

# Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission

April 3, 2012

TO: The Honorable John J. Cullerton, Senate President  
The Honorable Christine Radogno, Senate Minority Leader  
The Honorable Michael J. Madigan, Speaker of the House  
The Honorable Tom Cross, House Minority Leader

FROM: Norm Durlinger, Chair *Norman Durlinger*  
Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission

SUBJECT: Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission Report

The Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission respectfully submits this report to the Governor and General Assembly pursuant to Public Act 97-0619. Among other things, the public act created the Commission and charged it with exploring and examining all duties of the State Board of Education (ISBE) and all regional offices of education and intermediate service centers to determine which duties and responsibilities should be handled by a regional delivery system and how best to streamline the regional offices of education.

If you have any questions about the report, please contact Susie Morrison, Deputy Superintendent of the Illinois State Board of Education and one of the Commission members at 217/782-2223.

cc: Tim Anderson, Secretary of the Senate  
Tim Mapes, Clerk of the House  
Legislative Research Unit  
State Government Report Center



# Illinois State Board of Education

Gery J. Chico, Chairman  
Dr. Christopher Koch, State Superintendent

## ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

STREAMLINING ILLINOIS' REGIONAL OFFICES OF EDUCATION COMMISSION

# Recommendations: Executive Summary

Prepared by  
Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission  
Committee Members

On behalf of  
The Governor and the Illinois General Assembly

Submitted pursuant to (SB 2147) PA 97-0619

April 2012

# Illinois State Board of Education

## Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission

### Executive Summary

In recognizing the value of the Regional Offices of Education (ROEs), their services to local communities, and their close coordination with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and in an effort to deliver educational services efficiently and effectively, the Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission was established.

The purpose of the Commission was (1) to examine the duties of the ROEs, Intermediate Service Centers (ISCs), and ISBE to determine which responsibilities are more efficiently and effectively provided regionally, with specific funding to carry it out; and (2) to assess the current boundaries of the educational service regions to determine if they can be expanded to streamline the ROEs.

In addition, the Governor and a representative from ISBE requested that the Commission consider the process for selecting regional education officers. The Commission decided that this question was outside the role of this Commission.

The Commission considered two sets of recommendations: the five recommendations made by the 2010 Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force and the five recommendations offered to the 2012 Commission by the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS). The Commission suggested that the 2010 recommendations be recognized and addressed.

### Final Recommendations From the Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission, 2012

The 2012 Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission submits four recommendations and one additional consideration to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly.

#### Recommendation 1: Statewide Coordinating Council

The Commission recommends the adoption of Recommendation 1 from the 2010 Task Force Report to establish a statewide coordinating council: "A coordinating council, to be facilitated and supported by ISBE, shall be established to bring leaders from ISBE together with representatives from regional offices and intermediate services centers, career tech centers, technology centers, special education cooperatives, LTCs [Learning Technology Centers] and school districts on a regular basis to establish focus, monitor progress, and ensure the quality of the delivery system. The coordinating council may also include representatives from statewide agencies, other than ISBE, that provide services for young people. The State Board will set and communicate the policy direction for the delivery system, define outcomes, and ensure accountability of educational service agencies. The coordinating council will develop efficient strategies to guide the implementation of ISBE's policy priorities throughout the state. This will

be an iterative process in which the coordinating council will continually gather formative and summative data to inform and drive their work. In addition, the coordinating council will centrally coordinate communication with private school systems, ensure equitable access to core services across the state, and assess the fidelity of implementation in each region. It is important to note that although many of the services that will be coordinated are funded by state and federal dollars, the majority of the funding for these services comes from local sources.”

### **Recommendation 2: Core Services Across the State**

The Commission reviewed the core services provided by the ROEs, the ISCs, and ISBE and agreed that because time did not permit a comprehensive review, the Commission recommends the adoption of Recommendation 2 from the 2010 Task Force Report to fund core services across the state: “ISBE will work closely with district and ROEs/ISCs leaders to define a core set of services and supports that ROEs/ISCs shall offer to meet the needs of school districts.... ISBE will seek adequate funding from the Legislature to support these core services, which will be aligned with the State Board’s policy priorities, and will support compliance with federal and state laws and regulations. This may involve the decentralization of some core services, which are currently provided by ISBE, but that would be delivered by ROEs/ISCs under the new system.”

In addition, the Commission had consensus on funding for ROEs and decided that funding should come from the General Revenue Fund (GRF) and not the Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax (CPPRT). The Commission also came to consensus that the salary line item for regional superintendents should be moved to the comptroller budget and the support line item for the ROEs should remain under ISBE.

### **Recommendation 3: Accountability System for ISBE, ROEs, and ISCs**

The Commission adopts Recommendation 5 from the 2010 Task Force Report to implement an accountability system for ROEs and ISCs: “ISBE will work collaboratively with ROEs/ISCs to adopt performance standards that will guide the implementation and quality of the delivery of core services. Quality assurance standards for services will be based on industry standards for excellence. Performance agreements for school improvement may be considered as an option within the accountability system.”

Also, the Commission recommends that an annual survey, such as the Lieutenant Governor’s survey, should be conducted. In addition, ISBE— together with ROEs and ISCs—will adopt a new timeline for accountability for ensuring the quality of services. The Commission also came to consensus that the local school districts should be involved in shaping the new accountability system. In addition, ISBE will collect data from local districts on the quality of services delivered from the State Board.

### **Recommendation 4: Restructuring of ROE Size**

The Commission discussed five possible options and came to consensus on restructuring the size of ROEs. The Commission recommends reducing the total number from 44 to 35 ROEs and 3 ISCs by increasing the population minimum from 43,000 to 61,000. The Commission also

recommends that the population size of ROEs be reviewed every 10 years following the census to determine if the number of ROEs would need to be changed.

**Additional Consideration**

The Commission also recommends that the support line item of \$2.2 million regarding the budget for ROEs should stay with ISBE and the salary line item for regional superintendents be moved under the comptroller budget.



# Illinois State Board of Education

Gery J. Chico, Chairman  
Dr. Christopher Koch, State Superintendent

## ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

STREAMLINING ILLINOIS' REGIONAL OFFICES OF EDUCATION COMMISSION

# Recommendations

Prepared by  
Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission  
Committee Members

On behalf of  
The Governor and the Illinois General Assembly

Submitted pursuant to (SB 2147) PA 97-0619

April 2012

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# **Illinois State Board of Education**

## **Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission**

### **Recommendations**

#### **Submitted to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly**

**April 2012**

This report of the Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission is respectfully submitted to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly.

#### **Background**

Recognizing the value of the Regional Offices of Education in that locally elected public servants are working closely with local school boards and superintendents and in partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education, and in an effort to deliver these educational services more efficiently and effectively, the Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission was established. The purpose of the Commission was twofold: (1) to explore and examine the duties of the Illinois State Board of Education, Regional Offices of Education, and Intermediate Service Centers to determine which duties and responsibilities should be provided regionally to more appropriately and efficiently deliver services with specifics as to the necessary funding to carry out identified responsibilities; and (2) to assess the current boundaries of the educational service regions to determine if they can be expanded to streamline the Regional Offices of Education.

In addition, the Governor and a representative from the Illinois State Board of Education requested that the Commission consider an additional question, which is not defined in the law, Article 105 ILCS 5/3A-18, but is highly recommended, regarding the elected positions of the regional superintendents: Should the state consider other options for appointing or selecting regional education officers? The Commission discussed the request and decided that it was outside the role of this Commission.

#### **The Ground Rules**

The fifteen (15) members of the Commission held their first meeting on February 22, 2012. During the meeting, Dr. Norm Durlinger, co-director of the Center for Study of Education Policy, who was appointed by the Governor and General Assembly as Chairperson to lead the Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission, established five ground rules. The ground rules, which laid the foundation for the Commission's collaborative work together, are as follows:

1. Commission members will respect each other and what each member has to say.
2. No individual Commission member will take more than five minutes of time reporting his or her view of an issue. After everyone who wishes to speak has spoken, an individual will be allowed to speak for an additional three minutes.
3. Commission members will work toward consensus, but if the Chair deems that a consensus cannot be reached, he will call for a vote. Time is limited; the final report must be completed by April 1, 2012.
4. If a group of three or more members wish to develop a minority report on an issue, it will be placed in the Commission's final report.
5. Final decisions on recommendations will be prioritized in the Commission's report for the Governor and the General Assembly.

## Historical Review of ROEs

Dr. Robert Daiber, president of the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS), provided a historical review of Regional Offices of Education (ROEs). He noted that according to statute 105 ILCS5/3-14.2, regional superintendents of schools “shall exercise supervision and control over all school districts within the county.” Dr. Daiber remarked that ROEs are offices of public service held by elected regional superintendents. The ROEs, along with the Intermediate Service Centers (ISCs), and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) partner together to provide services to elevate the standards of teaching and improve the standards of schools in the region.

Within the state, there are 44 ROEs in 101 counties as well as 3 ISCs in suburban Cook County, representing six geographical areas. This structure employs more than 2,700 local people and serves more than 2 million Illinois citizens every year. Duties and responsibilities of the ROEs include compliance, health, life, safety, reporting, consolidation, and organization of districts. ROEs provide a menu of services, such as certification, bus driver training, General Educational Development (GED) testing, cooperative educational programs, regional safe school programs, truancy intervention, homeless services, early childhood programs, virtual schools, new principal mentoring, grant proposal assistance, and a wide range of professional development. Dr. Daiber stated that ROEs conduct all statutory duties in the same manner, but all ROEs do not offer the same services. Other Commission members remarked on the need for a standardized system for coordinating the delivery of services provided to districts and schools.

The *Statewide ROE/ISC Services and Statistics* document, submitted by Dr. Daiber, indicates that when comparing the costs to fund the ROE offices (\$13 million) to the revenue generated and the services provided by the offices statewide, the ROEs and ISCs demonstrate a model for fiscal efficiency. Dr. Daiber concluded his presentation by proposing five recommendations for the Commission members to consider.

## Recommendations From the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS)

Recommendations were presented to the Commission from IARSS by Dr. Robert Daiber; however, the discussion of the Commission centered largely around the five recommendations generated by the 2010 report of the Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force. These recommendations from the ROEs are as follows:

- 1. Examine the boundary lines of existing ROEs to determine if they best serve the school districts throughout the state.** Regional superintendents recommend that the boundaries continue to be based on census data and that they not divide counties. Should a new regional boundary map be adopted, it must be completed by September 2013, prior to the date by which candidates must file for the office of regional superintendent. In addition, all current regional superintendents would fulfill their terms of office through June 30, 2015.

### Recommended Boundaries of ROEs

- Amend the Illinois School Code 105 Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS) 5/3A-4—Mandatory consolidation of educational service regions (Section 3A-4) to state that ~~–(a)~~ After **July 1, 2015**, each region must contain at least **53,000 inhabitants**. Regions may be consolidated voluntarily under Section 3A-3 or by joint resolution of the county boards of regions seeking to join a voluntary consolidation to meet these population requirements. The boundaries of regions already meeting these population requirements on the effective date of this amendatory Act of 1993 may not be changed except to consolidate with another region or a whole county portion of another region which does not meet these population requirements. If locally determined consolidation decisions result in more than **39 regions** of population greater than 53,000 each, the **Illinois Association of Regional Superintendent of Schools** shall direct further consolidation, beginning with the region of lowest population, until the **number of 39 regions** is achieved.”

This is a 13.4 percent reduction in ROEs to serve the 870 school districts in Illinois. This proposal far exceeds any reduction of state agencies or state offices. IARSS proposed this boundary change in accordance with language stated in Recommendation 1.

- This proposed census population change would affect six ROEs as currently provided for in the Illinois School Code:
  - ROE 14—Suburban Cook
  - ROE 27—Henderson/Mercer/Warren
  - ROE 22—Fulton/Schuyler
  - ROE 25—Hamilton/Jefferson
  - ROE 26—Hancock/McDonough
  - ROE 33—Knox

- Consolidation hearings would begin July 1, 2012, with local county boards.
  - A revised map of ROEs would be completed by August 1, 2013, and submitted to the State Board of Elections.
  - Consolidation would become effective July 1, 2015.
2. **Implement the recommendations from P.A. 96-1798, as presented by the Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force.** These recommendations focus on ROEs/ISCs taking the lead on coordinating all educational services in their regions to ensure an effective and efficient approach that will provide for student success.
  3. **Provide opportunities and incentives to encourage the development of networks of shared services that focus on cooperative efforts in management, professional development, and technology support for school districts.**
  4. **Reallocate education dollars in the ISBE budget to support the regional delivery system by reducing/decentralizing ISBE.** Accountability should be measured by direct service to teachers in the classroom and to school district operations. An annual evaluation, such as the Lieutenant Governor's survey, should be conducted, which produces such data, including a study of all state dollars spent for classroom support.
  5. **Further define the partnership between the ROEs/ISCs and ISBE to assess, reform, and implement policy for Illinois education.** It is recommended that a statewide coordinating council be formed, which would meet quarterly to carry out these duties and responsibilities.

## **Final Recommendations From the Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission, 2012**

In consideration of the creation of a more effective and efficient delivery model for education in Illinois, the Commission discussed the five recommendations presented by the ROEs. In tandem, the Commission discussed the five recommendations in the October 2010 Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force report. The Commission acknowledged and referenced the Task Force's recommendations throughout the Commission meetings and suggested that the 2010 recommendations should be taken into consideration.

As a result of presentations, discussions, questions, and concerns, the Commission reached consensus on four recommendations. The Commission recommends that ISBE, the ROEs, and the ISCs work collaboratively to (1) establish a statewide coordinating council, (2) coordinate efficient and effective delivery of core services, (3) implement an accountability system for the State Board of Education and Educational Service Centers, and (4) expand the boundaries of regional service centers. The following recommendations are presented to the Governor and General Assembly.

## **Recommendation 1: Statewide Coordinating Council**

The Commission adopted Recommendation 1 from the 2010 Task Force Report to establish a statewide coordinating council: –A coordinating council, to be facilitated and supported by ISBE, shall be established to bring leaders from ISBE together with representatives from regional offices and intermediate services centers, career tech centers, technology centers, special education cooperatives, LTCs [Learning Technology Centers] and school districts on a regular basis to establish focus, monitor progress, and ensure the quality of the delivery system. The coordinating council may also include representatives from statewide agencies, other than ISBE, that provide services for young people. The State Board will set and communicate the policy direction for the delivery system, define outcomes, and ensure accountability of educational service agencies. The coordinating council will develop efficient strategies to guide the implementation of ISBE’s policy priorities throughout the state. This will be an iterative process in which the coordinating council will continually gather formative and summative data to inform and drive their work. In addition, the coordinating council will centrally coordinate communication with private school systems, ensure equitable access to core services across the state, and assess the fidelity of implementation in each region. It is important to note that although many of the services that will be coordinated are funded by state and federal dollars, the majority of the funding for these services comes from local sources.”

## **Recommendation 2: Core Services Across the State**

Time did not permit the Commission to fully discuss the issue of necessary funding to carry out identified responsibilities of the ROEs and, therefore, Recommendation 2 from the 2010 Task Force Report should be followed.

The Commission adopted Recommendation 2 from the 2010 Task Force Report to fund core services across the state: –ISBE will work closely with district and ROE/ISC leaders to define a core set of services and supports that ROEs/ISCs shall offer to meet the needs of school districts.... ISBE will seek adequate funding from the Legislature to support these core services, which will be aligned with the State Board’s policy priorities, and will support compliance with federal and state laws and regulations. This may involve the decentralization of some core services, which are currently provided by ISBE, but that would be delivered by ROEs/ISCs under the new system.”

This core set of services was reviewed in detail by the Commission. The Commission identified which duties were the responsibility of the State Board of Education and which were the responsibility of the ROEs. The Commission determined whether these services were most effective and efficient by remaining at the ROE level. The Commission decided that with the exception of Regional System of Support Providers (RESPROs) and Statewide Systems of Support, which are federal mandates, the vast majority of ROE duties are mandated by law. In addition, the Commission had consensus on funding for ROEs and decided that funding should come from the General Revenue Fund (GRF) and not the Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax (CPPRT). The Commission also came to consensus that the salary line item for regional superintendents should be moved to the comptroller budget and the support line item for the ROEs should remain under ISBE.

Details of the recommendation made for each service are as follows:

- **Tuancy/Dropout Students:** The Commission determined that this is both a local and state mandate. Consensus was reached that this should be the responsibility of the ROEs.
- **GEDs Awarded:** The Commission determined that this mandate is shared between community colleges and ROEs. Beginning in 2014, community colleges will take responsibility for GED testing and ROEs will be responsible for recordkeeping. It is important to note that ROEs will have the option to continue to administer the test. It was agreed that this mandate should remain with the ROEs.
- **Hearings for Chronically Truant Students:** Consensus was reached that this should remain with the ROEs.
- **Regional Safe Schools Programs:** The Commission determined that this is a shared service between schools, districts, and the state. Consensus was reached that this should remain with the ROEs.
- **Teachers, School Service Personnel, and Administrators Registered:** Consensus was reached that this responsibility should remain with the ROEs.
- **Substitute Teachers Registered and FY10 Teachers, Administrators, and Substitutes Recertified:** Consensus was reached that this should remain with the ROEs.
- **Criminal Background Check:** Consensus was reached that this should remain with the ROEs.
- **Professional Certificates:** Consensus was reached that this should remain with the ROEs.
- **Teacher Endorsement and Certificate Applications:** Consensus was reached that this should remain with the ROEs.
- **Bus Driver Initial Training and Annual Training:** The Commission identified this as a state function. Consensus was reached that it should remain with the ROEs.
- **Educator Professional Development Workshops:** The Commission determined that these workshops were a shared state and local responsibility.
- **Administrator Academy Workshops:** The Commission determined that these workshops were both state and local functions. Questions arose regarding inadequate funding.
- **Gifted Education Seminar Teachers:** Consensus was reached that this should continue to be handled by the ROEs.
- **Annexation/Detachment Petitions Filed and Hearings:** The Commission determined this to be a state function. Consensus was reached that this should remain a state function but handled by the ROEs.
- **Schools Served Through RESPRO Services (Year 3+ Schools Not Meeting No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Adequate Yearly Progress [AYP]):** The Commission identified this as a state and federal mandate.
- **Schools Serviced Through Statewide Systems of Support (Year 1 and 2 Schools Not Meeting NCLB AYP):** The Commission determined this to be a shared function (state and regional). Consensus was reached that this is the responsibility of both state and region.

- **School Buildings Inspected for Safety:** The Commission determined this to be a state mandate. Consensus was reached that the service should remain with the ROEs.
- **Building Amendments Processed and Permits Issued:** Consensus was reached that this service should remain with the ROEs.
- **School Evaluations of Districts for Recognition Status:** The Commission determined this to be a state mandate. Consensus was reached that this should remain with the ROEs.

### **Recommendation 3: Accountability System for ISBE, ROEs, and ISCs**

The Commission adopted Recommendation 5 from the 2010 Task Force Report to implement an accountability system for ROEs/ISCs: “ISBE will work collaboratively with ROEs/ISCs to adopt performance standards that will guide the implementation and quality of the delivery of core services. Quality assurance standards for services will be based on industry standards for excellence. Performance agreements for school improvement may be considered as an option within the accountability system.”

Next, the Commission recommended that an annual survey, such as the Lieutenant Governor’s survey, should be conducted. In addition, ISBE—together with ROEs and ISCs—will adopt a new timeline for accountability for ensuring the quality of services. The Commission also came to consensus that the local school districts should be involved in shaping the new accountability system. In addition, ISBE will collect data from local districts on the quality of services delivered from the State Board.

### **Recommendation 4: Restructuring of ROE Size**

The Commission gave ample consideration and discussion to five options, which are as follows:

- 250,000 minimum population with 8 ROEs and 3 ISCs
- 150,000 minimum population with 27-30 ROEs and 3 ISCs
- 86,000 minimum population with 30 ROEs and 3 ISCs
- 53,000 minimum population with 39 ROEs and 3 ISCs
- 61,000 minimum population with 35 ROEs and 3 ISCs

The Commission reached consensus and recommended restructuring to reduce the total number of ROEs from 44 active (45 is language in the statute) to 35 ROEs and 3 ISCs by increasing the population minimum from 43,000 to 61,000. The Commission also recommended that the population size of ROEs be reviewed every 10 years following the census to determine if the number of ROEs would need to be changed.

### **Additional Consideration**

The Commission also recommended that the support line item of \$2.2 million regarding the budget for ROEs should stay with ISBE and the salary line item for regional superintendents be moved under the comptroller budget.

## Appendix A

### Illinois State Board of Education Streamlining Illinois' Regional Office of Education Commission SB 2147 (PA 97-0619)

#### Commission Committee Members

##### **Chair**

Norm Durflinger  
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##### **House Republican Designee**

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## **Appendix B**

### **Illinois State Board of Education Streamlining Illinois' Regional Office of Education Commission**

#### **Committee Meeting Minutes**

- Minutes of Commission Meeting – February 22, 2012
- Minutes of Commission Meeting – February 27, 2012
- Minutes of Commission Meeting – March 5, 2012
- Minutes of Commission Meeting – March 15, 2012
- Minutes of Commission Meeting – March 22, 2012
- Minutes of Commission Meeting – March 29, 2012

**Illinois State Board of Education  
Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission**

**Wednesday, February 22, 2012**

**Minutes**

**Attendance**

**Commission Members:**

Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia  
Dr. Brent Clark  
Dr. Norm Durflinger  
Rep. Roger Eddy  
Dr. Michael A. Jacoby

Dr. Michael Johnson  
Dr. Vanessa Kinder  
Scott Kuffel  
John Meixner  
Susie Morrison

Mike Nekritz  
Dr. Darlene Ruscitti  
Jane Russell

**Presenter:**

Dr. Robert Daiber

**Notetakers:**

Sheila Rodriguez  
Rachel Trimble

**Welcome and Introductions**

The first meeting of the Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission was called to order at 9:02 a.m. by Dr. Norm Durflinger, chair of the Commission, who then facilitated introductions of the Commission members and welcomed the group. Dr. Durflinger noted that if any one of the Commission members is not able to attend the meetings, he or she should contact another member to get updated. He then stated that he has a bias on the subject of this Commission and that there must be some sort of regional delivery in the state of Illinois. Dr. Durflinger then went over the ground rules:

- Respect each other and what each person has to say.
- No individual Commission member is to take more than 5 minutes of time reporting his or her view of an issue. After all who wish to speak have spoken, individuals will be allowed to have 3 additional minutes.
- The group will work toward consensus. If the chair does not feel consensus is possible, he will call for a vote on the issue. The time is limited, and the Commission is charged to have a report completed by April 1, 2012.

- If a group of three or more wishes to develop a minority report on an issue, it will be placed in the Commission’s final report.
- Final decisions for the Commission report will have prioritized options for the Governor and the General Assembly to review.

Dr. Durflinger reported that the charge of the Commission is to explore and examine (1) all duties of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), (2) Regional Offices of Education (ROEs), and (3) boundaries of the educational service regions in order to do the following:

- Determine which duties and responsibilities will be provided regionally.
- More appropriately and efficiently deliver services.
- Determine whether ROE boundaries can be expanded to streamline the ROEs.

According to 105 Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS) 5/3A–18, “The Commission shall ensure that its recommendations include specifics as to the necessary funding to carry out identified responsibilities.”

One other task—not in the law but requested by the Governor and a member of the ISBE agency—is to determine if the regional superintendent positions should be elected positions. Should the Commission consider other options for appointing or selecting regional education officers? Dr. Durflinger stated that Commission members technically do not have to look at this particular task if they do not want to.

