16 / Anna 37 / Jonesboro 43 / Anna-Jonesboro CHSD 81
- 4 Riverdale 14 dissolution
- 5 Leepertown 175 dissolution

## Feasibility Studies for FY 2011:

- 6 Pawnee 11 / Morrisonville 1 / Panhandle 2
- 7 Red Hill 10 / Lawrence County 20
- 8 Venice 3 / Brooklyn 188
- 9 East Richland 1 / West Richland 2
- 10 Rossville-Alvin 7 –HS Reactivation

## Feasibility Studies for FY 2012:

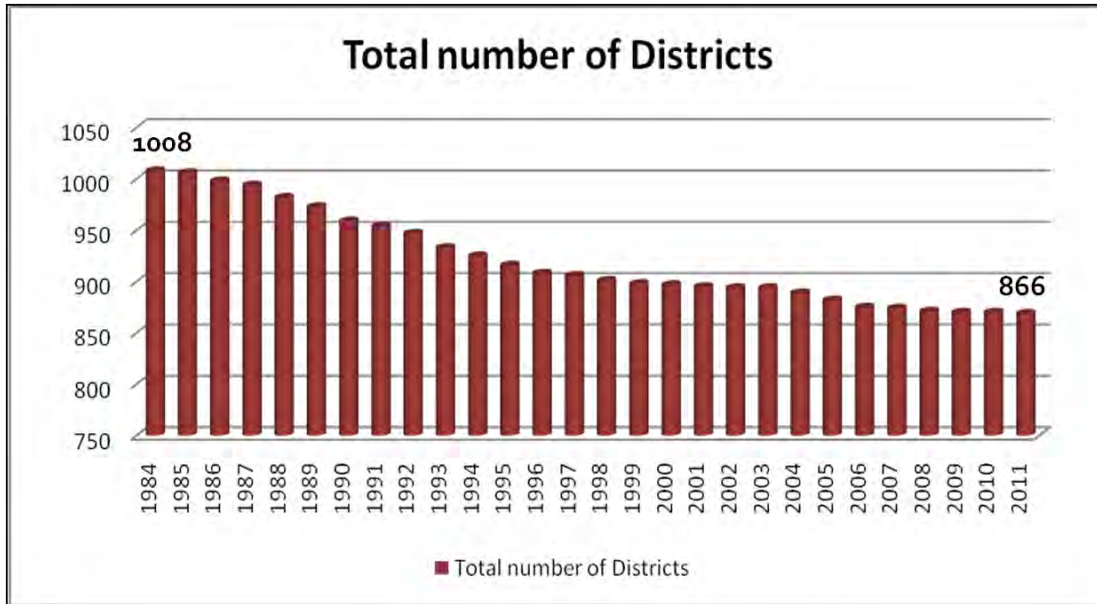
- 11 St Anne 256 / Pembroke 259 / St Anne CHSD 302
- 12 District 50 / Central 51 / Washington 52 / Washington CHSD 308
- 13 Bethel 82 / Dodds 7 / Ina 8 / McClellan 12 / Opdyke-Belle-Rive 5
- 14 Morrisonville 1 / Nokomis 22 / Panhandle 2

## Other Active Discussions:

- 15 Catlin 5 / Jamaica 12 / Oakwood 76

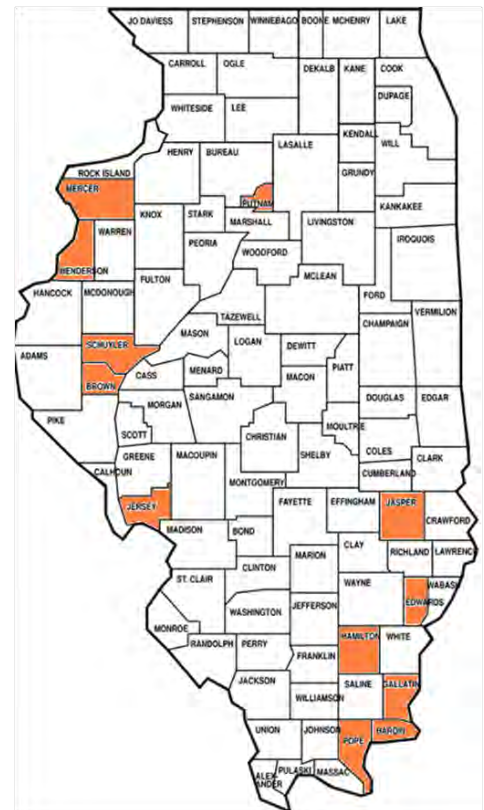
# Illinois School District Consolidation

The number of school districts in the state has declined by over 150 in the past 28 years, through various types of realignment.



Twelve mergers have resulted in county-wide districts:

- Brown County CUSD 1 (781)
- Edwards County CUSD 1 (978)
- Gallatin County CUSD 7 (721)
- Hamilton County CUSD 10 (1209)
- Hardin County CUSD 1 (616)
- Henderson County West Central CUSD 235 (961)
- Jasper County CUD 1 (1400)
- Jersey County CUSD 100 (2838)
- Mercer County SD 404 (1366)
- Pope County CUD 1 (554)
- Putnam County CUSD 445 (932)
- Schuyler-Industry CUSD 5 (1220)



According to DCEO/U.S. Census 2010 data, the State has 38 counties with school-age populations(ages 0-19) under 5000, with 11 of those projecting school-age population declines through 2030. Of these 38 counties, only 11 have formed county-wide school districts.