Dr. Durflinger then moved on to introduce Dr. Robert Daiber, who presented on the duties, roles, and responsibilities of the ROEs.

### **Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS) Perspective**

Dr. Daiber stated that the focus of his presentation will be on the duties of the regional superintendents and the ROEs. He stated that in Senate Bill 2147, regional offices are offices of public service, ROEs serve public and private schools by helping with professional development, the organization is directly connected to the state board and Legislature, and they partner in the delivery of education. He stated that this model works and that the difference between the ROEs and ISBE is that the ROEs are an implementation agency while ISBE is a policymaking agency.

He continued by stating that there are 44 ROEs that serve 102 counties; the Intermediate Service Center (ISC) has three offices in Cook County. Dr. Daiber continued to talk about the structure of the ROEs, which cover six areas and 102 counties; some are single or multiple counties because of the boundary lines stated in statute. There are 2,700 employees that are paid for by local funds, and they serve more than 2 million students each year.

### **Duties, Role, and Responsibilities of ROEs**

Dr. Daiber presented on the duties and responsibilities of the ROEs, which are spelled out in school code 105 ILCS 5/3-14 through 5/3-15.7; there are 925 citations for regional superintendents. Dr. Daiber talked about compliance, which entails supervision to schools and

districts, as well as compliance visits, which verify instructional programming, school governing operations, and other duties. ROEs also coordinate inspections to ensure compliance with the Health/Life Safety Code for each school building by statute. They also review and certify 10-year surveys, amendments, and building plan reviews; issue building permits; conduct building inspections at zero cost to districts; and issue occupancy permits.

Reporting also is a major duty. By statute, the district is required to file documents with the ROE, and the regional superintendent certifies State Board of Elections lists of districts under supervision. ROEs also are responsible for the oversight of school consolidation and reorganization. They provide guidance during the consolidation process, validate petitions, and publish hearing notices. They are an election authority during the consolidation. Dr. Daiber continued to list other duties and responsibilities, which included efficiencies and the detachment process. He stated that not all ROEs offer the same services because they are so diverse and complex, but they conduct all statutory duties the same. They also offer professional development for teaching; offer services in certification, bus driver training, General Educational Development (GED) testing, and cooperative education programs (technology support); operate regional safe-school programs, truancy intervention, McKinney-Vento homeless services (federal grant program), early childhood programs, the Illinois Virtual School (manage), and new-principal mentoring; assist with grant applications; and conduct professional development.

Dr. Daiber then pointed to Appendix B of the ROE report regarding the \$10 million matching support that is brought by the ROEs. He stated that one will find, by county, the population census and amount of money (local match) that make up the \$10 million. He explained that in addition, there are “on-behalf” contributions of office space because regional superintendents are elected officials and additional revenues are brought into these offices through enterprise activity. He continued to talk about the effectiveness of the ROEs. He stated that he believes they are an effective system because they provide support to the districts. In Fiscal Year 2010, they managed \$10 million, and they got high marks on the Lieutenant Governor’s survey, which rated the ROEs the highest on responsiveness to schools. The survey is done by the school boards and has not been done since 2008. He also stated that greater effectiveness may look more at policy coordination, research development, and the Central Records Depository program.

Dr. Daiber described the role of the ROEs and how they serve students at every stage of life as a resource office for education in the state of Illinois. They ensure a safe and secure educational environment and act as a guide to monitor school district compliance. ROEs also partner with the General Assembly in the development and implementation of current and future education policy. He then ended his presentation by stating the following five recommendations that the regional superintendents would like to bring forth to the Commission.

### **Five Recommendations**

1. Examine the boundary lines of existing ROEs to see if they best serve the school districts throughout the state. The regional superintendents recommend that boundaries continue to be based on census data and that counties should not be divided. They also would like this boundary map to be completed by September 2013 if a new regional boundary map is adopted. In addition, the current regional superintendents would have the right to fulfill their terms until 2015.

2. Implement recommendations from P.A. 96-0798, which focuses on ROEs/ISCs taking the lead on coordinating all educational services in their regions to ensure effective and efficient approaches toward student success.
3. Provide opportunities and incentives to develop a network of shared services that focuses on cooperative efforts in management, professional development, and technology support for school districts.
4. Reallocate education dollars in the ISBE budget to support the regional delivery system by reducing or decentralizing ISBE. The accountability should be measured by direct services to teachers in the classroom and school district operations.
5. Further define the partnership between the ROEs/ISCs and ISBE to assess, reform, and implement policy for education in Illinois. It is recommended that a statewide coordinating council be formed, which would meet quarterly to carry out these duties and responsibilities.

### **Questions From Commission Members**

Dr. Durflinger took questions from the Commission members. Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia, Commission member, stated that for home-rule cities, there seems to be duplication of cities, and she wanted to know if that was a true statement. John Meixner responded by stating that the superintendent has the authority to have jurisdiction. Rep. Chapa LaVia stated that two entities come to inspect in the city of Aurora, according to a superintendent in Aurora. A Commission member stated that the bill that came out a couple of years ago stated that the ROEs are the authority. Rep. Chapa LaVia asked if schools have to pay for permits to the city in which they reside. The overall response from the group was no, but Dr. Vanessa Kinder believes that some cities may try to charge the district.

Dr. Daiber asked if there is duplication throughout the state because many districts are not being inspected by the state fire marshal's office. Dr. Darlene Ruscitti stated that in her school, they look at different things. Dr. Michael Johnson stated that they look at the fire code and track it, but this is a continued concern because not all fire marshals look at the same things.

Scott Kuffel asked if the regional superintendents are going to stay as elected officials. Dr. Daiber stated that he believes they will stay as elected officials because there's \$10 million that they manage and there are 2,700 people that are working to deliver these services.

Dr. Brent Clark asked about the mechanisms that cause counties to access the monies used by those particular counties to support the ROEs. Dr. Daiber stated that every dollar that he has in the budget takes a lobbying effort to get that budget approved. He is competing with the sheriff's budget and the probation budget; they also have put additional money in to have a computerized GED test, which they have to establish by 2014, and they need to do that if they want to get more funds from the county. Mr. Meixner responded that, by statute, they are required to give a portion for office space. Dr. Clark asked if it is certain that a percentage is tied to the county. There is a relationship with the size of the county and its population. Dr. Durflinger asked if it is possible to get what the budget amounts are, or at least get what statutes say, by the meeting on Monday, February 27, 2012.

Dr. Johnson responded by stating that there's a requirement for Cook County to get the difference of ROEs. If your region is 2 million or more, you are exempt from county support. Dr. Kinder stated that there's no financial support for Cook County ISC costs; therefore, they get grants and some state support but not county support. Dr. Durflinger asked Dr. Kinder if it would be possible to get a breakdown of Cook County funding streams; she stated that she can.

Rep. Chapa LaVia asked if there is a uniform basis for all ROEs to do the same work. It was stated that all ROEs do the same work. Rep. Chapa LaVia asked if any ROEs go above and beyond. Dr. Daiber stated that some ROEs frequently step up and go above and beyond to help in the delivery of education. Most ROEs are involved in the delivery of the Common Core State Standards. He stated that his ROE is the fiscal agent for technology support and the IlliniCloud. They also serve 16 counties on technology support. Not every ROE can do this, and some ROEs could be looked at doing more, but all ROEs do the same essential things that are mandated.

Rep. Roger Eddy stated that recently there has been a lot of publicity on raising the graduation age. Services are provided by ROEs; but if the age is raised, more truancy services may be needed. ROEs can continue to offer regional services for safe schools, but has the amount the counties contributed toward fulfilling a lot of the traditional stuff increased? Some ROEs assess tuition, but the contributions from the county have not picked up the reduction of some of these services.

Mike Nekritz stated that he appreciated the school evaluation survey in 2008 and wanted to know if the area's local superintendent has done something similar. Dr. Daiber responded by stating that he thinks most have. His school services line item was \$2.2 million, and it was \$4.5 million in 2010. ROEs must continually assess and evaluate what services they can provide to districts; this is an ongoing task for ROEs.

## **Reviewing the Recommendations of the ROE**

Dr. Durflinger further facilitated discussion to review the recommendations one at a time. He asked Commission members to turn to page 8 on the ROE report that was handed out at the beginning of the meeting. (The five specific recommendations can be found on pages 3–4 of these minutes.)

### **Recommendation 1**

The Commission began with reviewing and reading Recommendation 1, and Dr. Durflinger asked if anyone had any questions or comments regarding this particular recommendation. Dr. Daiber stated that there are rumors as to how the regions would be recreated. In some regions, the boundary would divide counties; our recommendation is that no counties be divided between two ROEs. Dr. Clark asked if the concept conflicts with local distribution. Dr. Daiber responded, saying that ROEs do not have the ability to levy taxes like the community colleges can. Mr. Meixner stated that community colleges have a conflict with the taxation issue. Mr. Kuffel wanted to know if there is a district that has two ROEs, and then who is responsible for that district. Mr. Meixner stated that the primary ROE would be responsible.

Dr. Daiber stated that in the code, there must be 43,000 inhabitants in a region. Rep. Eddy stated that that should not include Cook County. Rep. Eddy recommended adding some consideration of size of geographic square miles to the first recommendation. Dr. Daiber stated that is why the county line is in there—so that there are not five ROEs in DuPage County. Dr. Clark asked about the largest geographical ROE. Rep. Eddy responded that ROE 11 or ROE 20 would be the largest ROE geographically. Dr. Daiber responded, stating that ROE 11 may be the largest in square miles. Dr. Durflinger stated that the number of inhabitants should not be 43,000. Dr. Daiber believes this number can be up for discussion and that ROE 14 is nonexistent.

Dr. Durflinger told the Commission that in looking from a policy level, there may be something missing. He asked the Commission if there should be a review after every census. Rep. Eddy asked if this process should be similar to the General Assembly process. Mr. Meixner asked if having fewer ROEs is more efficient or effective; he feels that the current number of ROEs is pretty effective. Mr. Kuffel voiced a concern on the number of inhabitants because it does not reflect the number of students or educators. Dr. Durflinger asked if there should be another number instead of 43,000. Dr. Ruscitti responded that Kane County has nine districts, but they are big; DuPage County has 42 school districts, so you cannot go by districts, either.

Dr. Durflinger reiterated that what he is hearing from the Commission is that following Recommendation 1, there would need to be a population minimum and square mile maximum. The Commission agreed but felt that may be difficult to determine. Dr. Durflinger further elaborated on Recommendation 1 and stated that counties should not be split but that the Commission should come up with a number (i.e., 43,000) and not necessarily look at number of students or square miles.

The Commission members then had a discussion on the possibility of an elected superintendent. Commission members were concerned with the calendar and fiscal issue. They feel there are a lot of ancillaries, and it seems that would be a long period of time for a superintendent to be elected. They talked about the possibility of it being lined up with school board elections. Dr. Durflinger stated that this issue needs to be revisited in the next meeting.

## **Recommendation 2**

Dr. Durflinger asked the group to read Recommendation 2 and asked for its meaning. Dr. Daiber stated that the 2010 Commission report outlined five recommendations for improvement of education in Illinois; those recommendations are on a timeline this year. The task force wanted to make the statement that the report defined ISCs. Rep. Eddy stated that there are five recommendations, and one is on developing a statewide coordinating council. He asked Susie Morrison if she knew where that is in the process. Ms. Morrison stated that they have started talking about funding and that the original intent was to have that data before the coordinating council, but then they had another committee and it slowed it down. Rep. Eddy asked if Recommendation 2 is on a core set of services and, if so, whether it has been defined.

Dr. Durflinger asked if anyone had any more questions on the second recommendation. Dr. Jacoby stated that they probably need to respecify timelines based on their current work. Dr. Durflinger stated that he had a hard time personally saying yes to the second recommendation

because it does not state what the core services are. Dr. Jacoby stated that this was more the technology services and that they looked at the Iowa model, and Recommendation 2 relates to that model. Rep. Eddy stated that in talking about core services, they also need to think about bus driver education, certification, and so forth and see where they are best suited. Dr. Ruscitti commented that it's more than a service because they do training and have people to do the school calendar and that they are always being approached by the local superintendent with questions and are asked to fix things. Rep. Eddy stated that he is not sure that ROEs can be all things to all people. Dr. Jacoby stated that part of the issue is that there are dual systems. When a local superintendent is working on a calendar and needs to call someone, the choice of whom to call likely will depend on with whom the superintendent has a better relationship; that's because there's no clear channel of support of contacts. Theoretically, if we had a conduit of communication, no district would need to contact ISBE.

Dr. Darlene Ruscitti asked if there are things that can get removed. If so, then those things can be examined, such as the things that are done with schools on school improvement. Rep. Eddy stated that maybe the Commission needs to think about what duplication of core services exists. Dr. Durflinger recognized that the group cannot at this time agree on Recommendation 2.

### **Recommendation 3**

For the third recommendation, Dr. Durflinger indicated that he has asked Dr. Lynne Haeffele from the Classrooms First Commission to give a report for the meeting on Monday, February 27, because there are lots of discussions that relate to shared services and where they should be. Mr. Kuffel asked for examples of incentives, and Dr. Daiber stated that cost savings to districts is an incentive. Mr. Meixner stated that his ROE shares meeting spaces, copy machines, and the like with its special education cooperative; those are some of the things shared by the two counties. This situation indicates that we need to have a new law for shared services.

### **Recommendation 4**

Next, a brief discussion occurred regarding the fourth recommendation and a question was asked on what, specifically, would be reallocated out of the state budget. Dr. Ruscitti stated that she thinks it looks at what can be done more effectively and efficiently, such as bus driver training, truancy services, and so forth, because the ROE is the truant officer, although it does not get any truant grants. There was some clarification on who provides the bus driver training. Does it come from ISBE or ROEs? It was stated that the majority of it comes from the ROEs, but there was a concern on customizing the training because taxi drivers are being utilized to drive students to the schools. A suggestion was made that there may need to be better coordination between ISBE and the ROEs. ISBE currently is in charge of the annual reports, and the rest is handled by the ROE.

Dr. Daiber stated that if ROEs are going to provide multiple services such as Common Core State Standards, teacher training funds then need to be reallocated, and additional funds are going to be needed. There was a question about districts using the ROE for the Common Core State Standards. Rep. Chapa LaVia stated that she has gone throughout the state and thinks that half go to their ROEs and half of them do not. There is a concern about knowing what to

reallocate without knowing what the core services are. It's hard to plan efficiency models for 44 ROEs that are very different. Dr. Michael Johnson suggested that there needs to be some system mapping from ISBE that they can see to get some clarification as to what is done at the ISBE level and what is done at the ROE level.

Dr. Johnson asked Ms. Morrison about how she views the role of the ROE. Ms. Morrison stated that it is clear that in Illinois, they have to have an intermediate service agency. In the early '90s, they had 57 ROEs that did professional development only, and it's decreased since then. Their preference would be to have a single intermediate service agency; they prefer a single unit that is not fragmented. They need to clearly define roles and responsibilities of ISBE and ROEs; because they do not have a reporting structure, expectations and the whole issue of accountability are vague. She continued to state that the professional development is something that ISBE cannot offer because they do not have the expertise, so they turn to the ROEs. She added that sometimes we feel that we deal not with one system but with 47 separate entities.

Dr. Johnson stated that the Commission needs to figure out what they want the ROEs to do and specialize in. Rep. Eddy stated that if we value what the ROEs do and use them for delivery, their time would be well spent. Ms. Morrison responded and stated that ISBE does not have the resources to provide that, and they need to hold themselves accountable for doing those things well. Dr. Ruscitti stated that they really need to have those roles identified and standardized. She sees that there's a lack of communication between entities; oftentimes, they need to guess and figure it out because they are trying to serve their districts and schools. She feels that they need to focus on what the system looks like and how it will add value to the day-to-day classrooms. Dr. Durflinger responded that this is a system problem, and we're trying to figure this out. Rep. Eddy responded and stated that his frustration was on having a task force to deal with ROEs; there was one before, and it was not acted upon. Therefore, there has to be something. He indicated that there must be some delivery system between districts and regional entities, and he would like to concentrate on local control and local delivery. If recommendations are going to be made on whether regional superintendents should be elected or appointed, maybe a discussion on whether school boards should be elected or appointed needs to be added.

Dr. Durflinger stated that he has a little problem with Recommendation 4 on reallocating funds; he stated that if he were a superintendent, he would respond by stating that until accountability is set up and until there is a method of removal of nonaccountable regional superintendents, he would not want to give up any of the money. He continued by stating that there are extremely good regional superintendents, but there also are the ones that are not so good. He has been approached by people who feel that regional superintendents should be eliminated; he further stated that he thinks in some of the plans, they are going to have a specific accountability process and an actual method of removal for regional superintendents. He stated that the Commission needs to talk about that point before it is over.

## **Recommendation 5**

The discussion on Recommendation 5 will take place at the next meeting of the Commission, on Monday, February 27, 2012.

## **Discussion on Additional Information/Topics for Future Meetings**

Dr. Durflinger discussed some additional topics and information for future meetings. He stated that one of the charges is to examine the duties of the ROEs, and he feels that they have done those at this meeting. He stated that if anyone has questions regarding the roles and responsibilities of ISBE or ROEs, they can let him know and he will pass it along to the appropriate person. Dr. Johnson stated that one of the things that Commission members should look at is the duties of the state board because they need to see if some of the things that are part of the state board should continue to be part of it. Dr. Ruscitti would like to see where the state's accountability is because she is not sure who the customers are or who the clients are. Rep. Chapa LaVia stated that it's a lopsided ship because ISBE has lost a lot of people, and we want to make sure we provide what we have for the kids in the state of Illinois. A large percentage of those funds goes to administration. Something's wrong with that, and we need to look at those issues. She continued by asking if the ROEs have best practices. If they do, then they need to share them with the Commission. Rep. Eddy stated that they need to be cognizant when they compare mandates with other states. They need to look at the layers and also number of districts and how that all works. Illinois is a very guarded, local-control state, and that costs, too.

## **Wrap-Up and Closing Comments**

Dr. Durflinger announced that the next meeting is at 9 a.m. on Monday, February 27, 2012, at the Illinois Principals Association office. Dr. Daiber then asked Commission members if they want to entertain the last matter of business that was not part of the law, which regards whether regional superintendent positions should be elected positions. He continued and stated that they will determine that in the next meeting. Dr. Clark asked if they are going to have discussions at the next meeting on variations of size. Dr. Durflinger stated that they should look at the number 43,000, and it will be further discussed at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

**Illinois State Board of Education**  
**Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission**

**Monday, February 27, 2012**

**Minutes**

**Attendance**

**Commission Members:**

Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia	Dr. Vanessa Kinder	Mike Nekritz
Dr. Brent Clark	Scott Kuffel	Jane Russell
Dr. Norm Durflinger	John Meixner	
Dr. Michael A. Jacoby	Susie Morrison	

**Guests:**

Linda Miller  
Larry Pfeiffer

**Representing Commission Members:**

Dr. Gail Fahey (for Dr. Darlene Ruscitti)  
Ben Schwarm (for Mike Johnson)

**Presenters:**

Dr. Robert Daiber  
Dr. Lynne Haeffele

**Notetakers:**

Sheila Rodriguez  
Rachel Trimble

**Welcome, Introductions, and Consensus Recap**

The second meeting of the Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Dr. Norm Durflinger, chair of the Commission. Dr. Durflinger welcomed everyone and asked both Dr. Gail Fahey (representing Dr. Darlene Ruscitti) and Linda Miller (director of Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center) to introduce themselves.

Dr. Durflinger went over consensus items from the meeting that occurred on Wednesday, February 22, 2012.

- **There is a need for a regional delivery system.** The Commission agreed on this item.
- **There should be a minimum size region, such as a population of 43,000 as stated in 105 Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS) 5/3A-4.** The Commission agreed with this consensus.
- **There should be recognition of the size of the region.** Dr. Durflinger asked if this was a concern. Scott Kuffel stated that the only concern he had had was limitations in parts of the state where geography dictates population. Dr. Brent Clark stated that they may be boxing themselves too much; in his opinion, it should be taken off the table. The Commission agreed to take this item off the table.
- **Minimum population should be determined after the census is published.** Dr. Durflinger indicated that this statement means the number of regions would be reviewed a couple of years after every census. The Commission agreed.
- **It has not yet been determined whether or not counties should be divided.** There was a discussion among members on whether or not counties can be divided. It was decided that this issue will be discussed in the next meeting
- **If there is a change in the number of regions, the new regional boundary map must be adopted by September 2013 and the terms of office would continue through June 30, 2015.** The Commission agreed.

## Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Perspective

Dr. Durflinger introduced Susie Morrison to present on the ISBE perspective.

### Susie Morrison's Presentation

- ***ISBE Mission and Goals***
  - Goals: adoption and implementation of the Common Core State Standards
  - Development of the Longitudinal Data System (LDS)
  - Supports for effective teachers and leaders
  - Support for the lowest performing schools
- ***Agency Centers Housed Under ISBE:*** Fiscal, general counsel, school support, teaching and learning
  - ISBE manages budget and finances for 869 districts; this is a challenge.
  - ISBE has external assurances to make sure they are fiscally responsible.
  - For funding and disbursement, ISBE oversees accounting claims, approves special education programs, and processes federal aid audits.
  - For school bus services, ISBE looks at school financial data, provides consulting services, and reviews all districts' annual financial reports.
  - For data systems, ISBE has established a robust LDS. ISBE is working on building the LDS with federal grants and expects it to be up and running by 2013.

- ISBE’s legal department develops and reviews external agreements.
- The Government Relations office is the face of the General Assembly and provides support on bills and other activities.
- ISBE also handles public school recognition and grants recognition to all public schools.
- The ISBE School Support Services center ensures compliance of professional preparation programs.
- The ISBE Nutrition Program is the largest division in the agency and runs very smoothly because they have resources from the federal government to do their job.

In some cases, one or two staff members may be doing all of the work in an area of the agency.

ISBE has a shared learning infrastructure that was developed to provide a virtual space to house lesson plans. It is the hope of ISBE that it will be a robust learning opportunity for all 869 districts across the state. The virtual space is currently being piloted in Bloomington and Normal districts.

Ms. Morrison continued her presentation and talked about the Career & Technical Education division that currently is working on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, and that division also does the non-public school recognition. They are also handling technology and mathematics and talking about STEM learning exchanges in the Race to the Top (RTTT) work. She continued by stating that the state’s Early Childhood program is one of the largest programs within the agency. This program has only seven staff, but it is very high profile. For the English Language Learning program, all of the staff members are in Chicago. Their Innovation & Improvement program has become the heartbeat of school improvement, and it houses other programs such as the Common Core State Standards, School Improvement Grants (SIG), Response to Intervention, and other interventions.

Ms. Morrison continued sharing information about Special Education Services. She stated it is not just an administrative special education grant but that the staff does a lot of monitoring. Staff also administer due process, and the afterschool, technology, and truant programs are housed under Special Education Services. Their Standards & Assessments division works primarily with assessments, Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). They have weekly meetings, and they have staff that goes to the monthly meeting that occurs in Washington, D.C. Ms. Morrison stated that anything that touches assessment is in this division. She also stated that this division is responsible for data analysis and progress monitoring, but the agency does not have a research arm or staff in place to do analysis of its data. ISBE is well aware of the challenges. The majority of the time, the agency collects data and develops a report that is requested by the federal government. She stated that ISBE has moved from being a compliant agency to more of a support to school districts. This approach is an expectation from the U.S. Department of Education, but it presents challenges to the agency because it has been hard to transition staff who have been doing this a long time.

## Questions From Commission Members

Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission members if they had any questions for Susie Morrison. John Meixner asked Ms. Morrison if she had an organizational chart. She stated that the organizational chart has been taken offline because it is being changed; it will be finished in March. Dr. Durflinger told the Commission to turn to page 14 of the ROE report and asked Ms. Morrison about the capacity of ISBE to do all the duties of the regional superintendents. Ms. Morrison stated that ISBE could not take on these duties with the staff it has at the present time. Dr. Durflinger stated that one of the requirements of the Commission is to review the duties of the state board.

A question was raised on what the ROE can do to help the state board. Mr. Meixner stated that they are looking at the effectiveness issue. Ms. Morrison stated that they need support on data analysis and are going to have an outside entity help them with data analysis; she hopes that will happen in the next few months. Dr. Daiber stated that his ROE provides customer service on certification. He then further stated that if a statewide coordinating council is established, they could collectively make decisions on the role that the ROE could play in regard to certification. Dr. Daiber also stated that they deal with area certifications; He has had some issues with that and is not sure if ROEs should deal with certification issues.

Dr. Daiber brought up some criticisms made regarding the duties of the regional superintendents. He stated that he reviews the 10-year surveys of the districts and tracks them. There's a Health/Life Safety survey that is filed that is approved by him and then approved by the state board. His ROE also issues building permits and approves the Health/Life Safety funds, which also have to be approved by the state board. Dr. Daiber stated that instead of having the state board approve it, that task can be given to the ROEs.

Dr. Daiber continued and talked about general compliance and suggested that ROEs can possibly handle that as well because he thinks the purpose of compliance is to make sure that schools are safe and teachers are certified. He suggested that the statewide coordinating council could review that and relieve the state board from doing those tasks, which may affect the general state aid formula, but it needs to be reviewed and made more efficient. These are examples of things that are being duplicated. The process needs to be streamlined. Dr. Daiber pointed out that the tasks that are listed on page 14 are done by ROEs to some capacity.

Dr. Daiber then talked about General Educational Development (GED) testing and stated that, in 2014, GED testing will be computerized and that the ROEs are the chief examiners. He stated that the rest of the general duties can be carried out by the ROEs as a regional delivery system in coordination with the state board and legislation. Mr. Meixner stated that some of the communication is missing and that if one can envision having one point person for delivery in each region, it would be more valuable. He suggested possibly having a one-stop shop and it would be wrapped around in the coordinating council.

Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission if he can play the devil's advocate. He went down the list of mandates and asked if anyone else would be able to handle those mandates. He stated that for truancy and dropout students, some of the work can be transferred to the truancy division; the

GED testing should go to the community colleges. He continued by stating that teachers and school personnel, substitute teachers, teacher endorsement/certification, and administration of academy workshops can go to either the ROE or state board or a combination of both. Criminal background checks can go to the school districts, state police, or state board. He stated that a lot of those things can be transferred to other groups, such as Gifted Education or School Statewide System of Support, or there may be another way of handling it. Dr. Durflinger stated that he would lean more toward having a five-year survey and not have the ROEs involved in it. Compliance can go back to the state board; value-added measures can be given to someone else. Dr. Durflinger stated that there are things that can be taken off the table.

Dr. Kinder stated that the money has to go to someone, and it seems more logical to work with what they currently have. Dr. Durflinger stated that he is speaking on behalf of the people who do not have all the information of the Commission. Dr. Durflinger thinks that there is going to be a decrease in regional superintendents and it will be significant; some issues need to be addressed.

### **Lt. Governor's Classrooms First Commission Perspective: Presentation by Dr. Lynne Haeffele**

Dr. Durflinger told the Commission that the minutes will be available for approval at the next meeting. He then introduced Dr. Lynne Haeffele, who presented on the Lt. Governor's Classrooms First Commission.

Dr. Haeffele stated that as a result of legislation, Illinois has the Classroom's First Commission in operation thanks to Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia. Dr. Haeffele updated this Commission in particular, on shared services; Dr. Michael Jacoby is chairing the Classrooms First Commission, and Larry Pfeiffer is involved in the Education Shared Services. Illinois launched the first Classrooms First Commission in September 2011; a report is due to Governor and General Assembly on July 1, 2012. Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon is chairing this commission, and she wants it to be very research based and open; therefore, they are looking at a lot of data. They also have comments submitted via the Web and a lot of presentations at their commission meetings. Dr. Haeffele explained that this commission has four groups that are looking at different areas, such as consolidation and shared services.

Dr. Haeffele explained that for Education Shared Services, ISBE does not have a lot of staff support. With a large effort like the Common Core State Standards, they have determined that there will be a need for some ROE capacity and support. ROEs have a proven track record of providing good professional development, and their group has been in discussion on the role the ROEs can play in providing shared services. The Classrooms First Commission believes that one role of the ROE could be on virtual learning, but that commission sees logistics as a challenge and suggested that the ROEs could help districts with the coordination of their calendars. But if virtual learning is done with the community colleges, the ROEs could help provide dual credit/enrollment and promote learning exchanges, which would need to be coordinated on a regional basis.

Mr. Meixner suggested that ISBE could coordinate with ROEs across programs such as regular education and system support that can all reside in one place. He stated that there may be an opportunity to see how ROEs are designed and ROEs could play a role in realignment. Mr. Pfeiffer stated that the conversation has begun on the issue of opportunity and access and that they see some challenges for the small districts, especially access in their districts. In representing small rural districts, Mr. Pfeiffer does not know whether that is the role of the current Commission; but they should consider the age of enrollment and are looking at requiring four years of mathematics.

### **Current Recommendations of the Classrooms First Commission**

Dr. Michael Jacoby presented on the current recommendations that the Classrooms First Commission is developing.

Dr. Jacoby stated that, operationally, the shared services workgroup is similar to others. He stated that they are looking at how to improve efficiencies. They have found some overlap with internal efficiencies, and they are looking at how to make efforts inside the school efficient and how to outsource. They also are recommending criteria in which best practices might be employed and what such practices look like. For example, should ROEs remain in operation (which is laid out in one of their recommendations)? Should there be a more aggressive approach as districts begin to have more financial difficulty, which would be based on certain financial ratings when a warning is reached? (See the handout on —Classrooms First Commission: Current Recommendations Under Development.”) Dr. Jacoby stated that an efficiency study should be done that can be directed by the regional superintendent or the Educational Service Center (ESC) and the district would be required to review the recommendations with ISBE and formulate responses. Dr. Jacoby stated that it focuses on the roles of regional superintendent. Dr. Jacoby then opened it up to questions.

Dr. Durflinger asked if they are on-track or off-track. Mr. Kuffel asked if the virtual learning and dual credit is going to be more synchronous. Dr. Daiber suggested that someone look at finances for virtual learning courses because, for students that are expelled, parents can ask that their child be placed in a regional safe school. Virtual schooling can be a good fit, but it may be a financial burden on the family. Dr. Haefele stated that the Classrooms First Commission will take a look at that.

Mr. Kuffel stated that there's a concern regarding certification. He said that he is an advocate and thinks it's a great idea. But as they look at the financial piece, he stated that it is more cost-effective for districts to pay a \$250 fee for a class than to have a teacher do it. He also stated that there could be some coordinating effort with ISBE. Dr. Jacoby stated resource management service and having a Web-based model for analysis are working. He also suggested the repeal of the outsourcing bill and having a repository of shared service agreements. He stated that the state of New Jersey is a good example. Finally, he mentioned how funds are used for consolidation and how to identify them. Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission if they had any more questions.

Dr. Haefele wrapped up and stated that they have been finding out with their research that consolidation is not always intended to save money but to shift the resources to the classroom.

She felt that their overarching recommendations are to shift things in a better direction and that they are working in workgroups. Dr. Jacoby added that the Commission will work with the recommendations and have a statewide hearing to allow people to respond to those recommendations.

## **Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS) Follow-Up**

After a short break, Dr. Robert Daiber gave a follow-up presentation to last week's meeting. Dr. Daiber referenced code 105 ILCS 5/4-2, which looks at monetary compensation to offices, and code 105 ILCS 5/4-4, on providing ROEs a suitable office. He mentioned that no dollar amount is specified in these codes regarding the population size of 2 million. He stated that the size of the region may be impacted by square miles or density. He then moved to code 105 ILCS 5/3A-7, which focuses on the regional office budget, addresses the dimension of having more than one county, and indicates how those counties share the expenses. He stated that once again there is no set dollar amount. The last paragraph is significant that by Oct. 1 regional superintendents shall prepare a budget, with secretarial service, personnel expense, and office space and submit to the county board for each region for approval. The budget can be amended by a 2/3 majority.

Dr. Daiber stated that those budgets may be different. County boards typically honor those budgets. In some cases, office space is budgeted; and in some cases, it is looked at from the general auditor. Some regional superintendents have to pay rent and lease out space out of their county fund, and the same is true with furniture, travel, and hiring of staff, so that's what shapes the budget. There is nothing in the code by student enrollment, by school district, or square area, or population that there is a dollar amount given in budget. Dr. Durflinger asked if there was any need for the Commission to point some of the problems that the ROEs have in inconsistencies on the county in getting funds.

Mr. Meixner stated that he thinks part of the problem is how it's structured; it may be different in some counties because those employees are part of the contracts. He stated that in his region, they pay for their employees' salaries' and some budgets may be larger because of that. He stated that his county supplies them with framework and foundation to support their office.

Dr. Durflinger made a correction to something stated at the February 22, 2012, meeting: Section 5/4-10 of the school code does address removal from office.

Dr. Daiber stated that this budget is part of their annual report that is presented to each county board by September of each year and they do that to make them aware of their budget, revenues and expenditures, which is shared with the county board. Dr. Brent Clark asked if the budget is from December 1 to November of the next year. Mr. Kuffel asked that in the 2010 report, how will the regional offices see that process of design? Dr. Daiber stated that he thinks that came from the Governor's office to establish the Commission, and that it would be a collected initiative. Dr. Daiber asked Susie Morrison how she sees it. Ms. Morrison stated that ISBE would convene the coordinating council and do it collaboratively. Dr. Durflinger asked if this Commission should support the concept of the other commission. Dr. Daiber stated that this concept is in Recommendation 5.

Dr. Jacoby stated that the more they can provide guidance on that, the better it will be. Dr. Durflinger thinks some of the problem is the lack of communication between regional superintendents and the state board; he does not know how to stop it without some sort of mandate. He then asked the Commission if they have consensus on putting the statewide coordinating council in their report. Everyone agreed to this. The state board also is on board.

Mr. Nekritz stated that part of it has to be the question of equity and what money is being generated for different programs; he thinks that definition would be pretty important for him to understand, and there needs to be better understanding of fair service. Dr. Durflinger stated that he too had a concern of inequity between the regions caused by the politics of county boards. Ms. Morrison stated that it evolved when there were service centers and they ran a budget based on population. When the ROEs came about, the budget went down from \$18 million to \$2.2 million; the level of service was affected, and that's an issue. From 1865 to 1970, there was a county superintendent, so that office was there. Then in the '70s when it was regionalized, the 102 became 57 and now it's down to 44. Dr. Durflinger asked Mr. Nekritz if he wants something put on the next agenda. Mr. Nekritz stated that he would because he is having a hard time grappling with the disparity of funds. Dr. Durflinger made the decision to put it on the next agenda. Mr. Nekritz also added that federal mandates should be discussed as well.

Dr. Jacoby stated that he feels that goes to the core role issue and that it would be nice to have a matrix that indicated that ~~yes~~, we believe this is a core role" and ~~yes~~, this should not be a core role done by the regional office." Ms. Morrison stated that in addition to that, they need to think about what should be on the mandated list that is not there. Dr. Durflinger stated if the core role should be tied to the recommended list to the coordinating council; if there needs to be a core role, someone has to put it together. He stated that the Commission should verify Recommendation 2, and everyone agreed.

Dr. Jacoby asked if there is a benefit in mandating the budget at the county level and wondered what that budget is based on. Mr. Meixner stated that is based on what the regional superintendent believes is appropriate. Dr. Clark asked if the population of the students drives the ROE salary. Dr. Daiber responded by stating that the census population drives the salary. He stated that Tier 2 is the majority of ROEs that have a medium population, and the Tier 3 salary is for the large population areas. The Tier 1 salary is around \$90,000, the largest one (Tier 3) is \$104,000, and the medium population salaries would be in between. Dr. Clark asked about the ISC's salary. Dr. Kinder stated that their salary is determined by the governing board; it could be below or above the salaries of regional superintendents. Dr. Clark asked Dr. Kinder how he could find out about the salaries of the ISCs because it would be interesting to see how they align with the ROE salaries.

Dr. Kinder further stated that the governing board oversees the salaries and does not receive any county money at all. School districts do not pay the ISCs any annual fees, but they may pay for services they provide. Dr. Jacoby asked if the ISCs price services so that they make some revenue. Dr. Kinder stated that approximately 70 percent of their funding is through grants, and there also are local services of revenue. All three ISCs charge tuition for their regional safe schools, and they rent out rooms to bring in more revenue. A portion of their salary funds comes from grant money. Dr. Daiber stated that they cannot use any grant money for salaries. He thinks

there's a misunderstanding in a piece of the legislation, but it is prohibited by the grant. Dr. Durflinger stated that the Commission agrees to support Recommendation 2.

## **Discussion on Elected vs. Non-Elected Issue**

Dr. Durflinger facilitated a discussion on the elected versus the non-elected superintendent. He indicated that he hears it both ways on which way to go. He said that there are only three states that elect their regional superintendents: Montana, Arizona, and Illinois. He stated that Illinois is either extremely innovative or being close to the last one on a dead horse. He feels there should be a discussion on this issue. Dr. Durflinger stated if superintendents are elected should it be nonpartisan. He asked the question of how ISCs and school boards are elected. Dr. Kinder stated that the ISCs are appointed. Dr. Durflinger then posed to the Commission the question of whether the regional superintendents should be appointed, like the ISCs. Dr. Kinder stated that their governing board appoints the directors for ISC. They have 66 school districts, and the governing board members represent those 66 districts; they also have five special education cooperatives, three superintendents, three teachers, a community college member, and an administrative agent. Dr. Kinder indicated that each ISC has to have an administrative agent, which is the overseeing body; then their board approves, and then it goes to the township.

Dr. Jacoby asked Dr. Kinder if she sees problems with the current governing board. Dr. Kinder stated that it does work with suburban Cook County; they love it, but suburban Cook County looks different than other counties, and they feel they have a voice. Dr. Daiber had a clarification question regarding the funding of the ISCs. He wanted to know how the ISCs operate without enterprise funds and how they obtain grant money. Dr. Kinder stated that their districts do not pay a yearly fee; they pay for workshops, professional development, and classes. It was stated that when an office was taken apart, the salary money that was originally for the regional superintendent was divided among the three ISCs, which was about \$92,000. Dr. Kinder stated that when the change went through, they got \$92,000 to spend on Health/Life Safety.

Dr. Jacoby stated that the ROEs are always trying to tweak and make things fit. If they were building a system today from scratch, what would it be and how would it be funded? He feels they have a lot of Band-Aids on everything. Mr. Meixner stated that their system has been in place since 1865. Dr. Jacoby stated that if they were building a system they would not have a discussion about an elected regional superintendent; they would be talking about ISBE appointing someone for the ROE. A statement on who would appoint a regional superintendent came up, and Dr. Durflinger stated it could be a combination of ISBE and someone at the local level. Dr. Durflinger stated he would want a combination of the two and somehow have that local relationship but allow the state board to have much more control; the ROE and the state board should have some accountability. Dr. Durflinger asked Susie Morrison if there is a group out there that looks at accountability for these services. Ms. Morrison stated that there is one that does accreditation of intermediate service units. Dr. Durflinger asked Susie Morrison if it would be possible to contact them and have them attend the next meeting. Ms. Morrison stated she will try to have someone come in for the next meeting and present on accreditation.

Dr. Clark asked if the ISC governing board can rule on annexation detachment. Dr. Kinder stated that they have not had that happen. Dr. Daiber stated that they would have to have the regional

board and state board attend the hearing since the ISC board is not a regionally elected board. Dr. Clark asked if there is a statutory issue with the idea of an appointed person, such as an ISC director removing a board member. Dr. Durflinger stated that it would have to end at the end of the term of the regional superintendent. Dr. Kinder stated that one has political ties; the neutrality issue is not different for the ISC than for the regional superintendent. Mr. Meixner stated that he has not seen any data that ROEs are inconsistent. Dr. Kinder stated that they need to see what is not happening that should be happening and that is the real issue—not the elected versus non-elected issue. Mr. Kuffel stated the issue may be in the core services because there are going to be inconsistencies, and sometimes the timing seems such that they could go on a pattern for a decade. Again, if we knew exactly what the expectations were, we would all be on the same page. Dr. Kinder stated that their role could be year-to-year—and not four years like the regional superintendents—and could be revisited each year.

Dr. Daiber stated that any time there is a petition for consolidation or transfer of boundary lines, the regional board of trustees is involved; they do not act like a school board acts with a superintendent. Mr. Nekritz asked who should ensure the districts, helping districts navigate that legislation, besides their attorney. Dr. Jacoby stated that it's the law; if there's a coordinating council, they may be able to give some council. Mr. Nekritz stated the problem is that districts need guidance.

Dr. Fahey asked that in regard to the issue raised on compliance, what services can the ROEs and ISCs do? At the systems level, it's more than just awareness and bringing people together; it's formalized on bringing human resources together because they are at the community level. She then stated that in terms of awareness and all the way up to implementation, principals are pre-working with their districts, so what can the ROEs do? Do they flip the law? There's a huge distance between the law and implementation with fidelity, and she can talk about expectations, what are the accounting mechanisms and how the information gets back to the entity providing services to the law and implementation. She stated that if they can frame the expectations and account within that box, she thinks it's a pathway to efficacy for the issue the Commission is struggling with.

Dr. Daiber wanted to address what Mr. Nekritz said about systems. One of the places they need to provide support is on school board training. Once we identify an entity that can facilitate that, we can offer Senate Bill 7 training to deal with the issues of training because the ROEs do not have the capacity. Mr. Nekritz asked what the system should be doing.

Dr. Durflinger asked Dr. Fahey about the efficiencies and asked the group if they are aware of DuPage County's concept of regional delivery. Dr. Durflinger asked Dr. Fahey if she would be willing to present for 15 minutes on DuPage County's concept of regional delivery. Dr. Fahey agreed to present at one of the future meetings. Dr. Daiber also stated that the Commission can review pages 6–7 of the ROE document, which has a summary of that document.

Dr. Durflinger stated that the issue of elected versus nonelected is difficult. He would like to put it on the agenda for next week and determine if they want to move forward with this; if so, a decision will have to be made.

Dr. Durflinger stated that he personally believes there should be 18 to 35 ROEs: 18 is based on the original delivery system, and 35 goes back to what was in the law. He stated that there is no research base to these numbers, but he feels that there is some or a good portion of legislative feeling that there should be a decrease in the number of ROEs. He asked the Commission to think about that this next week. He asked John Meixner to come up with a number. Based on the 2010 commission, the Iowa group came up with reductions. Mr. Meixner asked if they are looking at number of offices or the population. Dr. Durflinger stated that during the last meeting, they would look over the final report and the meeting before that they would vote and come to a consensus so that the Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center could have a week to put the report together. Dr. Durflinger stated that they are starting to close in on some of the discussion and believes that by the third and fourth meeting, they will come to consensus. Dr. Clark had a clarification on the number of offices that Dr. Durflinger stated. Dr. Durflinger told Dr. Clark that they can look at numbers that fall between 18 and 35, but that politically he does not know if that will work. The final decision will be made by the Legislature and Governor.

## **Wrap-Up and Closing Comments**

The next meeting will be held at 9 a.m. on Monday, March 5, 2012, at the Illinois Association of School Boards.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

## **Upcoming Meetings**

- Meeting #3, Monday, March 5, 2012, 9:00 a.m.–Noon, Illinois Association of School Boards, Springfield
- Meeting #4, Thursday, March 15, 2012, Time and Location TBD
- Meeting #5, Thursday, March 22, 2012, Time and Location TBD
- Meeting #6, Wednesday, March 28, 2012, Time and Location TBD [*Note: The date of this meeting was later changed to Thursday, March 29, 2012.*]

**Illinois State Board of Education**  
**Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission**

**Monday, March 5, 2012**

**Minutes**

**Attendance**

**Commission Members:**

Dr. Brent Clark	Dr. Michael Johnson	Mike Nekritz
Dr. Norm Durflinger	Dr. Vanessa Kinder	Dr. Darlene Ruscitti
Rep. Roger Eddy	Scott D. Kuffel	Jane Russell
Sen. William Haine	John Meixner	
Dr. Michael Jacoby	Susie Morrison	

**Representing Commission Member:**

Meredith Byers (for Jim Tammen)

**Guest:**

Dr. Robert Daiber

**Notetakers:**

Sheila Rodriguez  
Rachel Trimble

**Welcome and Introductions**

The third meeting of the Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Dr. Norm Durflinger, chair of the Commission. Dr. Durflinger welcomed everyone and had the Commission members introduce themselves because he saw new faces in the room.

**Approval of February 27 Minutes**

Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission members if they had any changes or additions to the February 22 meeting minutes. Dr. Darlene Ruscitti indicated a necessary change to page 3 of the notes regarding the statement on building inspections being funded through a 5-cent levy; she said that this statement is incorrect and that it should be eliminated. Dr. Durflinger asked for this statement to be removed and asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Dr. Michael Johnson motioned to approve, and Scott Kuffel seconded the motion to approve the February 22 minutes.

Dr. Durflinger then asked if there should be any changes or additions to the February 27 meeting minutes. Referring to page 8 of this document, Dr. Vanessa Kinder stated that 70 percent of the Intermediate Service Center (ISC) funding is through grants in general, not federal grants. Dr. Durflinger asked for that language to be corrected and requested a motion to approve. Dr. Brent Clark motioned to approve the minutes, and Dr. Johnson seconded his motion to approve. Both meeting minutes were approved by the Commission.

## **Discussion on Elected vs. Nonelected**

Dr. Durflinger began facilitating a discussion on the issue of an elected versus a nonelected regional superintendent. He stated that this was a request from the Governor's office, and staff from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) would like to hear the pros and cons of having an elected and nonelected regional superintendent. He then stated that a decision needs to be made in the next meeting regarding whether this should be part of the report, but today they are just going to have a discussion. Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission if anyone wanted to begin the conversation. Dr. Johnson had some thoughts on more or less how this issue should be treated. He stated that perhaps rather than a recommendation, the Commission can provide the pros and cons and use them as the basis of discussion, which would be fruitful. Sen. William Haine stated that it all depends on what the mission is of the Regional Offices of Education (ROEs); maybe it should be elected, and some states elect their ROE from their school boards. He stated that in Illinois, it has been a historic custom and urges that it should stay that way. Sen. Haine further stated that having this public office determined by the voters is an important thing to do because it helps the educational system and provides accountability. He stated that if the Governor appoints the regional superintendent, then the direct connection to the citizens is lost.

Dr. Durflinger asked for two or three positives of this office being elected. Sen. Haine stated that it provides accountability, it provides function of the ROEs, and the trouble is that citizens do not know the mission of the ROEs. Historically it's been elected, and citizens are well served if high officers are responsible. He stated that not many people take part in school board elections; he does, but not voting in any election is difficult for him to comprehend. Dr. Ruscitti added that at least 30 percent of her time or her assistant's time is devoted to addressing the issues of education. They are the go-to entity when districts and schools are frustrated with their local boards. They are the voice of authority and statute, and that gives them credibility and greater accountability. She stated that she was a little concerned that they had this issue on the plate when one of the charges is to examine the region's duties and State Board duties, which is the issue they should be discussing. John Meixner stated that he agrees with Dr. Ruscitti, that they have not spent time on the duties and they should focus on that instead. Since they have a short time, they need to focus on the other recommendations.