# Illinois School District Consolidation: Dual District Analysis

At the December 2011 Commission meeting, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) provided information on school district reorganizations, including types of realignment, types of incentives, and an analysis of state incentive costs, currently in statute, for mandatory consolidation of dual district feeder systems (separate elementary districts that send students to a stand-alone high school district). The concept of dual district consolidation was raised at the public hearings and in survey submissions.

**Illinois currently has 100 high school districts (16 under 500 students) and 377 elementary districts (138 under 500 students). According to ISBE, a mandatory consolidation would have the following impact:**

- Would affect 36 counties, 543,000 elementary students and 253,000 high school students;
- Would result in districts far larger than the Large Unit District Association (LUDA) minimum of 3,500; and
- Would realign many high-performing, well-financed districts at great cost in associated incentive payments.

**Potential educational benefits** would include better curriculum alignment between K-8 and high schools and more comprehensive course offerings. **Potential financial benefits** would include administrative staff reductions; facility efficiencies; and other efficiencies including pupil transportation, food service preparation, custodial services, and office services. [Note: many dual district systems already collaborate to create these types of administrative efficiencies.]

**If current incentives in state law are applied, estimated state costs for such a mandatory consolidation are as follows:**

- **Salary Differential Incentive:** Based on average salaries in elementary and high school districts, the estimated 1-year cost is \$783.5 million, and the estimated 4-year cost is \$3.1 billion.
- **\$4,000 per Certified Staff Incentive:** Based on estimated teacher numbers in elementary and high school districts, the estimated 1-year cost is \$203.5 million, and the maximum estimated 3-year cost is \$610.5 million ( Note: this cost could be less, as not all districts would qualify for 3-year payments).
- **Unable to estimate:** the *Deficit Fund Balance Incentive*, which requires review of Annual Financial Reports at time of reorganization, and the *GSA Difference Incentive*, which requires recalculation of general state aid for each reorganization.

**Local costs** could include maintenance of salary support after state incentive payments cease, costs to unify curriculum materials such as textbooks and software, and costs to retrofit and/or construct buildings, with the possibility of local tax increases to fund these expenses.

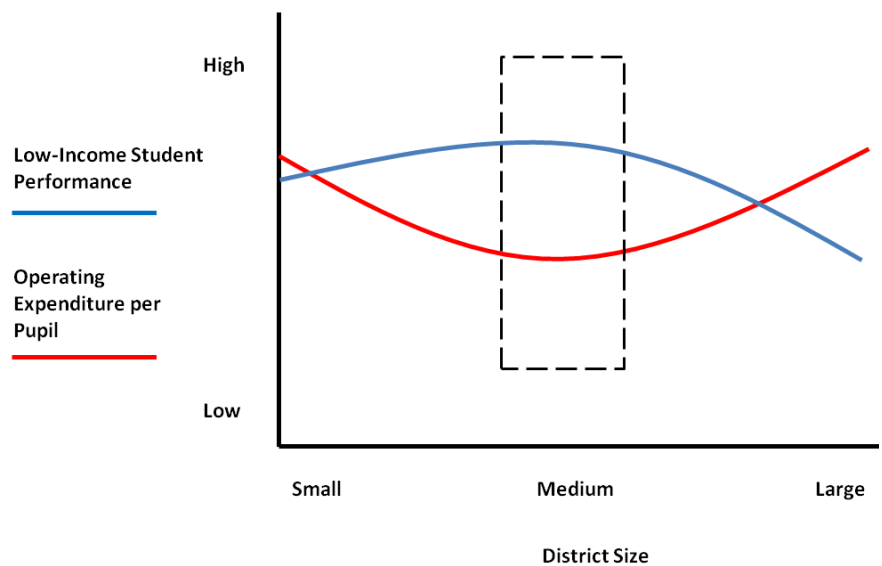
# School District Efficiency Research

School district efficiency research is imperfect. It does not tell us the optimal number of districts for a state, nor does it provide consistent calculations for optimal district size. However, districts can be compared in terms of spending and student performance, controlling for student demographics. When researchers conduct these types of studies, some general patterns emerge:

- Low income student performance declines as district size gets larger.
- Per-pupil spending is relatively high in small districts, declines in mid-size districts where economies of scale are greatest, and increases in large districts, which tend to employ additional layers of administration and economies of scale decline.