Rep. Roger Eddy stated that this isn't a resolution, it is law. He has served on a number of task forces and wanted to know if this Commission was the appropriate venue to discuss this issue; he feels uncomfortable that they are not following the law.. Dr. Durflinger stated that there seems to be a consensus that because this is not part of the law, it should not be discussed. Rep. Eddy stated that this may not be the proper venue based on what the law says. Dr. Durflinger asked if they have consensus. Dr. Johnson concurred and asked if the real question should be on the role

of the ROEs. Dr. Johnson stated that in terms of election, what does one run into in terms of policy decisions if the primary role is compliance? He stated that in the end, it's the local district's responsibility, and what are people actually voting for in terms of policy? Dr. Ruscitti stated that they see themselves as ISBE's partner. There's a debate that ROEs see themselves in a partnership role because they are dealing with local issues and servicing the community. She stated there's a lot of involvement and it's more than just saying how does the ROE support policy and practice? Dr. Durflinger asked if there is consensus among the group that they are not going to go there. The Commission agreed to move on and not discuss this issue any further.

Dr. Durflinger stated that he has asked Dr. Ruscitti to give a short report on the process they use in DuPage County, which is somewhat summarized on pages 6 through 7 in the ROE report on their systems approach.

### **DuPage County Process: Dr. Darlene Ruscitti's Presentation**

Dr. Ruscitti stated that this was the second commission she has served on and that she is hopeful that they can work together as a system and move forward with public education in Illinois. She stated that they have done a lot of work as an ROE and ISC in moving forward into the 21st century and making sure that every child is successful. She stated that she hears from parents, and they just want to make sure that their child has a better life and quality education. Dr. Ruscitti stated that they can do that by partnering and working collaboratively with ISBE and that they are their eyes and ears, and at times, there are issues that fall on deaf ears. She stated that the bullying issue and other issues are being brought to regional superintendents and that they also are being approached about how the ROEs are going to help with the Race to the Top work.

Dr. Ruscitti stated that she wanted to refer to a plan to align efficient and effective excellence and that they recognize that the state of Illinois does not have money but that there are ways to make things work that have to do with collective entities working together, with the State Board being the central entity. She pointed out Appendix F, right after page 46 of the ROE report, and stated that they had discussions on the roles of ISBE and the ROEs. She stated that they see ISBE as the entity that does policy, research development, and mining the data. The role of the ROE is more one of providing customer service, and there needs to be a dotted line between the role of ISBE and other entities. She stated that first and foremost, they need to define their relationship with ISBE, and she believes that they don't have great alignment among education entities. She argued that if they want to talk about efficiencies and effectiveness, the arrows have to be going both up and down. She stated that the context is not just coming from the DuPage ROE, but she talked with others about ideas and perspectives.

Dr. Ruscitti pointed to page 25 and stated that is the goal of any good government. She then explained what the ROE does. She stated that their ROE helps to build capacity and build compliance because it's tough in the classrooms because the schools are so diverse. She stated that they ROE visits all 262 schools in its district in regard to the compliance issue. They meet monthly and talk about safety, which has cut their health and life violations in half. She continued to state that compliance and compassion are most important in building capacity. She stressed that the most important thing is the relationship between the education system in Illinois and the ROEs. She stated that ISBE and others have to let go of some authority and allow ROEs

to be creative, and there isn't anything wrong with a single system, but they need to focus on the outcomes. She then stated that the focus should be on empirical data and stated that there are a lot of mandates. Once this Commission is complete, they should meet on a regular basis because they are relational and responsive to school districts, and they are results driven and hold themselves accountable. She concluded her presentation by stating the importance of having a systems approach and making sure that every child is achieving.

### **Discussion on Dr. Ruscitti's Presentation**

Dr. Durflinger asked if anyone had any questions for Dr. Ruscitti. Sen. Haine stated that on page 26 of the document, Dr. Ruscitti quotes the task force of 1980, arguing that the systems were duplicative, and he asked her to rectify. Dr. Ruscitti responded by stating that was the first streamlining task force. Sen. Haine stated that to him, they seemed like duplicative structures, and he asked why they need a coordinating council. He further stated that he thinks they are searching for a mission of the ROEs, which should be simple—to be effective locally—and that a simple mission should be established. Dr. Ruscitti stated that the coordinating council was speaking to the lack of communication in Illinois, and the intent of the coordinating council is to have all entities represented. Mr. Meixner stated that the coordinating council will take care of the communication issue and that the third recommendation states that the ROE would be the point person for all services and the accountability portion. Sen. Haine asked how that would be fleshed out. Mr. Meixner stated that the accountability and accreditation would solve a lot of issues. Dr. Johnson stated that he had a concern about going back to the old ROE model. Dr. Ruscitti stated that they approve an institute day, and when she thinks of the administrator academy, she thinks of leadership and looking at the role of leadership. Dr. Johnson stated that part of the problem on the side of the school board is that we are training superintendents without going to the school boards, who have no say. Dr. Ruscitti stated that they have a professional development training module for school boards and superintendents that will be launched soon. Dr. Johnson stated that they have mandatory training, but the school boards are left out of the discussion, which is a concern that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Meixner stated that Dr. Johnson's recommendation is to have someone from the school board represented on the coordinating council. Susie Morrison stated that it would be good to bring all those people together, such as the school boards and professional development trainers. Dr. Johnson stated that he had a concern about the ROEs doing all of the professional development; he felt the ROEs do not have the capacity. Dr. Ruscitti stated it wasn't the idea to have ROEs provide all of the professional development, but there needs to be more coordination. Dr. Michael Jacoby stated that there seems to be a standardization of roles and putting everyone in a box. He thought that the ROEs want the professional development to be more standardized so that ROEs can be more consistent. Dr. Ruscitti stated that she partly agreed that there needs to be some standardization but didn't agree on standardizing the superintendent role because superintendents manage districts that are very different. She used the example of a DuPage County superintendent who has a large portion of Latino students, which is very different from other districts. Mr. Meixner stated that there is value added to that because there are differences throughout the state, and there should be some freedom to apply certain grants. Dr. Jacoby stated that there needs to be a core set of expectations; otherwise it will be hard to compare to other accountability models. He wanted to be clear that there should be a set of core services offered at every ROE.

Dr. Ruscitti stated that the “how” needs to be identified and that she is big on having a coordinating council to make sure that the ROEs are doing those core services. Mr. Meixner asked if there should be just one coordinating council. Scott Kuffel stated that it could stop at Recommendation 1 and that he appreciated the commentary about value added, but that should come after Recommendation 1 is fulfilled. Dr. Kinder commented that they have a statewide council, which is taken to the region and then gets taken to the local level, so she saw it differently. Dr. Ruscitti added that the intent was that the bullying policy could go through the coordinating council. Rep. Eddy stated that he envisioned an organization chart, which includes an advisory group such as the P-20 council that is making various recommendations. He stated that school districts are constantly watching all these moving parts, and if there is a way to have this coordinating council replace all of the moving parts, then he can see some value. He also stated that the role of this coordinating council needs to be clearly defined to districts because it can add more confusion. Dr. Durflinger stated that Recommendation 1 falls back to the original recommendation of the original task force and that they are going to have to have a council. Mr. Meixner stated that they can better identify the coordinating council. Dr. Johnson stated that to him, it has a different charge, and it’s going back to their mission, and the coordinating council is much larger than what they are looking for.

Dr. Durflinger stated that in going back to the law, the first step is to determine the duties of the State Board and ROEs. He stated that he would like to have everyone go back to what the duties and responsibilities of the ROEs are. He asked the Commission to turn to page 14 of the ROE report and look at the mandates that are required. He then told the Commission that they are going to be looking at all of the mandates and value-added activities and determining which mandates and activities should be the responsibility of the ROEs. Dr. Durflinger began going down the list of mandates, which were then discussed in detail by the Commission.

## **Discussion on Mandates**

The following mandates were on the list to be discussed:

1. Truancy/dropout students—Truants’ Alternative and Optimal Education Program (TAOEP)
2. General equivalency diplomas (GEDs) awarded
3. Hearings for chronically truant students
4. Regional Safe Schools Program (alternative school) students
5. Teachers, school service personnel, and administrators registered
6. Substitute teachers registered and FY10 teachers, administrators, and substitutes recertified
7. Criminal background checks
8. Professional certificates
9. Teacher endorsement and certificate applications
10. Bus driver initial training and annual training

11. Educator professional development workshops
12. Administrator academy workshops
13. Gifted education seminar (ISBE designation) teachers
14. Annexation/detachment petitions filed and hearings
15. Schools served through Regional System of Support Provider (RESPRO) Services (Year 3+ schools not meeting No Child Left Behind [NCLB] adequate yearly progress)
16. Schools served through Statewide System of Support Services (SSOS) (Year 1 or 2 schools not meeting NCLB adequate yearly progress)
17. School buildings inspected for safety (Health/Life Safety)
18. Building amendments processed and permits issued
19. School evaluations of districts for recognition status (compliance)

## **1. Truancy/Dropout Students**

Dr. Durflinger asked if truancy should be handled by the ROEs. Mr. Meixner stated that by statute, ROEs have to handle this issue and that they do a good job in rural areas. Dr. Durflinger asked about urban areas. Dr. Kinder responded that ROEs handle truancy in suburban areas and that this role has value. Rep. Eddy asked if there should be some intermediate step to determine if a child is truant and if it's the responsibility of public policy. He stated that without the ROEs, he would call the State Attorney's office to determine if the law has been broken. Mr. Meixner stated that the ROEs are the intermediate center, and they don't take a punitive approach but try to have remediation. Rep. Eddy stated that Mr. Meixner may do the task differently, but other ROEs do it more punitively and that it would need to be described how it's done everywhere. Dr. Johnson stated that there are cases in which the school does not want the students back, and if it weren't for the ROEs, those students would fall through the cracks, which makes the case for having checks and balances.

Dr. Johnson stated that ROEs can handle truancy for certain areas, such as rural. In other areas, this responsibility can be combined—where they would have a truant office—or, in some cases, it can be handled by the ROEs. Dr. Durflinger asked if anyone else had a different view, and there seemed to be consensus that truancy should be handled by the regional superintendent and it can become part of the accountability process.

## **2. GEDs Awarded**

Dr. Durflinger asked Dr. Robert Daiber to talk about GED awards. Dr. Daiber stated that community colleges made the decision that the GED should be computerized, and there will need to be a registered site and proctors will be needed. He stated that historically, ROEs are the recordkeepers of GED records and that will not change, but the role of the ROE as the GED examiner and main test site will go away. Dr. Durflinger stated that in 2014, the ROEs will no longer be the chief examiners but will continue to be the recordkeepers. Dr. Daiber agreed that statement is true. Rep. Eddy asked why the recordkeeping couldn't go to the local school recordkeeper. Mr. Meixner stated that the student seeking a GED may not be a regular student all

the time; instead, the person may be a home-schooled student. Dr. Ruscitti stated that they get thousands of requests for these records. Dr. Daiber stated that the test results will be held in a database moving forward and that the ROEs will have access to that database. Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission if they agreed that this mandate should stay with the ROEs, and the Commission agreed.

### **3. Hearings for Chronically Truant Students**

The Commission also agreed that the mandate on chronic truant students should stay with the ROEs.

### **4. Regional Safe Schools Program**

Next, Dr. Durflinger asked who should handle the mandate on the Regional Safe Schools Program. Mr. Scott Kuffel asked if the ROEs play a different role in different areas. Mr. Meixner stated that the ROEs are the administrative agent for the regional safe school program. The Commission agreed that this mandate should stay as is.

### **5. Teachers, School Service Personnel, and Administrators Registered**

In regard to the teachers, school personnel, and administrators registered mandate, Mr. Meixner stated that this is all encompassed in one thing. Dr. Kinder stated that they just did a survey, and they get about 100 calls a day regarding certification. Dr. Durflinger asked if the State Board can handle this mandate. Ms. Morrison stated that the State Board cannot handle it and that she thinks that the ROEs and ISCs play the troubleshooting role because they need to help people view the online system. Therefore, the role of the ROE is important. Dr. Kinder stated that they encourage people to use the online system, but they still get a lot of other questions on how to get certified. She stated the questions are far beyond the online system, and they are still taking in a lot of phone calls. Ms. Morrison stated that they play the role of troubleshooting but that it will eventually need to turn to mediation. Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission if they agreed that this mandate should still be handled by the ROEs. The Commission agreed. Dr. Ruscitti asked if there are duties that can be taken from the State Board that can be handled by the ROEs. Ms. Morrison stated that she thinks there may be some duties that can be handled by the ROEs.

### **6. Substitute Teachers Registered; Teachers, Administrators, and Substitutes Recertified**

The Commission agreed that the mandates on substitute teachers registered and on teacher, administrator, and substitute recertification should stay with the ROEs.

### **7. Criminal Background Checks**

Dr. Durflinger asked if there's a better way to do criminal background checks. Mr. Meixner asked if there's a more cost-effective way to handle background checks. Dr. Johnson stated a human resources company handles their background checks. Mr. Meixner stated that it was more expensive to have a human resource company handle the background checks, and they collect the fingerprints and do the background checks for their substitute teachers. Dr. Durflinger stated

that when he was a superintendent, his ROE handled background checks for substitute teachers. Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission if this mandate could be handled elsewhere. The Commission agreed that this mandate should stay with the ROEs.

### **Additional Thoughts on Some Mandates Already Reviewed**

Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission if they could go over the mandate list from the beginning again and see if the mandate is majority local or state handled.

**1. Truancy/Dropout Students.** Dr. Durflinger asked if the mandate on truancy/dropout students is local or state. The group stated that it's both. Dr. Ruscitti stated that they need to define that relationship. Dr. Jacoby stated that if it means it's the state, does it mean that it's a mandated responsibility? Should it be exclusive or shared? Mr. Nekritz stated that in Lombard, they are dealing with 99 percent of truancy issues without involving their ROE, and they have to make sure that their actions are consistent within their district. He stated that he thinks they need to define "local" and what percentage of the districts are handling this duty. Rep. Eddy stated that he was looking at the statute and that if they go through the list, it may be efficient for the Commission to look at what costs it entails. He stated that if the ROEs are carrying out something that is beneficial as a service, school districts would be responsible for funding. Or is this something created by the state and expensed by the state? He stated that for the first mandate on the list (on truancy), districts still have a duty and responsibility to report chronic truancy, but there needs to be an alternative for students to return to school, and this responsibility is shared.

Mr. Meixner stated that it's different because the compulsory attendance law applies only to public schools and that parochial and home-schooled students don't count. Rep. Eddy asked if that means that home-schooled students can't be truant under the definition of the law. Mr. Meixner stated that is correct. Dr. Ruscitti stated that she asks the parents to show them evidence that they are educating their children; if they don't, then the ROE takes the parents to court. Rep. Eddy stated that the responsibility of the local school district is to report and asked if this mandate is funded by the state with some local funds, and if so, what is the percentage? He stated that the recommendation should derive from who is being served. Dr. Ruscitti stated that it has to do with the previous streamlining commission. They did the research and found out that in Illinois, the truancy dollars are distributed to seven community colleges, 37 ROEs, and 36 school districts. Dr. Ruscitti stated that she does not receive any truancy grants and that it gets muddy on who is accountable for truancy. Rep. Eddy stated that it should be a partnership and that the mandate itself should be carried out as a state mandate and should be funded by state funds.

Sen. Haine asked why community colleges are involved. Rep. Eddy responded by stating that they get involved as a resource. Sen. Haine asked if they provide the resource but are not the focus of truancy, and Rep. Eddy stated that is correct. Sen. Haine further stated that some communities in his county have an ordinance that anyone less than 16 years of age has to be in school, and if they are, not, then they are considered truant. Dr. Ruscitti stated that the judges in the courts do not want to see these students. When a judge

encounters a student who has one credit and is in his or her senior year, the judge can require the student to attend the DuPage alternative school so that he or she can get a GED, or we need to enroll them in a community college. Dr. Durflinger stated that this mandate (dropout/truancy) is shared.

**2. GEDs Awarded.** Dr. Durflinger brought up the mandate on GEDs awarded and asked the Commission if they agree that this mandate should be handled by the ROEs and if it's a local or state function. Dr. Jacoby stated that the mandate is shared between community colleges and the ROEs. Dr. Durflinger reiterated that it is still a local function. Rep. Eddy stated that the records function is local, and if it goes to the community college, then it is a state-created cost. The Commission agreed.

**4. Regional Safe Schools Program.** Dr. Durflinger moved on to the regional safe schools mandate and asked if this was a shared or state function. Rep. Eddy stated that public school students go to these schools in lieu of expulsion; therefore, it is serving a school function. He stated that he would agree that a large part of this mandate benefits the local districts. Dr. Johnson stated that he would argue that it's a state issue because the board would expel those students under statute. Dr. Ruscitti stated that she would say it's shared because the DuPage ROE has lost a lot of its funding and the burden is across the state. Dr. Kinder stated that the loss of funding is more than 50 percent. The DuPage ROE's budget went from \$2.2 million to \$500,000. Dr. Durflinger stated that the Commission then agrees that it is shared.

**6. Substitute Teachers Registered.** The Commission then agreed that the mandate on substitute teachers registered is a state function.

## **10. Bus Driver Initial Training and Annual Training**

Dr. Durflinger then went on to discuss the mandate on bus driver training and stated that it is a state-funded mandate. He then asked if anyone else can handle that responsibility, such as the Illinois Department of Transportation or the Secretary of State. The Commission agreed that this is a state function that should continue to be handled by the ROEs.

## **11. Educator Professional Development Workshops**

The Commission then discussed the mandate on professional development workshops for educators. Dr. Clark stated that the ROEs are part of the process. Dr. Durflinger asked if this is a local or state function. Rep. Eddy stated that if it's mandated, then it becomes a state function. Dr. Clark stated that ROEs are doing a lot of training. Mr. Kuffel asked if the question is whether this training should be handled by the ROEs. Dr. Kinder stated that one of the charges for ISCs in the law is that they are mandated to provide professional development, and he thinks there's a combination of both state and local. Ms. Morrison stated that part of the issue is that professional development is not exclusive, so is it a mandate or should it become a service? Mr. Kuffel stated that his district provides required trainings, such as diabetes training, but they don't call those professional development activities.

## **12. Administrator Academy Workshops**

Dr. Durflinger discussed the mandate on the Administrator's Academy workshops and asked the Commission if this is mandated. Dr. Ruscitti stated that school districts will go wherever they need to get the job done. She stated that it's about the implementation and not the law and how can they best implement it, which is one of the roles that is seen by the ROEs. She then stated that the real issue is the issue of dollars: they compete for dollars, and it should be a factor that needs to be laid out. Dr. Kinder stated that it's a duplication of services and that conversations need to happen to find out what everyone else is doing. Dr. Durflinger asked if they would be doing an Administrator's Academy workshop if the state did not mandate it. He then asked if there was an administrator workshop before the mandate. The Commission stated that there wasn't one before the mandate. Dr. Durflinger stated that to him, it is a state function. Dr. Kinder stated that there's enough work for everyone and that they really need to get together and talk about how these duties can be done more efficiently. Dr. Durflinger asked if this is a state or local function. Dr. Ruscitti stated that she sees this as professional development. Dr. Durflinger then stated that the academy, then, is both a state and a local function; the Commission agreed.

Sen. Haine asked Ms. Morrison if the State Board has the capacity to provide the Administrator's Academy. Ms. Morrison stated that the State Board does not have the capacity; she stated that the State Board asks the ROEs and ISCs to help them in many ways, and the funding is inadequate. She asked how they can end up in a better place than they have been in the past.

## **13. Gifted Education Seminar**

The Commission moved to the next mandate regarding the gifted education seminar and agreed that it should be handled by the ROEs.

## **14. Annexation/Detachment Petitions Filed and Hearings**

The Commission discussed the issue of annexation and detachment petitions, and they agreed that this issue should be handled by the state and should stay as a state function.

## **15. Schools Served Through RESPRO Services**

Next, the Commission discussed the mandate on schools served through RESPRO services. Dr. Durflinger asked if the ROEs are the only ones that can handle this service. Ms. Morrison stated that the State Board cannot handle it; because these services are mandated, they roll it out to the ROEs. Dr. Kinder stated that it is state mandated since it's rolled out by the State Board. Dr. Durflinger asked if anyone else can do it. Dr. Kinder stated that no one can do it as well; the Commission agreed that is a state/federal mandate.

## **16. Schools Served Through SSOS Services**

The Commission continued and discussed the schools served through Statewide System of Support (SSOS) services. The Commission agreed that this mandate is also state and federal. Dr. Durflinger asked if the ROEs can say no to this mandate and if the State Board can decide to use

someone else to handle this service. Dr. Ruscitti stated that the DuPage ROE is the only one, by statute, that needs to provide those services; therefore, it is mandated in that particular ROE. Dr. Johnson stated that it's not necessarily mandated but a service. Dr. Durflinger then stated that this is technically not a mandated responsibility but a directed service. Dr. Ruscitti stated that there is conflict because the ROE is mandated by school code to provide these services.

### **17. School Buildings Inspected for Safety**

The Commission continued and discussed the school building inspection mandate. Dr. Durflinger asked if anyone else can handle it. Mr. Meixner stated that ROEs are the only ones that have the capacity. Dr. Johnson stated that the Illinois Association of School Boards spoke with insurance companies, and the insurance companies are able to do it at a cost. Dr. Johnson stated that there needs to be someone else looking at it besides fire marshals and architects. Dr. Ruscitti asked which duties can be done more effectively and efficiently, especially with the current economic climate. Dr. Kinder stated that there is a compliance piece that cannot be done by insurance companies. Dr. Ruscitti stated that this is all part of the accreditation process and that they need to do it in one system. Sen. Haine asked what happens if an ROE does not do it. Dr. Ruscitti stated that the person would be removed. Ms. Morrison stated that those elements are part of an accountability process, which doesn't exist but needs to come out of these recommendations. Dr. Durflinger stated that consistency is huge, and there are a lot of inconsistencies throughout the state. Ms. Morrison stated that it should be clear what the expectations are and what happens if they are not met. The Commission agreed that no one can do it better than the ROE and that this is a state mandate.

### **18. Building Amendments Processed and Permits Issued**

The Commission then agreed that the mandate on building amendments should stay with the ROEs because they do it best.

### **19. School Evaluations of Districts for Recognition Status (Compliance)**

The Commission also agreed that the school evaluations of districts mandate is purely a state mandate.

## **Wrap-Up and Closing Comments**

Dr. Durflinger then asked the Commission if anyone has an all-inclusive list of value-added services provided by the ROEs. Dr. Daiber stated that he gave that list to Dr. Durflinger. Dr. Durflinger stated that for the next meeting, they will send out that list, which will be reviewed. Sen. Haine pointed out that in the ROE report, it states that the ROE is the primary entity that enforces school code for public and private education. He would like to have this fleshed out to see how the ROEs handle private schools. Dr. Durflinger also stated that Dr. Ruscitti gave him some information and that one of the duties is to look at the duties of the State Board and decide if the ROEs can handle some of those duties. This issue will be discussed in the next meeting.

Dr. Durflinger told the Commission that they have some homework and that they will discuss the value-added services and move forward in defining the duties and responsibilities of the ROEs and State Board as well as look at boundaries for the next meeting. Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission if it was okay to change the time of the next meeting from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Commission agreed that they will meet at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, March 15, 2012.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:58 a.m.