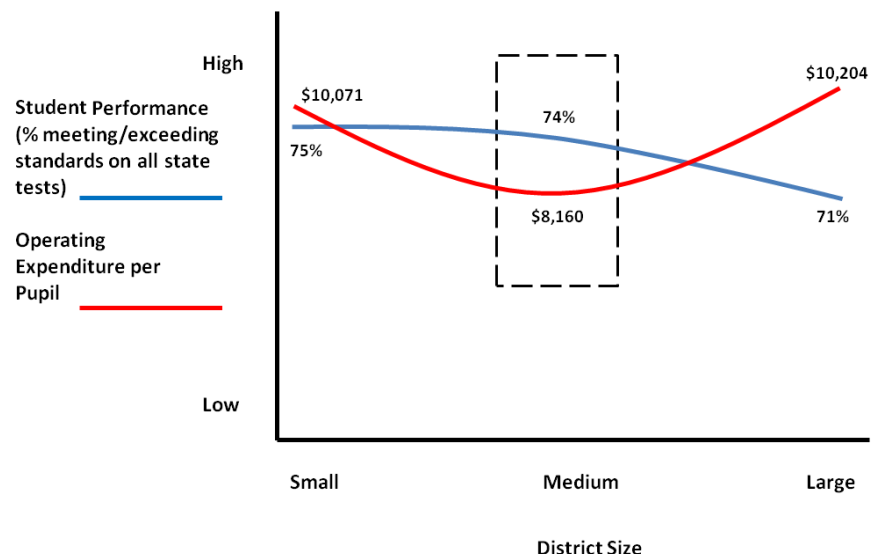
These data seem to imply that, at least for districts serving low-income populations, there is a mid-range size that has the potential for higher performance and lower spending (represented by the dashed-line box). However, the actual optimal district size varies depending on funding systems, state policies, and local educational practices.

## General Research Findings



To test this theory in Illinois districts, commission staff used 2011 Illinois Report Card data to compare large, medium and small unit districts (size designated by the Illinois State Board of Education), all serving low income student populations of 50-70%. Results shown at right indicate that the general relationship defined in the research above applies to these Illinois districts, with medium size districts (in the middle 50% of enrollments) performing as well as small districts but spending less per pupil. Compared to mid-size districts, cost per pupil is higher and performance lower in the large unit districts.

## Illinois Sample Data



# District Efficiency Research: Three Approaches

Research identifies three approaches to achieving educational efficiencies: within-district, across districts, and through realignment.

## Within-District

- Some districts get better performance with fewer resources and comparable student characteristics
- Efficient districts can come in all types: large/small, high/low poverty, rural/urban/suburban
- Some districts achieve efficiencies through internal streamlining of staff, effective uses of technology, and creative resource deployment

## Across Districts (Shared Services)

- Shared services are becoming more commonplace in P-12 education
- Shared services can be direct (instructional)
  - Curriculum development
  - On-line and distance learning
  - Special education
  - Career and technical education
  - Alternative education
  - Teacher professional development
- Shared services can be indirect (operational)
  - Administration (example: shared superintendency)
  - Procurement (cooperative purchasing)
  - Technology
  - Business services
  - Facilities/maintenance



## Realignment

- Economies of scale are greatest when small districts merge.
- Point of diminishing returns: as districts get larger, at some point the economies of scale plateau and expenses rise with greater district complexity.
- The larger the district, the more resources devoted to secondary and non-essential activities.
- Two inefficient districts combined do not necessarily create one efficient district.



# Public Hearing Themes: Sample Testimony

## 1. Benefits of small districts and schools

- Small districts provide a safe, quality environment
- Efficiency secondary to quality
- Focus on small school and district research, which supports the educational quality argument
- Rather than treat all small districts with a broad brush, focus on those that are perennially in academic or financial distress
- One size does not fit all; bigger is not always better
- Efficiency means leaving no child behind; that's what happens in small districts
- Small schools and districts provide personalized education
- Partnerships with other districts and the community college afford learning opportunities for high school students
- Administrators are visible, accessible, and hands-on
- Performing double duty as superintendent and principal saves administrative costs

## 2. Educational opportunity as impetus for consolidation

- Improving high school curriculum and thus providing a better education for students should be the main reason for exploring consolidation
- Consolidations to improve educational opportunities should receive priority status for construction funding
- Consolidation decisions should focus on the students, assure enhanced educational and social outcomes, and provide comprehensive support
- Described a successful "unit district conversion" (the only one in Illinois), creating 3 elementary districts and a high school district from three unit districts; impetus was quality of the high school; now the reconfiguration has resulted in a 500-student high school creating many educational opportunities for students
- With enrollment declines, course offerings drop off; a consolidation will allow a new high school to offer art, foreign language, advanced placement, and vocational education courses
- In one county, districts underwent a highly successful county-wide consolidation six years ago. Since consolidation, student performance has increased and financial health has also increased. Thirty-six FTEs were eliminated during the merger.

# Public Hearing Themes: Sample Testimony

## 3. Shared services

- Small districts face increasing technology demands with decreasing or static funds; described the IlliniCloud Project, a co-op of over 150 districts sharing tech services for back office operations and instruction via the Illinois Century Network; have achieved 60% savings in storage costs, 90% savings on computing costs
- Described a dual district “educational cooperation committee” since 2008, which includes the Regional Office of Education (ROE) and facilities transportation coordination, staff sharing, and curriculum alignment in the feeder system
- Described ROE provision of shared services to districts, conducted in concert with the special education and vocational education cooperatives; all three cooperative ventures share office space and coordinate their programs; joint problem-solving for districts is a key function of the group
- Some district shares services with local municipal governments: gas, road salt, paper, facilities, phone service, internet access
- Consider consolidation of functions, not physical boundaries; suggested legislation to provide incentives for shared services
- Special education cooperatives are an efficient means to share personnel; special education cooperatives should be examined for efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency

## 4. Support for local control and case-by-case realignment decisions (as opposed to mandated consolidation)

- Local control preserves schools, communities, and their economies
- Consolidation may not solve problems as intended; “two broke districts together equal a new broke district”
- Consider consolidations on a case-by-case basis
- A relatively small percentage of funding comes from the state; the majority of funds are local, so that’s where decisions should be made
- Transportation and other costs of reorganization (e.g. salary schedule alignment, retrofitting buildings) can potentially erase savings
- Districts with broad curriculum offerings and in good financial condition should be left to decide on their own
- Illinois has not saved money through previous consolidations
- Creating bigger geographic districts will cause problems with statutory 1-hour bus ride limit

# Public Hearing Themes: Sample Testimony

## 5. Challenges and barriers to consolidation

- When districts reject consolidation, it is usually because of disagreements on issues related to a shared high school (location, tradition, etc.)
- Current incentives are good, but may need more
- Suggest giving consolidated high school construction highest priority for state funding
- Suggests applying a one-cent dedicated sales tax across IL (as in IA)
- Suggest statewide educational technology infrastructure modeled after Alabama
- In districts covering large geographic areas, transportation costs are daunting, especially with reduced state funding
- The salary equalization provision impedes consolidation
- The tax differential for unit districts impedes consolidation of dual districts
- Potential annexing districts do not want to assume the financial liabilities
- May need legislation to allow non-contiguous district consolidations
- Construction dollars are so delayed, this is holding up potential reorganizations
- In 12 consolidation feasibility studies, all would have required that tax rates increase after incentives run out
- Operating expenditure per pupil can spike based on construction, retrofitting buildings, and other one-time costs of consolidation
- Any savings obtained through administrative reductions in staff are overpowered by teacher and staff salary equalization

## 6. Support for school consolidation

- Consolidation will allow enhanced curriculum
- One district sees a financial crunch coming in five years, so is trying to be proactive in seeking consolidation opportunities
- Suggest county-wide school systems, as in Florida, Maryland, Virginia
- Fewer and larger districts make for better deployment of statewide technology solutions
- Scrap the current system; it isn't providing quality education

# On-line School District Efficiency Survey

## Survey Process

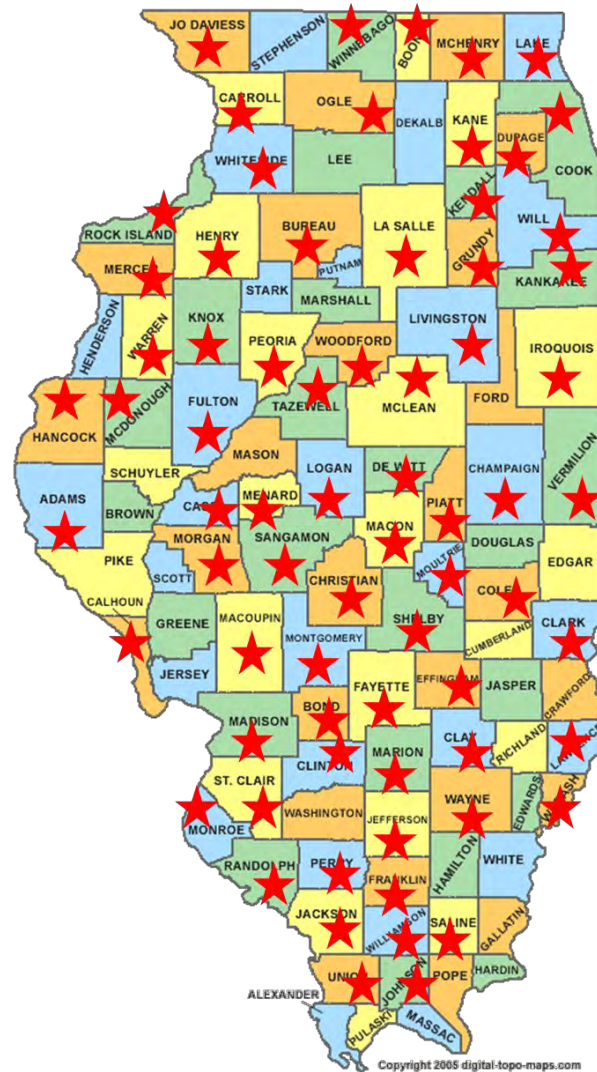
From October to December 2011, the Classrooms First Commission conducted a voluntary, non-scientific survey to collect ideas and suggestions for improving school district efficiency. The survey was available on the Lieutenant Governor's website, and collected approximately 470 responses. Respondents were encouraged to provide contact information for subsequent follow-up and to receive updates on the work of the Commission. Data were analyzed to identify themes and garner useful suggestions for developing recommendations.

## Survey Themes

Respondents' ideas and suggestions reflected the concepts described in the school district efficiency research as well as the themes presented during the public hearings:

- Within-district efficiency
- Shared services—educational and operational
- Realignment
- Additional suggestions and ideas