# **Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission**

**Thursday, March 15, 2012**

## **Minutes**

### **Attendance**

#### **Commission Members:**

Dr. Norm Durflinger  
Rep. Roger Eddy  
Dr. Michael Jacoby  
Dr. Michael Johnson  
Dr. Vanessa Kinder

Scott D. Kuffell  
John Meixner  
Susie Morrison  
Mike Nekritz

Dr. Darlene Ruscitti  
Meredith Byers  
Jane Russell

#### **Representing Commission Members:**

Diane Hendren (for Dr. Brent Clark)

#### **Guests:**

Dr. Robert Daiber  
Dr. Marian Eaton

Dr. Tom Parrish  
Nick Pinchok

#### **Notetakers:**

Sheila Rodriquez  
Rachel Trimble

### **Welcome, Introductions, and Consensus Recap**

The fourth meeting of the Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Dr. Norm Durflinger, chair of the Commission. Dr. Durflinger welcomed everyone and had the Commission members introduce themselves because he saw new faces in the room.

Dr. Durflinger reviewed the list of mandates that the Commission had discussed during the last meeting. He asked Commission members to turn to page 18 of the Regional Offices of Education (ROE) report and look at the duties of the regional superintendents. Dr. Durflinger went down the list and stated that there was consensus from the Commission on all of the mandates that ROEs should continue with those duties. He then asked the Commission if they were all in agreement. Commission members were in agreement.

Dr. Durflinger wanted to clarify for the record what is a state duty and what is a local duty. He stated there were two exceptions, the schools served through the Regional System of Support Provider (RESPRO) services and schools served through the Statewide System of Support Services. Both of these services are federal mandates. He stated that he thought that the

Commission was in agreement that the vast majority of the duties of the regional superintendents are mandated by law. Commission members were in agreement.

## Approval of March 5 Minutes

Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission members if they had received last week's minutes. Dr. Durflinger asked if there should be any changes or additions to the minutes. He asked the Commission for a motion to approve the March 5, 2012, minutes. Dr. Michael Jacoby motioned to approve the minutes. Scott Kuffel seconded his motion to approve.

## Decisions on Boundaries of Educational Service Regions

Dr. Durflinger asked Dr. Robert Daiber to come and have a seat with the Commission members. Dr. Daiber passed out a copy of the recommendations regarding the boundaries of ROEs. Dr. Daiber stated that the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS) met and had a discussion on boundary lines. Dr. Daiber stated that they made five recommendations, as follows:

- Amend the Illinois School Code 105 Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS) 5/3A-4—Mandatory consolidation of educational service regions (Section 3A-4) to state that **–(a) After July 1, 2015**, each region must contain at least **53,000 inhabitants**. Regions may be consolidated voluntarily under Section 3A-3 or by joint resolution of the county boards of regions seeking to join a voluntary consolidation to meet these population requirements. The boundaries of regions already meeting these population requirements on the effective date of this amendatory Act of 1993 may not be changed except to consolidate with another region or a whole county portion of another region which does not meet these population requirements. If locally determined consolidation decisions result in more than **39 regions** of population greater than 53,000 each, the **Illinois Association of Regional Superintendent of Schools** shall direct further consolidation, beginning with the region of lowest population, until the **number of 39 regions** is achieved.”

This is a 13.4 percent reduction in ROEs to serve the 870 school districts in Illinois. This proposal far exceeds any reduction of state agencies or state offices. IARSS proposed this boundary change in accordance with language stated in Recommendation 1 in the document *ROEs—The Resource Office for Illinois Education*.

- This proposed census population change would affect six ROEs as currently provided for in the Illinois School Code:
  - a. ROE 14—Suburban Cook
  - b. ROE 27—Henderson/Mercer/Warren
  - c. ROE 22—Fulton/Schuyler
  - d. ROE 25—Hamilton/Jefferson
  - e. ROE 26—Hancock/McDonough
  - f. ROE 33—Knox

- Consolidation hearings would begin July 1, 2012, with local county boards.
- A revised map of ROEs would be completed by August 1, 2013, and submitted to the State Board of Elections.
- Consolidation would become effective July 1, 2015.

Dr. Durflinger thanked Dr. Daiber for the work of IARSS and stated that all of the Commission members recognize the difficult task that was done in reducing the number of regions. Dr. Durflinger also stated that he was not sure that this will be a large enough number for the Legislature. Then Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission to discuss the recommendations made by IARSS. Dr. Jacoby stated that ROE 14 is not active right now but is still identified. Dr. Daiber responded and stated that ROE 14 would be dissolved and that this situation needs to be clarified. Dr. Jacoby asked the reasoning for choosing the population number 53,000. Dr. Daiber stated that IARSS had a discussion on what was a rational number; they didn't want to be conservative so they looked at cut-line census data. Dr. Durflinger thanked Dr. Daiber for doing this and added that he knew it was hard. He is not sure if this approach is going to be enough in the eyes of the Legislature, but it may help with some decisions they have. Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission if they had any other suggestions.

Dr. Jacoby wanted to know why was the focus on the number 53,000 because he looked at the census data and wanted to see what it would look like with different numbers, the highest being 250,000. He stated that with 250,000, you would retain the eight ROEs and three Intermediate Service Centers (ISCs), which would equal 11 total. He further stated that if the population number changed to 200,000, the number of ROEs would be reduced. He stated that they are used to operating with various numbers of regions throughout the state, which is around 22; we can also refer back to the original number of Educational Service Centers, which was 18. The idea of consolidation has happened before and has been successful, and Dr. Jacoby thinks they should look at a higher number such as 200,000 instead of 53,000.

Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission to discuss this proposal. Dr. Jacoby stated that he is looking at the size of ROEs that have more than 200,000 inhabitants and are operating just fine. Mr. Meixner stated that he doesn't think geography is being taken into consideration, which can make a difference. Dr. Jacoby stated that when one looks at the population base, you don't have to look at services; you have multiple counties involved. As they move more into using technology, they will be moving toward utilizing webcasts, which will cut down on traveling and reviews. Dr. Daiber stated that this situation is all about money and that he cannot see that this is saving money because there are 870 school districts that need to be served. He stated that you can make 10 offices, but the size of the office, staff, and payroll for those offices is going to increase because they will be serving more than 250,000 inhabitants. The issue is: How are you going to pay for it? How will you convince the county boards to support ROEs that are no longer local—especially when mathematically in numbers it's going to cost more, and operating costs will increase? Dr. Jacoby stated that may not necessarily be the case because they will only be paying for one regional superintendent and his or her staff.

Dr. Daiber asked if they were going to cut the salary line item from \$9 million to \$4.8 million. Dr. Jacoby stated that 10 ROEs are operating at populations of 200,000; the other piece you work

through is consolidation with the counties on providing the services and determining service levels, and you will have to work with the boards on consolidation. Dr. Ruscitti stated that they have not come to the outcomes of the ROEs. She stated that they can talk about numbers all they want, but the bottom line is looking at the value added. She is not sure how they are going to determine the numbers without looking at the responsibilities. It doesn't matter if you have 20 or 100 ROEs. She stated that she met with a superintendent in DuPage County and that they need a team to come to their school and assist them with a systems type of approach. Dr. Jacoby stated that he understood what Dr. Ruscitti was saying but that they were talking about what the minimum number of inhabitants would be for an ROE; he thinks 200,000 is a better number in terms of getting more equity.

Scott Kuffel asked why the alliance boundaries are not working. He stated that he thinks it's because there were counties that overlapped and that there needs to be a consistent alignment of communication and mission. Mr. Kuffel stated that he looked at page 14 and if those are the core services that are expected by the ROEs, then he doesn't see how it cannot be done on a regional alliance type of boundary that would allow for alignment and better communication. He posed this as an option to the Commission. Mike Nekritz stated that it may be an option but wanted to know how new ones would be formed; if the county didn't agree with the number, it would then go to legislation. Dr. Daiber stated that it is accounted for in the school code and is part of the IARSS recommendation. In the current code, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) should determine consolidation, but the proposition is for IARSS to take on this task. If we are doing this by association boundary, they can do that, but he would like to see a map of what is being proposed by the two parties.

Dr. Johnson stated that he can provide a map for everyone. Dr. Jacoby stated that he did some mapping on 150,000, but it's just scratched on the map that he has on hand; there's no reason why they couldn't produce a map with 150,000 or 200,000 inhabitants. Dr. Durlinger stated that, in reality, if one goes with just a number, the process goes back to ISBE. Dr. Ruscitti stated that going back to the first Streamlining Committee and another one that Governor Pat Quinn had, if they are talking about efficiencies and effectiveness, they received a map that showed X amount of Education for Employment (EFE) systems and special education co-ops, so they can lay those out as well. If this is about money, then they need to be examined first. Dr. Jacoby stated that those didn't hold to the county lines and that if they start building up from special education groups, they will never be able to agree on a county boundary line.

Mr. Meixner stated that he still thinks the services provided by ROEs are much different than the others and that Dr. Jacoby's efficiency model will drop with the 200,000 amount. Dr. Jacoby stated that he is not interested in saving money; he is interested in equity. Mr. Meixner stated that the three measures of accountability will eliminate those inequities. Dr. Jacoby stated that one gains efficiency in the coordinating council dialogue with 20 people at the table instead of 40 people. He stated that he would be curious about members of the equity groups and what the accountability measures are, so that they are not reinventing the wheel. Mr. Kuffel stated that he thinks if EFE and special education cooperatives all aligned with ROEs, it would work. He stated they are looking at options because the chair of the Commission asked for options and that it doesn't have to be aligned with the 2010 task force; a model like this may fit some components.

Mr. Kuffel asked if the \$10 million from the county is money that the regional superintendent asks for and is not based on per student or per faculty. He stated that he assumed the process is the same when going with a budget to a county board and that, regardless of boundary, they don't do that anymore. He asked if there was an amendment code of what county boards must do. Dr. Daiber stated that he will speak from a political platform; if he puts an office in St. Clair County, he will get full funding, but he will need to go to Madison County to ask for funding. He stated that the sheriff's department and public works department would like to have the half million dollars. Mr. Kuffel stated that, regardless of any change in boundary lines, it seemed that all or some of that county money will go away. Dr. Daiber stated that many people who work in the offices are union employees for the southwestern region. He asked if, in East St. Louis, is ISBE going to take care of those students or is he responsible for them? Dr. Jacoby stated that he would take care of the East St. Louis students. Dr. Daiber stated that he is speaking to it because he's from that environment and that there are challenges with the map, but it may have legitimacy with some schools that work well; it's constituent service or public official service. There's a complicated factor that goes far beyond school association thinking—it's the political climate.

Dr. Jacoby stated that they need to make this a nonpolitical climate and asked if the multiple counties in ROE 20 are providing resources. Mr. Meixner stated that every county is providing resources but not equally. Dr. Jacoby stated that the Commission may need to look at ILCS Code 2 and see the consistencies across the counties. Dr. Kinder asked if a county could choose to not give any funds, so that if six counties are condensed, it can have a real impact on RESPRO and the Regional Safe Schools Program. She stated they have to be cognizant of what programs they are looking at, and if and how they can be delivered before determining a number. Dr. Jacoby stated that they would need to look at the ROEs and list the services provided by each, and if two counties have safe schools, then he doesn't see why they can't both keep the Regional Safe Schools Program.

A member of the audience stated that they have five counties and had four safe schools, but they have lost some and are now down to two safe schools. The county will not bus their students to the other county that has the safe school, so those students are not in school and their dropout rate is going to increase in that region. Dr. Jacoby stated that those districts are the ones that made the decision to not bus those students and that it's not the ROE's fault. The audience member stated that this particular county has decreased its transportation funds, so it already has a tight budget.

Dr. Kinder stated that they need to be cognizant of those specific programs because it will have an impact on our students. Dr. Durflinger stated that he understands where Dr. Daiber is coming from on politics; he thinks it would be much better if there would be more involvement by county government on what the map should look like. If that is not done, then they will need a change of the law that will state what they need to have. He stated that if they stay with the map, there needs to be some legislation change. Susie Morrison asked Dr. Jacoby if the minimum population number of these regions is 200,000, then what will the maximum be? Dr. Jacoby stated that DuPage has 900,000 inhabitants and that the map has 19 regions with 200,000 inhabitants; therefore, they would end up with 21 or 22 ROEs. Dr. Durflinger asked if there was another proposal. Dr. Jacoby stated that he liked the idea of adding the qualifier that the counties

have the responsibility and there is some formula, so if there is a change, people aren't just left hanging; we are looking for equitable distribution throughout the state.

Mr. Meixner stated that equity is taken care of with accreditation and accountability. Dr. Jacoby stated that he cannot get his head around it because all superintendents are getting paid the same even though the services may be different. Rep. Eddy stated that when you talk about county government, they are interested in local services; whether or not they contribute, you want to look at whether they are going to be constituents. Considering the geography is larger, they are going to be more intent on providing some type of service, local constituent service. They will continue to do this because of the geography, and may end up providing more support to the ROEs. He stated that he has concern with the special education piece, especially in rural areas; he doesn't think they want to send a student 100 miles to a district that provides the service. He doesn't think most special education co-ops serve the geography they are able to serve. To enter into those existing ones and broaden those, you may not be serving the children that need to be served. It makes sense to align the services delivered; micromanaging does not make sense.

Dr. Ruscitti agreed with Rep. Eddy and stated that DuPage has at least five special education co-ops. Rep. Eddy stated that if these became larger areas, those counties will have larger offices and may provide more support. Dr. Daiber stated that the Southwestern ROE has five counties, some smaller ones, and asked if it makes sense to have five local offices—probably not. Rep. Eddy stated that he thinks the counties will want to have those local offices open because they are serving a larger area. Dr. Daiber stated that he fought hard for his budget and lost 2 percent of it. He stated that the ROE funding at the county level is at the same place as it is in the state, which is last, and he doesn't feel that the county is going to give them more money.

Dr. Jacoby stated that if ROE 40 is split, then two counties move to one; he feels the better methodology would be to raise the number from 53,000 to 150,000, which would leave 14 ROEs and three ISCs that would stay the same. He stated that county responsibility should be specified. Mr. Nekritz stated that one of the charges of the Commission was to look at the funding mechanism. He stated that the county boards are closest to the ROEs when it comes to state funding and they couldn't convince them to support the ROEs. Mr. Nekritz stated that there needs to be something added that tells the counties what they need to contribute. Dr. Ruscitti stated that she is opposed to it and that counties should not be forced to contribute.

Rep. Eddy stated that clearly the duties of the ROEs are state services; the recommendation should be that if funding is going to be reduced, then the Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax (CPPRT) should not be used, and the funding should come from the general funding line item. Dr. Durflinger stated that he would like to see some statement from the Commission on whether there should be corporate funding or state funding. Rep. Eddy stated that CPPRT should not be used after a certain number. Dr. Jacoby stated that IARSS proposed the 150,000 number. Dr. Durflinger requested a roll call vote. Dr. Jacoby brought up a motion stating that he would propose that the Commission use all language that the minimum population would be 150,000 inhabitants, with 17 existing entities that would not change; the other 30 would dialogue on how to consolidate. He further stated that language should be presented that would require counties to contribute funding using a formula based on the equalized assessed valuation (EAV) between levels of support and that the funding should come from the general

fund, not CPPRT. The remaining ROEs that consolidate can consolidate to larger numbers, or just the 150,000. There isn't a proposal for a set number on the rest of the ROEs, and county boundaries would be respected. The recommendation would take effect after July 1.

Dr. Durflinger asked if there's a second for that motion. Mr. Kuffel asked if Dr. Jacoby is looking at census data. Mr. Nekritz asked what the fail-safe is if counties don't approve it. Dr. Jacoby stated that if this proposal goes through, the ROEs would figure it out among themselves. Dr. Daiber stated that they would follow the school code process and that counties would have the option to choose the region. It states in the proposal that ISBE determines consolidation. Dr. Kinder stated that she would propose how that would fall out and thinks they need to look at ramifications of that, and that there shouldn't be a vote yet. Rep. Eddy stated to table Dr. Jacoby's motion and wait until next week because they need Sen. William Haine and Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia to be present, especially since legislation may be affected. Rep. Eddy made the motion, Dr. Ruscitti seconded the motion, and the Commission agreed to wait until the next meeting.

## **Discussion and Decisions on Duties and Responsibilities for ROEs and ISBE**

Rep. Eddy asked if the next meeting can be moved to the Capitol since legislators have committee meetings at the Capitol. Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission if that was okay and they agreed they would move the meeting to the Capitol next week. Before they moved to the next item on the agenda, Dr. Durflinger asked Rachel Trimble if she would have some of the report ready for review at the next meeting, or shortly thereafter. Ms. Trimble stated that she showed Dr. Durflinger the current draft and it depended if he wanted that shared. Dr. Durflinger stated that he wants the report e-mailed to everyone soon after the next meeting on March 22, 2012, because during the final meeting he would like to go through the report so that everyone is comfortable with it. The next meeting is very important, and everything needs to be finished by then.

Dr. Durflinger stated to the Commission that they look at the roles and responsibilities stated on page 14, and asked if they feel they need to be mandated. Mr. Meixner stated that those cannot be mandated because they are value-added services. Dr. Durflinger stated that they had a discussion on the duties and responsibilities of the state board and asked if there were items that the regional superintendents need to take over from the state board. Dr. Jacoby asked Susie Morrison if there are any areas that the Commission would need to talk about in moving the duties. Dr. Durflinger stated that the Commission can look at the list and come up some recommendations for the next meeting. He stated that in the next agenda they will have action on boundaries and discussions on duties and responsibilities of the ROEs and ISBE. Dr. Durflinger stated that they can move on to the next item on the independent review of ROE funding.

## **Independent Review of ROE Funding: Presentation by Dr. Tom Parrish**

Dr. Tom Parrish asked the Commission if they had received a report and a copy of his PowerPoint because he had some technical difficulties, and that he will walk them through it. Handouts were passed out. He stated that they did a unit analysis of how ROEs use state funds. He stated that this is not an audit and what they attempted to do is a descriptive analysis with the

data they received. He stated that Dr. Marian Eaton, his colleague, will answer questions on data since she was the one who crunched the numbers. He also stated that if there were other measures out there, they would be open to suggestions and that they did their best with what they could find. ISBE was helpful.

Dr. Parrish continued with his presentation and stated that they were asked to look at funding levels of the regional service providers and ways to ensure equitable quality assurance. The study looked at funding and how it may be helpful in thinking about equity and accountability in quality assurance. There could be multiple phases: the first one on accumulating and analyzing data, what data are available, to help them think about the question, and then how they are organized and interacting with one another. He stated that one could go beyond this and look at ISCs and other state educational service agencies. He stated that they didn't find as much rich information as they thought they would. The third step would be to obtain case study information.

He told the Commission to look at Slide 4, which is an overview. When given this broader charge, they looked at seven questions that they thought would be interesting to people:

1. What revenues are ROEs receiving and from what sources?
2. What funding formulas are used to distribute ROE funds?
3. To what extent does ROE funding appear equitable?
4. How many and what kinds of students are ROEs serving?
5. How are ROEs spending the funds?
6. What services are ROEs providing?
7. What is being produced by ROEs?

Dr. Parrish told the Commission members to look at Table 1 at the back of the report, which states the revenues that the ROEs are receiving and from what sources. He stated that this is an overall picture and that they saw many revenue sources. They can consolidate it so that it's not 300 lines of items, but Dr. Eaton did a good job at putting them into categories. The table is divided into three groups of categories, and most ROEs received general state aid. Mr. Meixner stated that the third line down on supervisor expenses was not received by the ROEs. Dr. Daiber stated that number is not correct. Dr. Eaton stated that she went by a file of disbursements from the state chief financial officer, which was 3 years of disbursements. Dr. Daiber stated that it was a very misleading line item, especially as a legislator, and they only got \$300,000; because of perception, he would separate those. Dr. Parrish stated that some combining would still be helpful and thinks that labeling would be important. He stated that they talked about putting ~~draft~~ "draft" on the report because the numbers and how they were accumulated or given would be inaccurate.

There were more discussions on some of the line items in Table 1. Dr. Parrish then pointed to the second page, in the last row, which shows a drop in funding and in the number of categories for which they received funding. He asked if there were any questions or concerns with Table 1. He stated that Table 2 takes some of that same information and tries to compile and equip per capita

information. The table shows revenues per capita for total students enrolled in a district given what the ROE serves. Mr. Meixner asked if the numbers are just public school numbers. Dr. Eaton stated that they were and the alternative would be to go to fall enrollment counts, but they went with the report card file. Dr. Parrish pointed to the last column on percentage of low-income students in the districts that is aggregated, which the ROEs serve. He stated that one of the things they see at the top is general state aid per capita that the ROEs receive. He stated that equal does not necessarily mean equitable and that the one rationale for the difference in funding is the percentage of poverty students. He stated that they also put the correlation between low-income students with each funding source, and the variation does not correlate with low-income students.

Dr. Eaton explained the general state aid line and stated that the line they got was allocated as general state aid. Dr. Daiber asked if they took the money that actually went to the ROEs or did they take the money that went to the districts? He stated that they took the money that went directly to the ROEs for their general safe schools program. Dr. Daiber stated that if they take the general state aid, in their region, there's no correlation with low-income students. He stated that it is invalid and for it to be statistically significant the two sets of data must be from the same factor. Mr. Meixner states that there are some ROEs that collect all the money from their region and disburse it to their districts. Dr. Parrish stated that maybe the average number of students would be the better number, but they don't think they have that. Dr. Kinder stated that they can get that number through the Student Information System (SIS). Dr. Parrish stated that it may be better to have the SIS count but it may not be the best denominator. He stated that Table 3 presents disbursements sorted from high to low and all the disbursements they saw in Table 1, less the category, are sorted so that one can see the amounts in 2009, 2010, and 2011. Hamilton County appeared to be the highest and McHenry County the lowest. Dr. Parrish listed the categories and went on to Table 4; he asked how they could think about what is being produced by the ROEs. He asked the Commission what their thoughts were on other measures. He then pointed to some maps that showed percent of proficiency. He stated that in trying to answer the fourth research question, it didn't yield counts. Mr. Meixner stated that he thinks it would be all students and there is a count for each school district, which they have to report to the state. Dr. Parrish then stated that they may have individual counts that they weren't able to find and that some of the Commission members may be able to point them to places where they can find those numbers.

Dr. Parrish then continued on to the fifth question and asked the members where they would be able to find that information. Mr. Meixner stated that they can find it in the attorney general's audit report. Dr. Parrish stated that they couldn't find the information to answer the sixth question and asked the Commission where they could go to find that information. Mr. Meixner stated that they could also find that in the attorney general's audit report. Dr. Daiber stated that every ROE is a statutory office that carries out enumerated duties, which are consistent in every office; there's no discrepancy. But there's a category called "services," so there are some discrepancies, but what the ROEs do is similar, and we presented a document to the Commission that identifies the services we provide.

Dr. Parrish asked if the answer is that the ROEs do the same thing, then why is the funding so different? Dr. Ruscitti stated that it is needs based, so if you have a large English language

learner population, then the ROE provides services in that area. Dr. Kinder stated that it is numbers-based. Dr. Ruscitti stated that the bottom line for her is whether it is per capita per student or per capita for every successful student. Dr. Jacoby stated that it seems that they were looking at each individual stream and the number of students served, and it's generated on the number of students that exist in that region who need that service. Dr. Parrish stated that he is trying to figure out the best denominator and that they may want to self-evaluate, and they can help with that. Mr. Meixner stated that they tried to look at a statewide model; Illinois is so diverse that trying to lock into one formula will be hard to do. Dr. Parrish stated that the more they can measure, the stronger the argument would be.

Dr. Jacoby stated that, in terms of equity, they are looking for how well they do that service and now they are getting into a qualitative analysis, which is difficult to do outside of doing interviews with people that do those services. He stated that if Dr. Parrish had an account model that included that qualitative analysis, and there was a standard review, they could probably get what they need. Dr. Parrish stated that there should be other ways to measure success. Dr. Jacoby stated that another way would be to look at revenue for the staff of each ROE; it would be more interesting to look at a particular program and staffing for that program and compare that across the ROEs. Dr. Parrish then asked how they know they are succeeding.

Dr. Ruscitti asked why Chicago Public Schools (CPS) was left out of the study. Dr. Parrish stated that they took it out because of the detail. Dr. Eaton stated the file they got did not include CPS. Dr. Parrish stated that CPS could be brought into the larger analysis. Dr. Parrish stated that they are open to suggestions and that not everything could be measured. He went on to possible next steps. Nick Pinchok stated that this was a start and they were given three years of data, and it's very complicated. He stated it is here for their purposes and they would welcome any opportunity to improve the analysis. Dr. Durflinger stated that Great Lakes West has three good sources with Dr. Ruscitti, Dr. Daiber, and Mr. Meixner. Mr. Meixner stated that, with no disrespect, he doesn't know if the report is accurate; two good sources should be contacted, one being the ROEs. Dr. Durflinger thanked Dr. Parrish and Dr. Eaton for coming. Mr. Nekritz stated that CPS was not included in the study and that they are looking at ROEs and the state board; they need to look at how money is being spent and the state board and what they spend. He stated that they have revenue sources that are left out, such as local money.

## **Wrap-Up and Closing Comments**

Dr. Durflinger stated that they have a room for next week's meeting; it holds 60 people but it doesn't have a telephone. Therefore, all Commission members need to be physically present for the next meeting. The next meeting will be at 9:30 a.m. on March 22, 2012, in the Stratton Building in Room A1.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

# Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission

Thursday, March 22, 2012

## Minutes

### Attendance

#### Commission Members:

Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia  
Dr. Brent Clark  
Dr. Norm Durflinger  
Sen. William Haine  
Dr. Michael Jacoby

Dr. Michael Johnson  
Dr. Vanessa Kinder  
Scott D. Kuffel  
John Meixner  
Susie Morrison

Mike Nekritz  
Dr. Darlene Ruscitti  
Jane Russell  
Meredith Byers

#### Guests:

Gus Bishop  
Dr. Robert Daiber

Becky Densmore-Stoll  
Sen. David Luechtefeld

Dick Spohr

#### Notetakers:

Sheila Rodriguez  
Rachel Trimble

### Welcome, Introductions, and Consensus Recap

The fifth meeting of the Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission was called to order at 9:32 a.m. by Dr. Norm Durflinger, chair of the commission. Dr. Durflinger welcomed everyone and had the commission members introduce themselves because he saw new faces in the room. Commission members introduced themselves, and Dr. Durflinger stated that the first item was to approve the March 15 minutes.

### Approval of March 15 Minutes

Dr. Durflinger called for a motion to approve the minutes. Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia motioned to approve, and Dr. Brent Clark seconded the motion to approve the March 15 minutes.

### Decision and Discussion on Accountability

Dr. Durflinger stated that in the last commission meeting, there was some discussion on the accountability on regional superintendents. He turned the meeting over to Susie Morrison to introduce the next presenters. Ms. Morrison introduced Becky Densmore-Stoll from AdvancEd. Ms. Densmore-Stoll introduced herself and her colleagues, Gus Bishop and Dick Spohr. She stated that they will talk about AdvancEd's processes and protocols, and she handed the meeting over to Dick Spohr.

Mr. Spohr thanked everyone and said that in the next few minutes, he will explain AdvancEd's quality assurance protocol. He stated that Educational Service Agencies (ESAs) are similar to Regional Offices of Education (ROEs). He added that he will try to give the explanation in terms of design and talk about AdvancEd and its protocol for implementation. Mr. Spohr stated that in Michigan, Gus Bishop has been the key person in implementing this model for ESAs—much like the ROEs in Illinois.

Mr. Spohr stated that in 1895, Congress established six regional accrediting agencies in the United States and that those six agencies were successful for more than 100 years. He stated that in recent years, states have become outspoken in establishing standards and expectations for their students. He stated that the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC), and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) came together to form AdvancEd. AdvancEd now represents 39 states and works with school districts in 70 countries. Its model is in 30,000 districts around the world. He stated that AdvancEd is the world's largest educational organization and continues to push research and development. He added that the protocol they will share today is a system of accountability that focuses on ESAs. AdvancEd is looking to establish standards, make the standards operational through indicators, and make them consistent. He stated that there is a desire to have a measure of consistency in order to ensure quality and maintain trust.

Mr. Spohr gave the commission members a document and stated that on the first pages there is a list of five standards. He stated that less than 10 years ago, the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) developed standards with 50 indicators. Those standards are not equal, however; some are more or less meaningful. He pointed the commission to page 6 of the document and asked them to look at leadership and governance. He also asked them to look at the second indicator on page 7, in which the standard states ~~agency.~~” The indicator states that the governing boards operate responsibly. How do they know they are doing that as they look at the rubric? The model is created with standards, which are the behaviors and actions, along with carrying a rubric so that schools and agencies are able to make a measure or self-assessment. He stated that this situation led them to a protocol for quality assurance, which is conducted by an in-depth self-assessment, and identify how they know the evidence. The external review is conducted once every five years. In this external review, educators come in and evaluate the evidence. They use any number of focus groups, and they watch the agency in operation. He stated that he thinks it's important to recognize that at the end of the day, they all need to keep the focus on student performance and growth. He stated that this explanation is just an overview of the model. Mr. Spohr then introduced Gus Bishop, who shared information on model implementation.

Mr. Bishop stated that he is going to share what it's like in Michigan, in which they have Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) in their regional service areas. In 1962, ISDs were formed in Michigan with appointed elected boards. Theirs was the first one chartered in Michigan. It has three counties and serves Beaver Island. Those ISDs were formed to provide some consolidation of services that local school districts could not do on their own. Their Intermediate Service Center (ISC) had 11 employees and now is at 240 employees. Of their 57 ISDs, five have gone through their accountability process with AdvancEd and two are currently going through the

process. He stated that trust has to be built on some form of accountability. A number of years ago, when funds were tight and when the focus became how to properly serve students, the ISDs were invisible; but now they are not. A number of people at the state Legislature started looking at ISDs. Some ISDs volunteered to go through the accountability process. During that process, the five standards were redeveloped from the original seven standards.

Mr. Bishop stated that he previously was a superintendent, and one of his challenges was telling those districts that they needed to look at their different departments. He stated that it's not enough to go to stakeholders and that this process requires the agency itself to go to everyone in its department. They found that in their ISDs, they didn't know how those programs coordinate; the first stakeholder they worked with was their own staff. Mr. Bishop stated that the one issue that came into place when they went around to the different departments was looking at the situation as a monitoring process. The key aspect of accountability is that they are not just an intermediary but that they are responsible for student achievement. He stated that he attended an ISD in southern Michigan. Because of its tax base, they are able to have a lot of that tax. The southern ISD had less money; they had to handle it differently, but they met the standards with what they had. He stated that they were validated, and it brought their staff closer. The process put them in a position where they could focus on the five standards.

Dr. Darlene Ruscitti stated that accountability is something the ROEs are looking at. They also looked at another instrument and put together a client survey. Then they took it a step further by being more responsive, and the survey currently is being piloted in a number of ROEs. She stated that they also would like to see how their services are aligned. She stated that Alaska's model is decentralized, and they do all the accounting, payroll, bilingual, inservices and professional development, and school management training. She stated that the document challenges them because three or four of the items are focused there and other agencies provide a lot of professional development in the state of Illinois. They need to look at standardizing this process and at the service agencies that provide professional development. She stated that regional superintendents need to look at accountability. She would welcome the opportunity to talk further but would argue that it is a task that the commission is not looking at. She stated that there is some disconnect on student success, and they need to start at the state level as opposed to starting locally.

Mr. Bishop stated that in his state, the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators has formed a partnership with AdvancEd to have this model be more of a statewide model. Those partnerships are important. Mr. Spohr stated that it's only the first six indicators that pertain to the agency, and the indicators themselves were determined through research to be those things that correlate highly with effective organizations. The second indicator is on teaching and learning; the regional offices are involved with that and, whenever one looks at self-assessment, it's in that context. John Meixner stated that they have been talking about it for a while, and he would like to know the cost. He stated that some offices were willing to jump on board, but the cost was too much. Ms. Densmore-Stoll stated that the annual accreditation fee is \$2,000, in addition to the quality assurance that is done every five years, and the agency would be responsible for the team member's travel expenses. Dr. Michael Jacoby asked what would happen if the ISD cannot meet accreditation standards. Mr. Spohr stated that they use the same standards, indicators, and protocols in all states and schools; it's the context

that leads to a change in implementation. He pointed to the indicators and stated that they will give direction; in some states, they use the process required for all of their schools. The expectation is that this is voluntary for schools, and they will approach it professionally and utilize all resources to achieve a high level; if they do not meet these expectations, they may not be accredited or recognized, or they go into advisement for two years.

Sen. William Haine asked if the ISD superintendent runs for office. Mr. Bishop stated that they are appointed by the board. Sen. Haine asked how their board is elected. Mr. Bishop stated that some boards are appointed and others are elected. Sen. Haine stated that superintendents' duties to supervise local school provides a check on what they do. Mr. Bishop stated that in certain areas, they are obligated to monitor by state law. Over time, this responsibility has expanded to the dropout-prevention processes, early childhood, and technology purchases for students. The superintendents monitor and audit but are now providing professional development.

Dr. Durflinger asked Dr. Vanessa Kinder if their election is similar. Dr. Kinder stated that it is similar. Mr. Spohr stated that they are finding that other states do it differently. Sen. Haine asked if citizens are happy with that process: Do they know about it, and do they care? Mr. Spohr stated that in one of their districts in Arkansas, the mayor was involved and added that stakeholders get involved. Sen. Haine asked if Mr. Bishop is an ISD superintendent and if he is the facilitator of the discussion on how well the school is doing. Mr. Bishop stated that his role in AdvancEd is to work with the school districts in improvement and accountability. Mr. Bishop stated that once the ISDs are involved with their organization, they must meet those expectations. Sen. Haine asked how they relate to the state board. Mr. Bishop stated that the ISD reports to the Michigan Department of Education, which is the state board.

Sen. Haine asked if Michigan wants to abolish its ISDs. Mr. Bishop stated that there was a time when there was a discussion of abolishing them; but since then, the ISDs have taken on more responsibility because the Michigan Department of Education has decreased its staff. Sen. Haine asked how the ISDs are funded. Mr. Bishop stated that they are funded by local property tax, some from federal special education funds and grants. A little less than half of the funding is flow-through dollars from the state, and the other half is property tax.

Dr. Brent Clark asked Mr. Bishop what determines the geographical boundaries of the ISDs. Mr. Bishop stated that in some cases, it is the county. In 1962, certain counties came together; there is some preference around counties. They have 57 ISDs.

Dr. Durflinger stated that Dr. Ruscitti is correct and that this is not part of the commission's charge, and he was hoping to get consensus that they will support Recommendation 5. He stated that he heard from the ROEs that they are working toward that. Mr. Meixner stated that the money issue should be discussed under necessary funding and that if they are going use that model, someone needs to pay for it; it cannot be added to everyone's list. Dr. Durflinger asked if he has consensus on Recommendation 5, and the commission members had consensus.

## Decision and Discussion on Boundaries

Dr. Jacoby stated that he requested his previous motion to be removed because they looked at it in theoretical terms. He stated he would like to dialogue on that topic but not necessarily move that motion. He stated that in their initial discussion on boundaries, they had talked about having a more equitable property base and had emphasized the importance of this recommendation of regional superintendents and geographic issues. Dr. Jacoby stated current statistics of ROEs. The smallest ROE population is 41,472, and the largest ROE population is 916,924, which is 22 times larger than the smallest ROE. The average ROE is 173,000 with the median being at 91,000. Their first recommendation is to establish a minimum population for an ROE to be 150,000 residents. He stated if they use the 150,000 number, they would end up with about 27 to 30 ROEs based on consolidation. Dr. Jacoby showed the commission a map of what the breakdown would look like. He stated that this particular map has 28 ROEs. Part of the recommendation had to do with county budgets, and that he would recommend that they maintain the existing number of assistant regional superintendents and the offices themselves. Several offices will come under that regional superintendent. Maintaining this number would allow for more practical oversight of multiple service centers and would not diminish the current service network.

Dr. Jacoby continued and stated that in terms of money, he is not thinking that the amount would be so dramatic. He believes there are inequities in the salary base of regional superintendents and they should keep the same money but have larger oversight. He suggested that they should take the remainder of the funds saved and move it toward having a larger salary bracket for regional superintendents, which can mean about \$30,000 to \$50,000 in salary increases. Dr. Jacoby further stated that with the county issue, they need to make a strong relationship with the county. There could be a recommendation on proportional funding on counties and the need for consistency in support. He stated they cannot compare one ROE to the next because the county funds them in different ways. He stated that the hearings would begin on July 1, 2012, with resolutions passed by June 1, 2013. He then stated that he would like to introduce another recommendation. Dr. Durflinger asked if they can have a discussion first on the proposed recommendation from Dr. Jacoby.

Dr. Ruscitti stated that she had a discussion with Rep. Roger Eddy and that the discussion should center on services before numbers. She is not sure if they are there yet and that their role needs to be clearly defined. She stated they need to talk about services because there is a lack of clarity. Mr. Meixner asked if Dr. Jacoby is still recommending the 150,000 number of residents. Mike Nekritz stated that if they combine the three smallest ROEs, they would still have three service centers. Dr. Jacoby stated that they can be combined, but that would be discussed later. Mr. Meixner stated that Dr. Jacoby said the ROEs would not be affected, but the counties would; this situation would affect a quarter of the counties. Dr. Jacoby stated that the recommendation would be to keep all offices. Mr. Meixner asked if the funding would remain the same. Dr. Ruscitti stated that she would like to see the salary range of regional superintendents. Dr. Jacoby stated that the range of salaries is between \$90,000 and \$104,000. Mr. Jacoby stated that there are three salary tiers based on population. Mr. Meixner stated that what Mr. Jacoby is asking for is for more support from the counties, and he does not know if that would go well. Dr. Jacoby stated

that he thinks that there should be multiple supports from counties—a proportional standard that they would get with an equalized share of funding.

Dr. Durflinger asked if the regional superintendents can request amounts above that proportion. Dr. Jacoby stated that they would never tell a county how much money to spend; instead, they would tell them that they would need to work it out with their regional office. Sen. Haine stated that if they increase the number of inhabitants to 150,000, does that cause the cost of the county board hiring to increase? Dr. Jacoby stated that it depends on the behavior of that regional superintendent and maintaining their credence. There may be a situation throughout the state where they may have a larger jurisdiction. Mr. Meixner stated that he personally does all of the building inspections for his buildings. If he gets a larger region, there's no doubt he may have to hire someone and he doesn't know where that money will come from. The services have to be there, but they are going to need funds. He stated that he thinks the number of their offices is more of a political issue than an actual number, and they have accepted that. Dr. Jacoby stated that he understands the concern, but he added that there are other ROEs that are doing that with multiple counties and they are managing their efficiencies. The ROEs are probably going to have to change their managing of those services. Mr. Meixner stated that most of the counties are multiple counties and that this will affect most of the ROEs, which already have multiple counties.

Dr. Kinder stated that if this recommendation were to go through as it is, it would eliminate 10 to 14 ROEs. She stated that eliminating their salaries would not be a huge savings. It would be a concern to her if they got rid of those ROEs because it's reducing the number of superintendents. Dr. Jacoby agreed, but he said that he would like to have Dr. Clark present another proposal. Dr. Clark stated that he loves maps. In the last 3 to 4 days, he has looked at the map of Illinois and the counties. He stated that he thinks they were all put on this commission and were given the goals, but the problem is that they are shooting in the dark. He stated that this is about services that are going to be delivered, where the funding is coming from, and how the counties are going to support it. He stated that he became concerned when he looked at rural Illinois, where they have a sparse population area, and the size of those regions becomes a concern if they get too large. Dr. Clark stated that overall, they have offices that are trying to deliver state functions at the local level. When he tried to balance the issue of delivery of services and funding, he looked at several bands of population and determined that the ROEs would be affected.

Dr. Clark stated that it is as simple as taking the current census at 43,000 and doubling the number to 86,000, which would impact 18 different ROEs. This leaves 26 ROEs, which allow room for remote ROEs to reconstitute to new ROEs, which would bounce back up to 31 ROEs. He stated that this is a 32 percent savings, which financially is a savings of \$3.5 million. Dr. Clark put this recommendation on the table for discussion on the minimum population at 86,000 with one regional superintendent and one assistant, with room for merging, dissolving, and reconstituting. Dr. Durflinger stated they are now looking at that 86,000 number. Dr. Clark stated that there's no magic to it; they currently have 44 ROEs, and the proposal would impact 26 ROEs. But in looking at regions that will form new ROEs, the number of ROEs would go up to about 30. Sen. Haine stated that in their governmental system, they seem to have inefficiencies; the constitution requires one circuit judge. He stated that it's difficult for him to recommend imposing what others see as a problem and reducing the numbers radically. Any reduction would

be okay with him. If the number of ROEs is radically reduced, that would place a lot of burden on the ROEs that are left; for the average citizen, we are not saving anything. Second, he stated that by reducing the numbers radically, they are implying that they don't need the ROEs and they should get rid of them all; therefore, they have to be careful.

Sen. Haine stated that politically it's better to go with the small counties number and develop a mission for the ROEs. He likes the recommendation to have them nonpartisan. He also would recommend putting them on the ballot for the public to decide if they should get rid of the ROEs. He stated that he had no idea of what his ROE did until this commission was formed. He is conservative with these numbers, but he does not think it is a big deal in the voter's mind. The voters need to know the roles and mission of the ROEs. He stated that he does not want to go below what the recommendation states. Sen. David Luechtefeld stated that he thinks the commission needs to be careful—just because someone said that they need to make fewer ROEs. He stated he is from a rural area, and the ROE's area will get awfully big if they agree on the recommendation. He asked if anyone gave a target number of ROEs. He stated it has become an issue that the government in general has decided. This situation is looking like they are doing their job, and this particular cut means nothing compared to what the state of Illinois is currently dealing with. He stated that personally he would want more ROEs created.

Mr. Nekritz stated that they are paying for something now that they were not paying before. He stated if districts have to pay for this, what should the minimum amount be in terms of numbers? It's not just a drop in the bucket. Dr. Durflinger stated that in the first meeting, he said he would like to give options and that may be necessary. If this commission is split in their decision, they can give the Legislature two options. He stated that he actually heard three options: (1) having 39 offices and 3 ISCs, (2) having 27 to 30 ROEs with 150,000 inhabitants, and (3) having about 30 ROEs and 86,000 as the minimum number of inhabitants. Scott Kuffel stated if corporate money is open, it could change how they roll because for them the local education agency is an important factor. Dr. Clark stated that he tried to balance the rural concern against massive size structure. Mr. Meixner stated that they need to prioritize what is important: Is it services, boundaries, or funding? Dr. Kinder stated that she would propose they talk about the Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax (CPPRT) and if it should be taken out. Dr. Clark stated that if CPPRT is off the table, a lot of things will change. Mr. Kuffel motioned that no funding for the ROEs or ISCs be borne by CPPRT. Dr. Ruscitti seconded the motion.

Sen. Luechtefeld stated that he thinks that's off the table and doesn't see that as being an option anymore because it cannot be taken to the Legislature and it needs to be stated clearly. Mr. Kuffel motioned that all ROE funding from the state should come from general revenue, and Dr. Ruscitti seconded his motion. Dr. Clark stated that this commission can recommend a lot of things. What happens after the ROE decides that CPPRT is not to be used? If the stage is set and it gets zeroed out under the general aid, what are they gaining? Dr. Durflinger stated that he thought CPPRT would not be used and general revenue would be used instead; if that's the case, the superintendent proposal would be recommended and indicate that if CPPRT continues, it would be at a certain level. Dr. Ruscitti asked for the reduction number and asked where that funding is coming from. Dr. Durflinger stated that if CPPRT is the source of funding, the number of ROEs should be a certain number; if CPPRT is not used, then the superintendent association number would be reduced. Sen. Haine asked if the commission would be comfortable with the

150,000 number if the funding source is CPPRT. He stated if the funding is coming out of their direct money, he would want to pay less; he would go with that motion if they state that it comes out their money. He states that it should say that they don't want it from CPPRT—period.

Dr. Jacoby stated that as the commission, their role should be the general revenue funding (GRF). Dr. Durflinger asked if they have a motion and would like to go to a voice vote rather than a roll call. Dr. Durflinger wondered if they have consensus. There was a motion from Mr. Kuffel that CPPRT money should not be used to pay for ROEs. Sen. Haine asked what if they came up with a number that is lower than 39 and justify it? Mr. Meixner stated that he would recommend 61,000 as the population number. Sen. Haine stated that the target is to talk about consensus. Dr. Durflinger asked if the commission is comfortable with having 35 ROEs that are fully funded by GRF. He stated that the population base would be 61,000 and the maximum number of ROEs is 35. He asked the commission for consensus and stated that it would be 35 ROEs with the 3 ISCs. Jane Russell asked how that would change services and what the geography would look like. Dr. Clark stated that it would affect the western side of the state and maybe 9 is the number; the more one drops the minimum census number, the less impact one has.

Dr. Ruscitti asked what is going to satisfy the hungry beast? Dr. Clark stated he doesn't know, and Dr. Ruscitti stated that Sen. Christine Radogno wants the maximum amount of cuts. Dr. Durflinger stated that they need a number. Sen. Haine stated if they do it by services. They have to say 35 is the number that has the least affect, which is what the Legislature will give weight to. Dr. Durflinger stated that the positive side of this is that if the commission is agreeing with this number, that will feed a little bit of the beast. Mr. Nekritz stated that he would like a number where CPPRT or other funding sources would be less attractive. Dr. Durflinger stated that they still have a strong consensus on 35 with the minimum population of 61,000 and he would like a roll call of all commission members. Mr. Kuffel asked if they want to codify the services that are listed on the ROE book. Dr. Durflinger did a roll call of all the commission members. Rep. LaVia and Rep. Eddy were the only commission members not present for the roll call. Dr. Durflinger asked if there is consensus, and all present commission member agreed. Dr. Durflinger stated that they have one option and asked the commission members if they want other options.

Dr. Durflinger stated that there is a legal question about the present law in terms of the minimum number that they have approved, which is 61,000. If a region goes below that number, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) does not feel it is required to do a consolidation. He asked if there a problem with some sort of wording to indicate that if the region falls below the 61,000 number, ISBE consolidates. Dr. Jacoby would consider reviewing the number issue every 10 years with the census. Dr. Jacoby stated that he would like to discuss the whole idea of having a partisan or nonpartisan election. Dr. Jacoby stated that he would like to have a discussion on the election date and nonpartisan suggestion. He asked Dr. Robert Daiber if the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS) has a problem with switching the election date or a stance on nonpartisan. Mr. Meixner stated that this is not the charge of the commission. Dr. Daiber stated that he would have to call a special meeting of IARSS and have everyone come from all over the state to vote on two items. They are filling out this particular term, and he feels those are issues if the commission wants to vote on it. Dr. Durflinger asked the commission if

they want to move forward with a recommendation or if they will just leave it. Dr. Jacoby noted that the report states that it should be further studied, which was discussed, but it's outside the role of this commission. Dr. Durflinger stated that they may have a discussion but should come to a consensus. Dr. Ruscitti stated that if there are other items that have been brought up, she would like to have the opportunity to bring up some items in the next meeting.