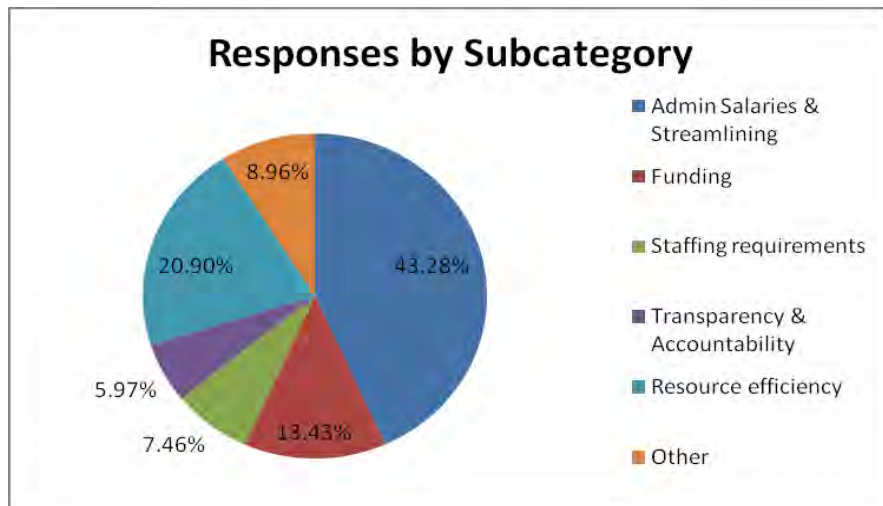
## Classrooms First Commission Efficiency Survey Participation by County



# On-line Survey: Within-district Efficiency

Within-district efficiency responses (62) represented several sub-categories of ideas:

- Administrative salaries & streamlining
- Funding
- Staffing requirements
- Transparency & Accountability
- Resource efficiency
- Other



Of the 62 responses, 25 were from current or retired teachers, 12 from community members, 11 from parents/guardians, six from other school staff and a couple in various other categories. The within-district efficiency responses come from 34 different counties with seven responses each from Cook and Will counties and four responses each from Lake, Macon and Vermilion counties.

## Sample Responses

- **Administrative salaries & streamlining:** Lower administrative salaries, consolidate administrative positions, limit the number of administrative positions per student, and eliminate various administrative positions.
- **Resource efficiency:** Greater use of technology, within-district sharing of books, greater use of bulk purchasing, and eliminating wasteful spending.
- **Funding:** Making athletic and art programs self-financed, raising more revenue through private resources, and allowing for increased local tax rates.
- **Staffing requirements:** Improve requirements for finance and operations personnel and eliminate the residency requirement for Chicago Public School teachers.
- **Transparency & Accountability:** Increase the amount of information disclosed by school districts regarding money spent on administrative positions and provide more detailed descriptions of staff in a school district.
- **Other:** Investigate specific instances of inefficiencies or questionable administrative practices

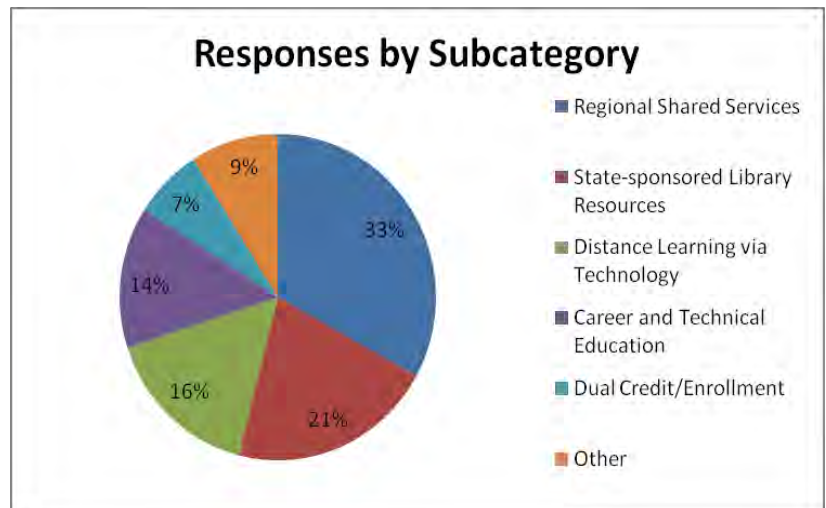
# On-line Survey: Educational Shared Services

Educational shared services responses (58) represented several sub-categories of ideas:

- Regional shared services (33%)
- State-sponsored library resources (21%)
- Distance learning via technology (16%)
- Career and technical education (14%)
- Dual credit/dual enrollment (7%)
- Other (9%)

Of the 58 responses, submissions were received from superintendents (13), teachers (13), parents/guardians (9), school administrators (5), library/media specialists (5), district administrators (3), local government officials (2), and one each from ROE staff, special education cooperative staff, community member, student, other school staff, and a former legislator.

Educational shared service responses came from 31 different counties, with ten responses from Cook County, four each from DuPage and Rock Island Counties, and three each from Kane, Sangamon, and Will Counties.