## **Decision and Discussion on Necessary Funding**

Dr. Durflinger stated that funding is one of the commission's charges and, along this line, had a discussion on accountability. The question is as follows: If there is accountability, who is going to pay for that process? He asked if it should come out of the county budget, state budget, or general fund. Dr. Ruscitti stated that she would like to be afforded the opportunity to look at it because she won't be sure until she talks with all of the regional superintendents. She stated that any entity in Illinois that provides services also should have the opportunity to be funded. Mr. Kuffel stated that he doesn't think accountability is part of the commission's charge, and it is not stated that this commission needs to recommend an accountability system. Dr. Durflinger stated that his understanding is that they have come to consensus with Recommendation 5 from the 2010 report. What he wants to know is that if they have an accountability system, where would that funding come from? Dr. Ruscitti stated that a system is in place that already requires the Lieutenant Governor to administer some kind of accountability survey, which hasn't been used in the last couple of years. She thinks they can take a look at that survey and have it reflect the current need of services.

Dr. Jacoby stated that if the ROEs are not performing their role effectively, something should happen. Dr. Ruscitti stated that she thinks there are other entities that they can point out, so it's not about that. She stated that the DuPage ROE has state grants, and they follow through with what they have and are accountable to that and to the county. Dr. Jacoby stated that there are vast differences of what the ROEs are doing. Dr. Ruscitti stated that the DuPage ROE is in the process of doing it with other regional superintendents. Mr. Nekritz stated that if his Regional System of Support Provider (RESPRO) does not show up, who can he go to? Dr. Ruscitti stated that is a perfect example of the ROEs having the intent of the law to deliver those services. Dr. Jacoby stated that he supports the recommendation of having an accountability system. They dealt with this situation with ROE 14 where they had to get legislation to take care of the problem. Mr. Nekritz pointed to Recommendation 5 from the 2010 Streamlining Report; if they had a quality assurance for each ROE, they could do it once every five years and review performance. Dr. Ruscitti stated that no one has had the courtesy to tell them what they haven't been doing right and that they have never heard about it from IARSS. She stated that they ask for the courtesy, and it's never been given to them. She stated for DuPage, it is a lot easier for them to use funds cost-effectively because they have a larger population. They just want someone to listen to them and come with a compromise, and it's not fair when someone states that they are not doing their job.

Dr. Jacoby stated that he apologizes if he offended Dr. Ruscitti and that it was not his intention; if there was a process in place that would do it objectively, he would go for that. Dr. Durflinger read Recommendation 2 from the 2010 Streamlining Report. Dr. Ruscitti stated that she proposes that regional superintendents come up with solutions and work with the ISBE to address those

issues. Mr. Kuffel stated that they heard from AdvancEd, and he doesn't know if that has to be the only option; thinks that they need to leave it at Recommendation 5. Dr. Michael Johnson stated that he has worked in seven of the 44 ROEs. There are so many differences, and they have a lot of districts that don't participate. Dr. Durflinger stated that the commission then has consensus on Recommendation 5 from the 2010 Streamlining Report, but they are not sure if they are going to get anywhere with the accountability financing. He stated that he still believes that specific standards are needed for regional superintendents, unlike the mayor. Rules and regulations are needed on the process because it is too vague and almost impossible to do.

## **Decision and Discussion on Funding Sources**

Dr. Durflinger asked the commission about what other financial things they should do. He asked if they are going to say that all the costs should be paid by the state of Illinois or if they are mandating that the state should pay for it. Dr. Kinder stated that somebody has to do the work; if it's going to be mandated, how is it going to be supported? Dr. Ruscitti stated that everyone knows there isn't money in the state and to ask for more is not a smart move. She stated that she could see that as a legislator and they can go back to the accountability issue, but it will get muddy down the road.

Dr. Durflinger stated that he wanted to broaden the option. He asked if they could have a statement at this point that any additional requirements be paid by the state or if they will leave it alone and not do as they were requested. Mr. Kuffel stated that maybe their tack is to indicate which mandates are not needed or should be mandated. Mr. Meixner stated that ROEs have taken a 70 percent cut in 10 years and are still functioning. Mr. Nekritz stated he would like to be cautious because the state has not paid them \$2.8 million. Dr. Durflinger asked the commission members what they want to do. Mr. Kuffel asked what the dollar figures are to carry out the mandated tasks on page 14 of the ROE report. Dr. Durflinger asked the commission to come up with the wording for the report. Dr. Ruscitti suggested they could say something about looking at greater alignment and then address the accountability and added services in the future. Mr. Kuffel stated that Recommendation 2 in the 2010 Streamlining Report said to fund services across the state. Dr. Clark stated that time does not permit them to fully discuss this issue and that they should go back to Recommendation 2 for the 2010 task force.

## **Wrap-Up and Closing Comments**

Dr. Durflinger stated that the Legislature is in session next Wednesday, March 28. Should they meet at the state board office or should they change the date to Thursday, March 29? The commission agreed to meet at 9 a.m. on Thursday, March 29, in the Stratton Building. Dr. Durflinger stated that a draft of the final report will be sent to the commission members on Wednesday.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:42 p.m.

**Illinois State Board of Education  
Streamlining Illinois' Regional Office of Education Commission**

**Thursday, March 29, 2012**

**Minutes  
(Unapproved due to End of Commission)**

**Attendance**

**Commission Members:**

Dr. Brent Clark	Dr. Vanessa Kinder	Rep. Pam Roth
Meredith Byers	Scott Kuffel	Dr. Darlene Ruscitti
Dr. Norm Durflinger	John Meixner	Jane Russell
Dr. Michael A. Jacoby	Susie Morrison	
Dr. Michael Johnson	Mike Nekritz	

**Guests:**

Amanda Elliott

**Notetakers:**

Sheila Rodriguez  
Rachel Trimble

**Welcome and Introductions**

The final meeting of the Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission was called to order at 9:03 a.m. by Dr. Norm Durflinger, chair of the Commission, who then facilitated introductions of the Commission members and welcomed the group.

**Approval of March 22 Minutes**

Dr. Durflinger asked if anyone had any changes to the March 22 meeting minutes. Meredith Byers stated that she did not second the motion on Regional Offices of Education (ROEs) not being funded by the Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax (CPPRT) and that Dr. Ruscitti was the one who seconded that motion. The Commission agreed and approved the March 22 meeting notes.

**Additional Commission Items**

Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission members if there were any additional items they would like to discuss. There were no additional items from the Commission; therefore, he went on to the next agenda item: the approval of the draft Commission report.

## Approval of Draft Commission Report

Dr. Durflinger stated that he received the draft Commission report and noticed that a few things should be included in this report. First, he felt that the original recommendation of the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS), regarding the 39 ROEs and minimum population of 53,000, should be placed in the report. He stated that this addition has been made to the final report. Dr. Michael Johnson also noted that on page 1 in the Background section, it states that the Governor and General Assembly requested that the Commission consider an additional question, which is not defined in the law, Article 105 ILCS 5/3A-18, but is highly recommended, regarding the elected positions of the regional superintendents: Should the state consider other options for appointing or selecting regional education officers?" Dr. Johnson explained that it was not the General Assembly but a representative of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) who requested for this option to be considered, and he requested that this change be made in the final Commission report.

Second, Dr. Durflinger referred to the recommendation on core services and asked for an addition to be made regarding necessary funding; specifically, he asked that the addition indicate that due to time constraints, the Commission was not able to discuss funding to the fullest extent. Ms. Byers stated that the lack of time was mentioned on page 5 of the draft Commission report. Dr. Durflinger stated that the Commission had consensus that the ROEs should be funded through the General Revenue Fund (GRF) and not CPPRT.

Dr. Jacoby stated that he also was thinking that they had talked about the whole issue on clarifying whether or not there was a process for when a ROE's population dropped below the minimum population, and he questioned if the State Board knew that they could initiate consolidation. John Meixner stated that he thinks the process is in place now. Amanda Elliott stated that the State Board has jurisdiction if the number of ROEs goes above 45 and that, right now, the ROEs can voluntarily consolidate. Dr. Jacoby asked if there is anything in the code that mentions census data or initiating the process. Ms. Elliott stated that the general recommendation should say it's the interpretation of IARSS and the State Board. Dr. Jacoby stated that the Commission recommends that based on the population total, further consolidation should occur if a ROE drops below the minimum population level.

Susie Morrison stated that she doesn't think the State Board had thought that it was their responsibility. Ms. Elliott stated that no matter what, they need to clarify this consolidation. Dr. Durflinger stated that they could have a recommendation to clarify the process. Dr. Jacoby stated that they can add to the recommendation on restructuring ROE size that the Commission gave ample consideration and discussion to five options and that consensus was reached on the 44 ROEs being reduced to 35.

Dr. Clark asked why they wouldn't list within the report what they talked about. Dr. Jacoby stated that some people who are looking at the report will look at the minutes, but others won't; he believes that that consideration of the five options was a substantial part of the Commission's work. He added that listing the five options will show others that they already have considered those options. Dr. Durflinger asked if the five options should be included within the final Commission report or added to an appendix. Dr. Jacoby stated that he recommends listing the

five options within the report. Mr. Meixner stated that he would prefer the five options to be in an appendix. The Commission agreed that the five options should be added within the report.

Dr. Vanessa Kinder stated that Recommendation 1 from the 2010 Task Force, on the development of a coordinating council, should be added to the final Commission report. Dr. Durflinger stated that this has been added to the report. Jane Russell then stated that in the recommendation on restructuring ROE size, there should be clarification and that information on the three Intermediate Service Centers (ISCs) needs to be added. Mr. Meixner then stated that for the recommendation on core services, specifically on the annexation/detachment petitions filed and hearings, it should state that this is a state function but that it should still be handled by the ROEs. He indicated that for school violations, which is another service, it should be added that this should remain with the ROEs.

Mr. Meixner then continued and stated that it is explicit in the report that for General Educational Development (GED) services, the ROEs are responsible for recordkeeping; but it doesn't state that they also administer the test in certain parts of the state, and the option should still be available that the ROEs provide testing. Dr. Durflinger stated that they should cross out ~~only~~ and allow ROEs to have the option to administer the GED test. Mr. Meixner stated that there was no mention of a funding mechanism—specifically the use of GRF and not CPPRT. Dr. Durflinger stated that he told Rachel Trimble and Sheila Rodriguez that funding information needs to be added to the final report.

Dr. Jacoby wondered if it may be beneficial if the salary line item for regional superintendents should be its own line item, not under ISBE's budget. He asked Susie Morrison for her thoughts. Ms. Morrison stated that the State Superintendent of Education thought it would be a clearer way. Ms. Elliott stated that it needs to be added under something because it is not its own agency. Dr. Jacoby asked where the salary item is placed for elected officials. Ms. Elliott stated that those line items are under the comptroller. Dr. Jacoby stated that the salary line item for regional superintendents also should be a line item under the comptroller. Dr. Durflinger asked the Commission members if they are in agreement that the salaries of the ROE regional superintendents be a line item in the comptroller's budget—the same way as other elected officials. The Commission members agreed that this line item should be moved to the comptroller budget. The Commission members also stated that the support line item of \$2.2 million regarding the budget for ROEs should stay with ISBE. The Commission members agreed that it should be added to the report.

Mr. Meixner stated that the timeline, specifically on the creation of the maps by September 2013, should be added to the report. He stated that the creation of boundaries is a lengthy process, and they need to make a note of their timeline for restructuring, stating that the new boundaries be completed by 2013. Dr. Jacoby stated that they could work it in advance of the deadline stated by the State Board of Elections. Mr. Meixner asked that they have it corrected. Mike Nekritz stated that on the recommendation for accountability system, it seems that they are repeating the recommendation from the last Task Force. He stated that local districts also should be part of that accountability system. Dr. Jacoby stated that with the revised timelines expanded, having the input of the local areas would be good. Mr. Nekritz stated that should be part of the timeline, and local districts should be included in ensuring quality of services. Dr. Jacoby stated that they

could recommend further that ISBE work together with the ROEs and ISCs to adopt a new timeline. Mr. Nekritz stated that it would be nice to get the input of others. Dr. Johnson stated that there isn't anything on satisfaction surveys to get feedback from local districts regarding services received from the State Board, and that should be looked at as well. Dr. Jacoby stated that this would be in addition to the accountability work that the State Board will be doing. Mr. Nekritz stated he thinks that this is in the statute, but it hasn't been done. Mr. Nekritz stated that the annual survey should be reinitiated and added to the Commission report under the recommendation for the accountability system.

## **Wrap-Up and Closing Comments**

After the discussion of all these items, Dr. Durflinger asked if the Commission members were in agreement that there are no additional items for the Commission report. He stated that the report will be given to ISBE and then it will be posted on the ISBE website. He stated that the two key things are that (1) the recommendation of decreasing the number of ROEs to 35 with a minimum population of 61,000 in addition to the 3 ISCs; and (2) the report will be completed by the deadline or at the latest by Monday, April 2.

Dr. Durflinger thanked the people in the audience because he knows that a lot of them have been there a long time. He also thanked the Commission for being there. He stated that he tried his best to get consensus from the group and asked the Commission to be supportive.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

**Appendix C**

**ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**STREAMLINING ILLINOIS' EDUCATIONAL  
DELIVERY SYSTEMS**

**TASK FORCE**

**Recommendations**

Submitted pursuant to PA 96-1798  
October 2010

# Illinois State Board of Education

## Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force

### Recommendations

#### Submitted to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly

October 2010

This report of the Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force is respectfully submitted to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly. The Task Force recommends that the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the regional superintendents/Intermediate Service Center Directors work collaboratively to streamline the delivery of educational services in Illinois. Specific changes are outlined in this report.

#### BACKGROUND

The Illinois General Assembly charged the Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force with examining the duties of all of the educational service agencies (ESAs) in Illinois including regional offices of education, intermediate service centers, special education cooperatives, education for employment systems, learning technology centers and services provided by ISBE. During the first meeting of the Task Force, Susie Morrison, Deputy Superintendent and Chief of Staff at ISBE, provided the Task Force members with a state map that outlined the service areas for each ESA in the state. She observed that there are many overlapping service area boundaries. Mike Kelly, Superintendent of Carlinville Community Unit School District, illustrated how these overlapping boundaries affect his school district. Within his regional office of education (ROE) there are four special education cooperatives, and within his special education cooperative, three ROEs are represented. Because there is not an existing mechanism to coordinate services between the ROE and the special education cooperatives, it is difficult for parents and staff members to know who to call to receive services. Other Task Force members remarked that services delivered by educational service agencies may not meet the needs of districts and that the quality of services provided by ESAs varies widely across the state. These data points raised questions for the Task Force about how to ensure that ESAs align their services with statewide priorities and are held accountable for the efficient and equitable delivery of high-quality services.

The conclusions of this Task Force are consistent with the findings of the other two Task Forces that have developed recommendations on the roles and structures of educational service agencies in Illinois during the last three decades. The first Task Force published *The Future of Educational Service Regions in Illinois* in 1980. In that document, they argued that the —.multiple intermediate structures that have proliferated...are confusing, competitive and duplicative” (p.3). As a result, thirty years ago, the first Task Force recommended that educational service agencies should be consolidated and streamlined to reduce costs, eliminate duplication and inefficiencies, and better serve the needs of local districts.

The second Task Force report, issued in 1991, found that the system of educational service agencies did not effectively and efficiently provide services to local districts and instead was —. characterized by duplication of management, overlapping territories, flawed accountability structures, and service responsibilities which need to be more responsive to changing expectations” (p. 2). The second Task Force recommended the development of a single comprehensive intermediate delivery system that would provide services in response to the needs of local districts.

Given the history of past recommendations, the existing structures of educational service agencies, and the context of the current fiscal crisis in Illinois, Dr. Chris Koch, State Superintendent of Education in Illinois, led the Task Force in the development of recommendations that would intentionally coordinate the statewide capacity of ESAs, maximize resources, and spend money wisely to benefit students throughout the state. The Task Force was expertly facilitated by Gina Burkhardt, CEO of Learning Point Associates. In order to inform their work, the Task Force also invited leaders of educational service agencies in other states to be present during each of their three meetings. Craig Burford, Executive Director of the Ohio Educational Service Center Association, shared lessons learned from Ohio’s recent streamlining process and Ron Fielder, the Chief Administrator of the Grant Wood Area Education Agency, described the organization of educational service agencies in Iowa and presented the national perspective on behalf of the Association of Educational Service Agencies. A list of the Task Force members is available in Appendix A and the minutes of each of the three Task Force meetings appears in Appendix B.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO STREAMLINE THE DELIVERY OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN ILLINOIS**

Public funding for government services/schools is not likely to return to previous levels; therefore effective regionalization must be a significant —solution to tough times.” One mechanism for efficiency and excellence is to allow for the Regional Offices of Education (ROEs)/Intermediate Service Centers (ISCs) to emerge as the primary delivery system of educational support and assistance to Illinois districts and schools. The Task Force agreed that the recommendations outlined below should demonstrate the following general principles:

- Improving the coordination and alignment of the delivery of services.
- Ensuring equitable access to core services that are consistent in quality across the state.
- Being responsive to the needs of districts.
- Supporting compliance with federal and state mandates.
- Maximizing resources and increasing efficiency.
- Holding educational service agencies accountable for providing high-quality services.

To implement these principles, the Task Force supports the development of a single, coordinated system of support for districts in Illinois. The following recommendations are put forth as the foundation for Illinois to realize this goal:

**Recommendation 1: Establish a statewide coordinating council:** A coordinating council, to be facilitated and supported by ISBE, shall be established to bring leaders from ISBE together with representatives from regional offices and intermediate services centers, career tech centers, technology centers, special education cooperatives, LTCs and school districts on a regular basis to establish focus, monitor progress, and ensure the quality of the delivery system. The coordinating

council may also include representatives from statewide agencies, other than ISBE, that provide services for young people. The State Board will set and communicate the policy direction for the delivery system, define outcomes, and ensure accountability of educational service agencies. The coordinating council will develop efficient strategies to guide the implementation of ISBE's policy priorities throughout the state. This will be an iterative process in which the coordinating council will continually gather formative and summative data to inform and drive their work. In addition, the coordinating council will centrally coordinate communication with private school systems, ensure equitable access to core services across the state, and assess the fidelity of implementation in each region. It is important to note that although many of the services that will be coordinated are funded by state and federal dollars, the majority of the funding for these services comes from local sources.

**Recommendation 2: Fund core services across the state:** ISBE will work closely with district and ROE/ISC leaders to define a core set of services and supports that ROEs/ISCs shall offer to meet the needs of school districts. These services shall be defined by April 1, 2012. ISBE will seek adequate funding from the Legislature to support these core services, which will be aligned with the State Board's policy priorities, and will support compliance with federal and state laws and regulations. This may involve the decentralization of some core services, which are currently provided by ISBE, but that would be delivered by ROEs/ISCs under the new system.

**Recommendation 3: Coordinate services in each region:** In order to efficiently implement the State Board's vision for the statewide system of support, ROEs/ISCs will take the lead on coordinating all educational services in their region, including those provided by EFEs, LTCs and special education cooperatives. The regional superintendent will serve as the single point of ISBE contact for each region as well as facilitating the coordination of services and improving communication about and access to services for parents and the community in the region. As part of their efforts to coordinate services across the state, the coordinating council and the regional superintendents in each region shall consider the development of tiered services in which all regional offices would provide the first tier of core services, such as training for bus drivers and certification for teachers. In order to deliver this set of core services, ROEs/ISCs may develop partnerships with other entities. In addition, ROEs/ISCs may form cooperatives or develop entrepreneurial services beyond the required core, in areas of expertise that are specific to their agency, which will be available to districts within the region or statewide. This tiered system will maximize comparative advantage across the state, provide a wide range of high-quality services to support the needs of districts, and supplement the sustainability of the system.

**Recommendation 4: Conduct an independent review of funding across the system:** ISBE will commission an independent organization to assess the existing funding structures that are in place across the state and the use of all federal and state dollars to determine what funds are available, how these funding streams interact, and how these resources can be used more efficiently in the future. To enable the state to make decisions based only on the highest quality data, the independent organization shall review data from multiple sources and obtain input and feedback from the field. The external review will be complete by October 31, 2011. Findings from this review, which will be public and transparent, will help the coordinating council to identify inefficiencies and duplication, to encourage collaboration between agencies, and to leverage discretionary sources of federal and state money to improve equity and efficiency across the system.

**Recommendation 5: Implement an accountability system for ROEs/ISCs:** ISBE will work collaboratively with ROEs/ISCs to adopt performance standards that will guide the implementation and quality of the delivery of core services. Quality assurance standards for services will be based on

industry standards for excellence. Performance agreements for school improvement may be considered as an option within the accountability system.

By August 2012, ISBE will adopt an accreditation process for ROEs/ISCs. Accreditation will be the condition for receiving state funding for the delivery of core services. In order to be fully accredited, ROEs/ISCs will be accountable for both individual and collective metrics to ensure coordination and quality across the system. An on-going and coordinated evaluation of the system will be scheduled every three years to ensure the components of the system are individually and collectively meeting performance standards.

## Appendix D

### Illinois State Board of Education

#### Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force

##### Task Force Members

###### **Governor's Office Designee**

Chris Koch, Chair  
State Superintendent of Education  
Springfield

###### **ROE Designees (appointed by Gil Morrison)**

###### AREA I

Darlene Ruscitti  
DuPage ROE #19  
Wheaton

###### AREA II

Rich Myers  
LaSalle ROE #35  
Ottawa

###### AREA III

Jodi Scott  
Henderson/Mercer/Warren ROE #27  
Monmouth

###### AREA IV

Kay Pangle  
I-KAN ROE #32  
Kankakee

###### AREA V

Marc Kiehna  
Monroe/Randolph ROE #45  
Waterloo

###### AREA VI

Larry Fillingim  
ROE #20  
Harrisburg 7

**IASA Designee (appointed by Brent Clark)**

Matthew Klosterman  
Superintendent, Belleville #118  
Belleville

**IFT Designee (appointed by Ed Geppert)**

Dan Montgomery  
President, North Suburban Teachers Union, IFT Local 1274  
Skokie

**House Republican Designee (appointed by Tom Cross)**

Roger Eddy  
State Representative  
Hutsonville

**House Democratic Designee (appointed by Speaker Madigan)**

Monique Davis  
State Representative  
Chicago

**Senate Republican Designee (appointed by Senator Radogno)**

Rebecca Woodhull  
Southern Illinois University  
Springfield

**IL Association of Career & Technical Ed (appointed by Pres. Lance Copps)**

Don Smoot  
Three Rivers Education for Employment Center  
Joliet

**Illinois Association of School Boards Designee**

Michael Johnson  
Executive Director, IASB  
Springfield

**Illinois Association of School Business Officials Designee**

Michael Jacoby  
Executive Director, IASBO  
Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb 8

**Member of an Intermediate Service Center (Appointed by State Superintendent)**

Kay Poyner-Brown  
Executive Director, Intermediate Service Center 2  
Bellwood

**Member of a rural school district (Appointed by State Superintendent)**

Mike Kelly  
Superintendent, Carlinville CUSD 1  
Carlinville, Illinois 62626

**Member of an urban school district (Appointed by State Superintendent)**

Preston Williams  
Superintendent, Urbana SD 116  
Urbana

**IEA Designee (appointed by Ken Swanson)**

Mary Jane Morris  
Director, Instructional Resource and Professional Development  
Illinois Education Association  
Carterville

**Chicago Board of Education designee (appointed by Ron Huberman)**

Eduardo Garza  
Director, Government Affairs  
Chicago Public Schools  
Chicago

**Illinois Association of Administrators of Special Education Designee**

Susanne Carrescia  
IAASE President  
Lebanon 9

## **Appendix E**

### **Illinois State Board of Education**

#### **Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems**

##### **Task Force**

##### **Meeting Minutes**

- Minutes of Task Force Meeting – April 20, 2010
- Minutes of Task Force Meeting – May 17, 2010
- Minutes of Task Force Meeting – July 21, 2010

# **Illinois State Board of Education**

## **Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force**

**Tuesday, April 20, 2010**

### **Minutes**

At 10:04 a.m. the first meeting of the Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force was called to order by Dr. Christopher Koch, the Illinois State Superintendent. He noted that the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) facilitates several Task Forces, but that the Streamlining Task Force is of particular interest and importance in the state. Given the current budget situation in Illinois, he commented that the Task Force has the opportunity to think comprehensively about how the regional system can efficiently provide school and districts throughout the state with high quality educational services. He stated that he does not have any preconceived notions about the outcomes of this Task Force and hoped that all Task Force members were entering the meeting with an open mind. He provided an overview of the work of the Task Force and the focus for each of the three meetings. The dual purposes of today's meeting are to ensure that everyone on the Task Force has a common understanding of the current composition of the state system of regional support and to begin to examine the research and data from other states. During the second meeting, the Task Force will dig deeper into the current situation in Illinois and further examine best practices from across the country. Finally, during the third meeting, the Task Force will discuss the recommendations that will be sent to the Governor and the Legislature in August. The overall goal of the Task Force and the recommendations that are developed will target getting students and the schools and districts that serve them equitable access to high quality assistance that is cost efficient, of high quality and supports the overarching goals set by the ISBE and the Legislature .