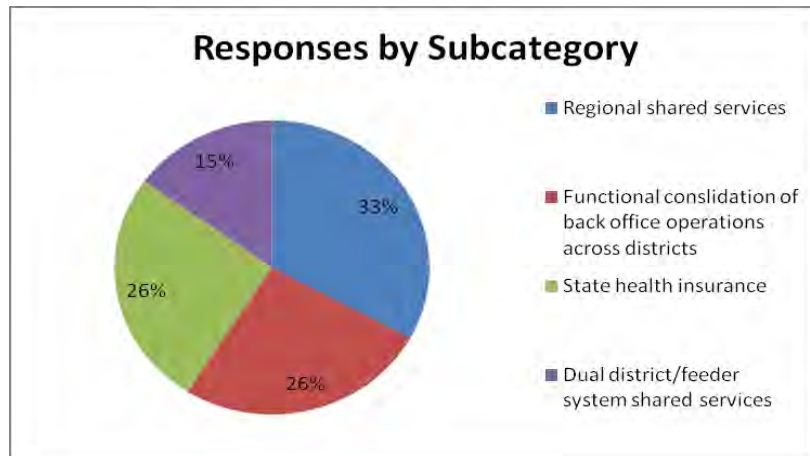
## Sample Responses

- **Regional shared services:** reduce the number of Regional Offices of Education (ROEs), merge ROEs with other services; merge ROEs with community colleges; hold cooperatives fiscally accountable; promote regional sports cooperatives among small districts; share staff across small districts within a region.
- **State-sponsored library resources:** reduce costs and inequity among schools by providing a statewide license for library resources such as subscription databases.
- **Distance learning via technology:** collaborate across districts and with community colleges to provide on-line courses using shared instructors; utilize the Illinois Virtual School; promote multi-district cloud computing.
- **Career and technical education (CTE):** reduce student attrition and its attendant costs through promoting CTE; create/expand CTE collaboratives.
- **Dual credit/enrollment:** reduce costs and promote student progress through dual credit opportunities with community colleges.
- **Other:** allow substitute teachers to register statewide; house Head Start programs in school districts; reinstate the Illinois Consumer Education Proficiency Test so students can opt out of the course; organize schools by levels of mastery rather than grade levels.

# On-line Survey: Operational Shared Services

Operational shared services responses (27) represented four sub-categories of ideas:

- Regional shared services (33%)
- Functional consolidation of back office operations across districts (26%)
- State health insurance (26%)
- Dual district/feeder system shared services (15%)



Twelve responses were from superintendents, four each from parents and district administrators, two from teachers, and one each from a board member, a counselor, a school administrator, a community member, and a principal. Operational shared service responses came from 23 different counties, with two responses each submitted from Calhoun, Coles, Cook, and McHenry counties.

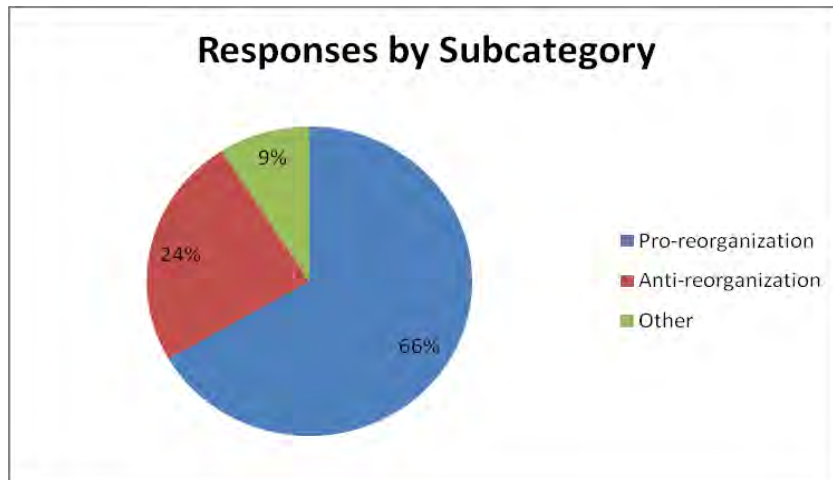
## Sample Responses

- **Regional shared services:** share operational services across rural districts; create service regions across multiple districts, in which operational functions are pooled; share transportation and technology services across small districts; create tax supports for shared services; share administrators across small districts; create regional shared school calendars.
- **Functional consolidation of back office operations across districts:** create centralized business offices within regions to handle business operations for multiple districts; contract out payroll and similar functions via competitive bidding; expand shared procurement opportunities regionally and statewide; utilize technology to consolidate business functions and improve efficiency.
- **State health insurance:** allow all school district employees to form a statewide health insurance pool to drive down costs; allow school district employees to join the state employees' health care plan.
- **Dual district/feeder system shared services:** create feeder-system shared service committees; share central office administrators across high school and elementary districts; develop intergovernmental agreements among feeder system districts.

# On-line Survey: Realignment

District realignment responses (145) produced several sub-categories of ideas:

- Pro-reorganization (66%)
- Anti-reorganization (24%):
- Other (9%): Allocate building funds, other



Respondents included superintendents (50), teachers (26), parents (25), community members (12), district administrators (5), principals (3), local government officials (3), school administrators (3), ROE staff (1), 1 school counselor (1), school staff (1), and 15 respondents identifying themselves as “other”. Responses came from 54 counties; those with the most responses were Cook (24), Lake (8), Will (8), and DuPage (8), with the rest distributed throughout the state.

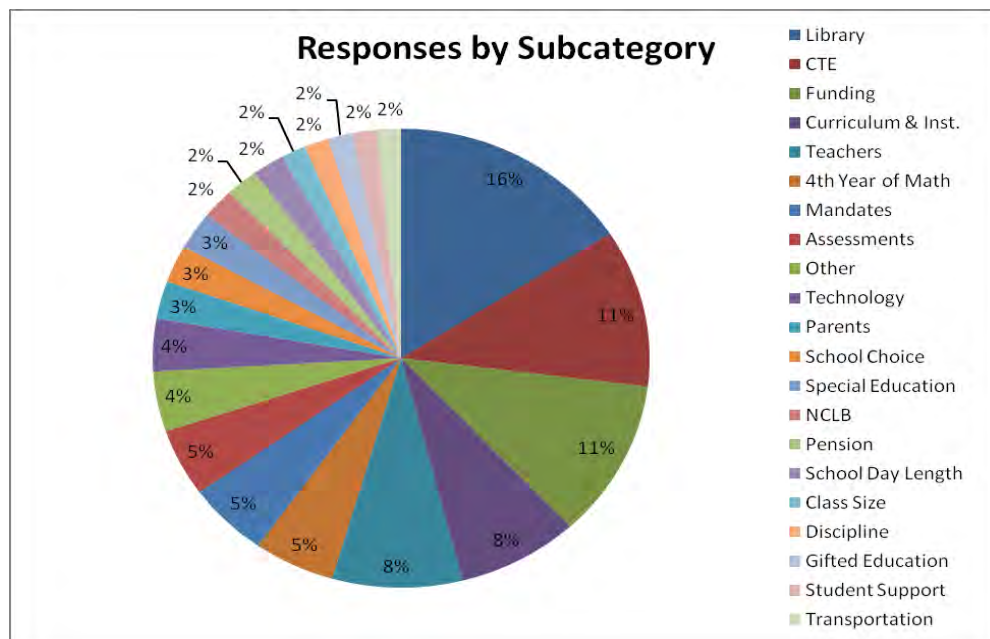
## Sample Responses

- **Pro-reorganization:** Consolidate dual districts, reorganize specific districts, consolidate school districts if students do not have sufficient educational offerings; consolidate a district with another if it is in financial trouble; consolidate if it would be cost-efficient to the district; reduce duplicative services through reorganization; reorganize school districts to be county-wide; make consolidation of school districts mandatory; consolidate high school districts with less than 300 students; realign districts on the basis of student achievement data; consolidate school districts by township boundaries or in the same city.
- **Anti-reorganization:** Need for local control; a local decision to consolidate is important to the newly consolidated district’s success; “bigger is not always better”; decisions made in small districts can focus on the unique needs of students and their community; consolidation should not be forced on districts that are doing well; consolidation is not always the answer to a district’s woes; consolidation can create problems with transportation; consolidation can increase bureaucracy and does not necessarily save money.
- **Other:** the State should provide construction funds to encourage small, rural high schools to consolidate; the State should provide funds for the construction of cooperative high schools; the State should offer more incentives to consolidate; eliminate superintendents from each district and use the regional superintendent as the head of all the districts in the county; superintendents should oversee more than one district; close unsafe school buildings.

# On-line Survey: Additional Suggestions and Ideas

The public survey collected approximately 470 responses, of which 179 of those responses included suggestions that were not applicable to operational shared services, educational shared services, within-district efficiency or realignment. This collection responses has been organized into the following subcategories:

Library (16%)	Parents (2.7%)
Career & Technical Education (11.2%)	School Choice (2.7%)
Funding (11.2%)	Special Education (2.7%)
Curriculum & Instruction (8%)	No Child Left Behind (2.1%)
Teachers (8%)	Pension (2.1%)
4th Year of Math (5.3%)	School Day Length (2.1%)
Mandates (5.3%)	Class Size (1.6%)
Assessments (4.3%)	Discipline (1.6%)
Other (4.3%)	Gifted Education (1.6%)
Technology (3.7%)	Student Support (1.6%)
	Transportation (1.6%)



Of the 179 responses, 39.4 percent were from Teachers, 20 percent from Parent/Guardian, 12.2 percent from respondents that did not fit within one of the predetermined categories and are labeled as “Other”, 8.3 percent from Community Members, 4.4 percent from Superintendents and from Other School Staff and a couple in various other categories. The responses came from 56 different counties, with 37 responses from Cook, 13 from Lake, nine from DuPage, seven each from Sangamon and Will and six each from Madison and Winnebago.

# On-line Survey: Additional Suggestions and Ideas

## Sample Responses

**Library:** Additional funding for school libraries, state-funded databases, the importance of librarians to student performance

**Career & Technical Education (CTE):** greater use of CTE courses, allowing other courses to be merged into CTE

**Funding:** Give school districts a lump sum of money per student, use sales tax as primary source of local education funding, create performance funding that would be based on financial management, cut property taxes

**Curriculum & Instruction:** Increase graduation requirements; improve core curriculum; require more math, reading and writing

**Teachers:** Performance pay, increase pay, improve teacher quality, eliminate tenure, greater teacher autonomy, limit teacher unions

**4th Year of Math:** Contextualize math instruction, requiring additional math will lead to higher dropout rates

**Mandates:** Restrict state involvement in education, eliminate various state education mandates

**Assessments:** Eliminate the ISAT, eliminate other mandated assessments

**Other:** Protect against bullying, tax deduction for parents of high-performing children, lessen the focus on school lunches

**Technology:** Too much technology, computer courses should be graduation requirements, improve access to technology

**Parents:** Require parent education, increase parental involvement

**School Choice:** Allow public school choice, develop a school voucher program, eliminate charter schools

**Special Education:** Expand transition plans to provide greater opportunity for vocational work, use special measurements to track education progress, require reading labs in special education courses

**No Child Left Behind (NCLB):** Repeal NCLB, NCLB's overreliance on standardized testing has failed students and not worked as intended

**Pension:** Do not institute any further changes to the pension system, eliminate double-dipping, require districts with high administrative-to-student ratios to contribute more to the Teachers Retirement System, separate Chicago Public Schools pensions from the rest of pension system

**School Day Length:** Increase the length of the school day

**Class Size:** Decrease class size

**Discipline:** Develop a standardized disciplinary plan, expel fewer students

**Gifted Education:** More support for brightest students

**Student Support:** More support and encouragement for young students, use older adults or college students in mentoring and tutoring positions

**Transportation:** Repeal the state mandate requiring school districts to provide transportation for students, let parents decide if their tax dollars should be spent on transportation, make parents reserve bus seats

## Next Steps

### ***Stage II: Review, Discussion, and Draft Recommendations (January - March 2012)***

Commission members form four work groups:

- In-district efficiencies/best practices
- Shared services: educational
- Shared services: operational
- Realignment

Involve relevant experts and interested stakeholders

Use information from the fact-finding stage to develop draft recommendations, including cost/benefit analyses

Deliberate upon the pros and cons of various recommendations and refine accordingly

Seek consensus on draft recommendations

Post progress reports on Commission website

### ***Stage III: Public Hearings, Final Report and Recommendations (April - June 2012)***

Use information from the previous stages to create a rationale for the recommendations

Draft practical and feasible recommendations with cost analyses

Gather feedback on draft recommendations from constituents/stakeholders (web postings, statewide hearings, organizational channels)

Refine recommendations

Identify timelines, necessary resources, and responsible entities

***Develop and submit final report to Governor and General Assembly by July 1, 2012***

AN ACT concerning education.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,  
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 5. The School Code is amended by adding Section 11E-190 as follows:

(105 ILCS 5/11E-190 new)

(Section scheduled to be repealed on January 31, 2013)

Sec. 11E-190. School District Realignment and Consolidation Commission.

(a) The School District Realignment and Consolidation Commission is established. The Commission shall consist of the following voting members:

- (1) the Lieutenant Governor or his or her appointee, who shall serve as the Chairperson;
- (2) one member appointed by the State Board of Education;
- (3) a member of the General Assembly appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- (4) a member of the General Assembly appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives;
- (5) a member of the General Assembly appointed by the President of the Senate;
- (6) a member of the General Assembly appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate;
- (7) a representative of a statewide professional teachers' organization appointed by the head of that organization;
- (8) a representative of a different statewide professional teachers' organization appointed by the head of that organization;
- (9) a representative of a statewide organization that represents school boards appointed by the head of that organization;
- (10) a representative of a statewide organization representing principals appointed by the head of that organization;
- (11) a representative of an organization representing professional teachers in a city having a population exceeding 500,000 appointed by the head of that organization;
- (12) a representative of an association representing school business officials appointed by the head of that association;

(13) a representative of an association representing school administrators appointed by the head of that association;

(14) a representative from the Chicago Board of Education appointed by the Chicago Board of Education;

(15) a representative from an organization representing administrators of special education appointed by the head of that organization;

(16) a representative from a statewide parent organization appointed by the head of that organization;

(17) a representative from an organization representing high school districts appointed by the head of that organization;

(18) a representative from a rural school district appointed by the Governor;

(19) a representative from a suburban school district appointed by the Governor;  
and

(20) a representative of an association that represents regional superintendents of schools appointed by the head of that association.

Members shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for their reasonable and necessary expenses from funds appropriated for that purpose. Members shall be reimbursed for their travel expenses from appropriations to the State Board of Education available for that purpose and subject to the rules of the appropriate travel control board. The Commission shall meet at the call of the chairperson, with the initial meeting of the Commission being held as soon as possible after the effective date of this amendatory Act of the 97th General Assembly, and shall hold public hearings throughout this State.

The State Board of Education shall provide assistance and necessary staff support services to the Commission.

(b) The purpose of the Commission is to make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly on the number of school districts in this State, the optimal amount of enrollment for a school district, and where consolidation and realignment would be beneficial. The Commission's recommendations must focus on all of the following areas:

(1) Reducing the money spent on duplication of efforts.

(2) Improving the education of students by having less obstacles between qualified teachers and their students.

(3) Lowering the property tax burden.

(4) Providing recommendations as to what the net cost savings of realignment is to this State.

(5) Providing input to school districts on reorganization.

(c) On or before July 1, 2012, the Commission must vote on

its recommendations and file a report with the Governor and the General Assembly. If the Commission adopts the report by an affirmative vote of at least 11 of its members, then the General Assembly must, within 14 days after the report is filed by the Commission, vote on whether to accept the report by the adoption of a resolution by a record vote of a majority of the members elected in each house. If the General Assembly is not in session on the day that the report is filed, then the General Assembly must vote on whether to accept the report within 14 days after the General Assembly convenes for the first time after the report is filed. The Commission is dissolved on the day after the report is filed with both the Governor and the General Assembly.

(d) This Section is repealed on January 31, 2013.

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon becoming law.

HB1216 Enrolled LRB097 07042 NHT 47135 b

Public Act 097-0503

## Selected References

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Illinois State Board of Education (2010). *Streamlining Illinois educational delivery systems*. Task Force Report pursuant to P.A. 96-1798.

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**For more complete information and for access to the full research resources used during Stage I, please visit Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon's Classrooms First Commission website:**

**<http://www2.illinois.gov/lsgov/Pages/ClassroomsFirstCommissionOverview.aspx>**