Dr. Koch introduced Gina Burkhardt, the CEO of Learning Point Associates, who will serve as a facilitator. Ms. Burkhardt welcomed the group and facilitated the introductions of the Task Force members. Eighteen members were present or represented by a designee and three members were absent, two of whom are legislators who were in session. Ms. Burkhardt opened the Task Force's discussion of the current situation in Illinois by asking the members to provide feedback and to comment on the accuracy on the information in the matrix that ISBE prepared for the Task Force. Susie Morrison, Deputy Superintendent and Chief of Staff at ISBE, noted that matrix provided information across the system of all educational service agencies (ESAs) in the state. The Task Force members received copies of the school code sections related to ESAs and a state map that outlined the service areas for each ESA. Ms. Morrison observed that her take-away from the map was that there are many overlapping service area boundaries. She opened the conversation about the matrix by asking the representatives from the Regional Offices of Education (ROEs) to comment.

Darlene Ruscitti of Area I remarked that the mission of the Task Force should be to consider a systems approach so that ESAs throughout the state are adding value to the classroom. She further commented that consistency of services throughout the state is more important than each ROE striving to protect its territory. Instead of competing with other ESAs to offer similar services, she would like to explore how the ESAs in Area I can best work together to serve schools and districts.

She added a description of the variety of services that her ROE offers, ranging from compliance, to school safety, to working with parents and the community.

Kay Pangle of Area 4 described how her ROE develops school improvement plans every year that are linked to her staff's analysis of state report card data and the needs of stakeholders in the region. Her team identifies areas in which schools and districts need support and develop professional development programs and services that are aligned with those needs. In addition, one of the most labor intensive areas of service for her office is related to teaching certification. Teachers in the region submit their renewal requests to the ROE. ROE staff members then review the statements of assurance of completed professional development, follow up with teachers if necessary, certify the quality of the statements, and forward the renewal requests to ISBE for their final approval. Area 4 also runs alternative programs for students.

Preston Williams, Superintendent of Urbana School District 116, remarked that an important role for the ROE is to serve as a liaison between the school district and ISBE. His ROE is quite helpful in this regard. Marc Kiehna of Area 5 added that ROEs are often not limited to K-12 education, but also provide adult education services and education programs in the prison system. Dr. Koch commented that ESAs could provide some support for the Department of Corrections, which is a school district, because they are engaged in very complex work, but do not currently have the appropriate resources to serve all of the needs of incarcerated youth. The Governor is also interested in looking at the glaring need in Illinois to provide more appropriate services for these young people. Ms. Ruscitti noted that through safe schools, ROEs can work with districts to provide support and services for these students as they make the difficult transition back to traditional schools. Dr. Koch agreed that ESAs certainly have a role to play in helping to serve the complex needs of these students through social/emotional and special education services.

Marc Kiehna observed that although there are overlapping boundaries in many areas of the state, in his region, the boundaries for the different types of ESAs are almost identical. This facilitates cooperation and collaboration among the agencies. His active participation on the Boards of other ESAs enables his office to coordinate resources. For example with a recent RTI initiative, the special education cooperative worked collaboratively with the ROE in order to provide professional development about RTI for all teachers, not just for special education teachers. Larry Fillingim of Area 6 agreed that collaboration was critical. In his region, the directors of the ROE, EFE, and special education cooperative meet monthly with school district superintendents to coordinate efforts so that they can maximize the resources they have to benefit the schools and students in their region.

Kay Pangle commented that the ROEs and the Intermediate Service Centers should be separate rows on the ISBE matrix. Kay Poyner-Brown, of Intermediate Service Center 2, agreed and elaborated with a description of her intermediate service agency. Her organization has some parallel responsibilities with ROEs, but they also provide different services. The three Intermediate Service Centers in suburban Cook County collectively serve as many students as Chicago Public Schools. Under the guidance of a governing board of constituents and stakeholders, her organization provides services including professional development, Regional System of Support Provider (RESPRO) services for schools in academic status, Reading First delivery, and safe schools.

Susie Morrison then asked the Task Force members about their funding sources. The members reported that most of them support their work by combining funding streams from the federal government (particularly for EFEs and special education cooperatives), state funding for professional

development, and revenue received from conferences or workshops. Ms. Morrison commented that, on average, federal funds comprise less than 10 percent of ROE budgets.

Kay Pangle, Darlene Ruscitti, and Rich Myers observed that their organizations do not begin with the funding stream. Instead their work begins with the needs of their clients and then they pursue funding to meet the needs of their clients. Ms. Ruscitti further commented that she will often work collaboratively with districts in her region to explore funding opportunities, but she will never compete with them.

Ms. Morrison then transitioned the discussion to learn more about the special education cooperatives in the state. Gineen O'Neil, Susanne Carrescia's designee to represent the Illinois Association of Administrators of Special Education, mentioned that the cooperatives are all quite different, but do have some similar basic components. IDEA funds flow through all of the cooperatives, they are all evaluated and accountable in the same way as school districts, they all strive to deliver cost-effective and high-quality services, and provide professional development for their member districts based on the districts' needs. The goal of the cooperatives is to support districts and build their capacity to serve students more effectively. She noted that although ROEs serve all districts throughout the state, cooperatives do not because districts choose to be members of cooperatives. Dr. Koch observed that the recent trend was for districts to withdraw from their cooperative and provide services through the district's central office.

Mike Kelly, Superintendent of Carlinville School District, pointed out that for small districts, special education cooperatives were not voluntary because they provide essential services. Michael Jacoby, of the Illinois Association of School Business Officials, observed that this aspect of voluntary participation in the ESA might be a criterion for the Task Force to consider in their recommendations. Mike Kelly further commented that there is not an existing mechanism to coordinate services between the ROE and the special education cooperatives. In his ROE there are four special education cooperatives, and in his special education cooperative, three ROEs are represented. As a result, it is difficult for his staff members to know who to call to receive services. While he does not question the commitment of ESAs in Illinois, he contended that districts need a more efficient delivery of services. Matt Klosterman, representing the Illinois Association of School Administrators, added that equity is also an important concern for the Task Force to address because ROEs are challenged to meet the varied needs of districts. Thus, the state should ensure that all districts are served equitably, particularly when resources are scarce.

Ms. Morrison then transitioned to a discussion of the Education for Employment System (EFEs) in Illinois. Don Smoot, representing the Illinois Association of Career and Technical Education, remarked that the EFEs were created as requirement for receiving Perkins funding. This federal requirement for a statewide regional delivery system for Career and Technical Education (CTE) remains in effect. The original intent was to have EFEs aligned with community college boundaries, but it didn't work out quite that way over time. The main purpose of the EFE is to administer state and federal CTE grants. EFEs also uphold CTE statutes. There are 57 EFEs, but all of them meet the needs of their region in different ways. In terms of evaluation and accountability, there are annual audits, local evaluations, federal monitoring visits, and annual assessments on Perkins performance measures.

Ms. Morrison thanked the group for providing so much input into the matrix. She reflected on the comments that Illinois received after the first round of Race to the Top in which one of the themes was that Illinois has a demonstrated lack of capacity to carry out the plans in their proposal. She

noted that Illinois needs to coordinate the statewide capacity of ESAs intentionally, maximize resources, and spend money wisely to benefit students throughout the state. Dr. Andrea Brown, a member of the Illinois State Board of Education, remarked that the ESAs in Illinois would be critical to bringing best practices to scale across the state.

Several Task Force members commented on the morning discussion. Mike Kelly observed that the public is not informed about the ESA system that they are currently funding in Illinois and they would probably not consider the current system a good use of their tax dollars. Mike Jacoby remarked that what he hears from his members is that the quality of services provided by ESAs varies widely across the state. He argued that the Task Force should recommend that there is a statewide need for more equity and accountability for ESAs. If ESAs are not providing high-quality service to districts, they should no longer be in business. Mary Jane Morris, of the Illinois Education Association, finds the ROEs that she works with across the state to be collaborative. In addition, she noted that several ROEs have strong expertise in particular specialty areas, but that expertise is inconsistent across the system. Thus, the Task Force should explore ways to share that expertise more consistently throughout the state. Darlene Ruscitti pointed out that change can be difficult, but the Task Force should have the political will to do what makes sense for schools and districts. Dr. Michael Johnson, of the Illinois Association of School Boards, argued that because the regional superintendents are currently elected to their offices, the state will need to fully fund the ESA system if state leaders want the regional superintendents to be accountable to ISBE rather than to the voters. Dr. Ron Fielder, of the Grant Wood AEA in Iowa, noted that this system of elected ESA leaders is becoming more unusual as such a system now exists in only three states, Montana, Arizona, and Illinois.

Gina Burkhart summarized the wide ranging morning discussion by noting that the Task Force members had discussed funding, collaboration, communication, leveraging efforts, quality assurance, accountability, boundaries, formal and informal structures, governance, oversight and equity of services. During the lunch break, she encouraged the members to consider how to define and measure impact, to think about what success should look like, and to outline outcomes that can help the group to frame the conversation moving forward.

After the break, Ron Fielder presented the national perspective on behalf of the Association of Educational Service Agencies. He reviewed the legal definitions of ESAs, their geographic spread throughout the country, the services and supports that ESAs provide, funding sources for ESAs, Board composition, clients, and accountability measures. He observed that ESAs are needed now more than ever as support for change and growth. ESAs can be a solution in tough times, but increased visibility also means increased scrutiny. He remarked that Ohio and Georgia are currently rethinking their systems of ESAs and Michigan is considering consolidating their ESAs because of the lack of resources in that state. Nationally, an emerging trend is that more and more states are considering how ESAs can function as a comprehensive and coordinated statewide system.

After providing the national context, Dr. Fielder then went on to describe the system of ESAs in Iowa. In 1975, 15 Area Education Agencies (AEAs) and 15 community colleges were created at same time and with the same boundaries. The community colleges provide the region with services related to CTE while the AEAs provide services related to special education, professional development, technology, curriculum, and instruction. Dr. Fielder observed that the delivery of professional development has shifted dramatically over time from the central delivery mechanism 10 years ago being conferences or workshops at the AEA to AEA staff now much more frequently traveling to schools to provide teachers with job-embedded professional development. The delivery

of professional development continues to evolve as more and more teachers are demanding online professional development that they can access at any time during the day or night at their convenience.

Dr. Fielder noted that the AEAs in Iowa receive the highest level of subsidies in the nation. They receive funding from the federal government (e.g. IDEA dollars), state funding, and revenue from state and local property taxes. State leaders decided that it was important for the government to provide this subsidy because they value equity and consistency of services across the state. In exchange for this financial support, Iowa set up a system of quality assurance. In fact, Iowa is the only state in the country with a mandatory accreditation process for ESAs. Five to eight other states are considering voluntary accreditation processes but the process in Iowa is mandatory. Each AEA must document how the agency fulfills the nine standards that are required by state law. Each AEA must annually submit a budget and a progress report to the Iowa Department of Education. Every five years their accreditation status is reviewed. Dr. Fielder has welcomed feedback from the accreditation process because it helped his AEA to improve. In Iowa, this process has improved the quality of service and provided more uniform access to services across the state. It is interesting to note that AEAs in Iowa are the only form of government that voluntarily downsized. Some AEAs realized they could not provide high-quality services on all the nine standards. As a result, they merged with other AEAs and saved the state, on average, \$650,000 annually in senior administrator salaries. Dr. Andrea Brown asked if this comprehensive system in Iowa is coordinated by an executive director. Dr. Fielder responded that they were able to hire the former speaker of the House for this position, a leader who was highly respected on both sides of the aisle, to make connections between the AEAs and ensure that services are delivered equitably across the state.

Dr. Fielder went on to discuss two trends for ESAs national nationwide. First, many ESAs are beginning to specialize in particular areas where they have comparative advantage and then market this service or product statewide. For example, Dr. Fielder's AEA developed an exemplary bundle of products and services related to a science curriculum. Rather than create a new curriculum for clients in their region, four other AEAs in Iowa purchase the exemplary services from Grant Wood AEA. Rich Myers found this to be an appealing idea. The challenge would still be to ensure equal access, but with available technology, ROEs can focus more on areas of expertise because they no longer need to be spatially close to the client. Second, partly as a result of declining state funding and partly as a result of a lack of consumer satisfaction, Dr. Fielder observed that many ESAs are becoming more entrepreneurial. For example, when ESAs in Minnesota experienced state funding decreases, they developed health insurance cooperatives. Because of their purchasing power, they were able to make a profit on this line of service at the same time that they were able to offer districts better rates than they could negotiate individually. This profit is then invested into funding educational services for districts in the region. ESAs are in a good position to run these types of cooperatives that provide districts with cost savings, promote efficiency throughout the region, and enable the ESA to invest in the development of educational services that will meet the needs of districts. ESAs throughout the country are running cooperatives for a range of services that include health insurance, food services, online application processes for district staff, legal services, sports referees, etc. The advantage of this type of entrepreneurial activity is that ESAs can be more responsive to district needs; however, the disadvantage is that there might be less equity statewide for districts that cannot afford to purchase any services. Hybrid models are emerging and this might be an avenue that Illinois would like to explore. Dr. Fielder asked the Task Force to consider if they want to play in the open market or if they would prefer to build a system that is focused on equity and uniformity of services. Dan Montgomery, representing IFT, cautioned that ESAs in Illinois should keep education as their primary focus and business support secondary.

Dr. Fielder noted that Iowa is more homogenous in nature than Illinois. The Iowa model might not transfer easily, but there are some lessons that Illinois can learn from Iowa and some principals that could inform the coordination of ESAs in Illinois. He encouraged the Task Force members to consider what criteria would be critical if they redesigned the system from scratch and to use those criteria as they begin to discuss how to best coordinate services across the state. He also urged them to get wide consensus on these criteria before making a decision about recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor.

Dr. Fielder then opened the floor to questions. Don Smoot noted that local control was an important tradition in Illinois and that ESA superintendents are elected by local voters. He asked how local interests are represented in Iowa. Michael Johnson agreed that a change to accountability in Illinois from elected officials to customer satisfaction surveys concerned him. Dr. Fielder responded that he meets regularly with the district superintendents in his region. He noted that there might be different levels of accountability, but it would be just as logical for his Board to dismiss him if the superintendents in his region were not satisfied as for the voters to not return a superintendent to his or her office. In fact, the districts in his region see the AEA as providing valuable support and services that allow them to operate with the limited resources that they have available. He pointed out that his job is to provide districts with resources, services and research-based innovations that are on the cutting edge, like instructional coaches and professional development to implement the formative assessment process. Rebecca Woodhull, Director of the Illinois Office of Educational Services, asked about the role of the Iowa Department of Education. Dr. Fielder responded that the State Board sets the strategic direction for the state and approves the budget for the AEAs. Then the AEAs work with the state education agency and districts to implement the programs and policies that have been defined by the Board.

The Task Force members then began to consider possible directions for their recommendations. Darlene Ruscitti commented that the Task Force should begin to define what services every district in Illinois deserved to receive and how to measure the quality of those services. Mike Kelly encouraged the Task Force to consider giving funds directly to districts so that ESAs can develop a menu of service options that are based on district needs rather than on what the ROEs would like to provide. He also urged the state to consider a system in which struggling districts can receive support, but incentives can also be provided for districts that meet targets for student achievement so that districts do not receive additional funding only when they fail to meet AYP.

Gina Burkhardt concluded the meeting by observing that the conversation had far exceeded her expectations. She pointed out that next meeting would take place on May 17, 2010 from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. at the Parke Hotel in Bloomington. Chris Koch stated that the purpose of the next meeting would be to come to a consensus on criteria that the Task Force should consider as they develop recommendations to streamline ESAs in Illinois. Kay Poyner-Brown remarked that the Task Force has to recognize where Illinois currently is, where silos exist, and then begin from that starting point. She also asked for a deeper examination of how federal and state policies (e.g. with turnaround schools) might play into the Task Force's recommendations. Mary Jane Morris asked for clarification about whether the Task Force's recommendations would include Chicago. Dr. Koch agreed that if the Task Force is to examine how to provide services equitably throughout the state, it makes sense to include Chicago. Gina Burkhardt remarked that ISBE would put appropriate parameters around the work of the Task Force at the next meeting. She adjourned the meeting at 2:58 p.m.

## **Illinois State Board of Education**

### **Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force**

**Monday, May 17, 2010**

#### **Minutes**

At 10:04 a.m. the second meeting of the Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force was called to order by Gina Burkhardt, the CEO of Learning Point Associates, who is facilitating the Task Force. Ms. Burkhardt welcomed the group, reviewed the agenda for the day, and noted that Dr. Ron Fielder, of the Grant Wood AEA in Iowa, is returning to serve as a critical friend and external expert on educational service agencies during the Task Force's working session. She then facilitated the introductions of the Task Force members. Sixteen members were present or represented by a designee and five members were absent. One guest was in attendance.

Dr. Christopher Koch, the Illinois State Superintendent, observed that the overarching purpose of the Task Force is to better serve districts and students in Illinois. During their work today, he asked the Task Force members to continually reflect on the underlying goal of the Task Force to consider how to develop efficient regional systems of supports for students, schools, and districts that are equitable across the state. He noted that there is some interest among Task Force members in the role of ISBE and the overlap between the role of ISBE and the ROEs. In the interest of using time efficiently, he invited the ROE representatives to a separate meeting to examine this issue and report back to the larger group in July during the final meeting of the Task Force.

Ms. Burkhardt noted that a slightly revised matrix was sent to the Task Force in advance of this meeting. She asked the members to send any revisions they recommend to Peggie Garcia who will capture this information and update the matrix for next meeting. Michael Johnson, of the Illinois Association of School Boards, observed that in the funding category on the matrix, local dollars were not included. However, most of the funding that educational service agencies receive is local and not from federal or state dollars.

Ms. Burkhardt observed that funding would be an important category to consider during the Task Force's first work session. She asked the Task Force to break into three groups to explore the following three issues: context, customers, and services. She directed the Task Force members to consider the following questions:

- What is the environment within which you are working now (federal, state and local)?
- How will that environment change over the next three to five years? For example, how might the environment change as a result of the availability of funding through 1003(g) school improvement grants and the kinds of supports that those schools will need?
- Who are your customers and what types of services will meet their needs?
- Rather than focusing on past experience, what needs to happen to best support the needs of students and districts in Illinois in the future?

Dr. Fielder asked the members to consider in their small group discussions about context, what are the opportunities and threats? As you look at the next five to eight years, what are the services that ESAs in Illinois need to provide for students and districts? Regardless of who the provider is, what are the services that school districts and communities need?

After the Task Force members met in small groups, Ms. Burkhardt and Dr. Fielder presented the patterns that they captured, identified common themes, and asked the Task Force members to react to the summary and provide their feedback.

Within the context piece there were three major categories of responses – funding, policies, and other. In terms of funding, the task force expressed uncertainty about what funds are available and from what sources, particularly as ISBE continues to face historic funding challenges. There is also a stronger emphasis on competition for limited dollars and some thinking about using Race to the Top funding and other ARRA dollars to support educational service agencies.

In terms of policies, there was a great deal of discussion about the changing policy environment that includes an ever increasing focus on accountability, student achievement, college and career readiness and on all aspects of educator quality (e.g. mentoring, induction, leadership, certification, evaluation, etc.). The members are also interested in what ESEA reauthorization will look like on the federal level and how will it be implemented at the state and district levels. In addition, the members are unsure about how the new common core standards and assessments will be implemented and what their role will be in rolling out the new standards. The policy context related to special education is also changing and there is a greater emphasis on RTI.

Within the “other” category, Task Force members mentioned several topics including: systems accountability, the tradition of local control in Illinois, technology, district consolidation, changes on the horizon for ISBE and the statewide system of support, efficiency of services, support for public and private schooling, and a frustration with the slow pace of research that does not keep up with the needs of schools and districts. The field needs more information, more quickly, about what works to improve student achievement.

In their discussion of customers, the small groups generated five categories:

- *district and school stakeholders* (e.g. superintendents, teachers, administrators)
- *policymakers* (e.g. state legislators and leaders at ISBE)
- *stakeholders from the community* (e.g. voters, advocates, non-voters, media)
- *parents and students* (e.g. customers for services related to adult education and programs for truants and dropouts)
- *other* (e.g. representatives from organizations that serve the homeless, mentally ill, incarcerated youth, senior citizens, or provide emergency services or health services).

Ms. Burkhardt asked the Task Force members which of these stakeholder groups are their primary customers and how they distinguish primary from secondary? She further asked them to consider how resources are targeted now and how might they be better targeted in the future.

For the final section of the morning work session, the Task Force members generated four categories of services that they provide:

- *district and school-based services* (e.g. private placements, educational programs, summer and extended learning, special education, ELL, transition services, pre-school, early

intervention, kindergarten readiness, professional development, school improvement, supplemental services, technology, industry certification)

- *compliance* (e.g. school records, 504/ADA, certification renewal, compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, accreditation, 403(b) plans)
- *adult education and GED programs*
- *other support services* (e.g. substitute teachers, workforce development, custodians, food services, transportation, school based health services, school construction, and safe schools).

The Task Force members also outlined issues that will affect their future work, including data collection, communication, curriculum alignment, new evaluation system for teachers, legal obligations, and levels of delivery. Ms. Burkhardt asked the Task Force to consider which of these services are most important? How do they tie to the context and the customers? Which services provide the best return on investment and have the greatest impact? When the Task Force members begin to design their ideal system, they should determine who should best deliver all of these services and how to deliver them as efficiently as possible. Dr. Fielder agreed that the Task Force should be thoughtful about identifying their core services and asked them to further consider which services should be or are subsidized by state/federal dollars and which should be more entrepreneurial.

The Task Force then provided feedback to the facilitators about the categories of context, customers and services. Darlene Ruscitti, of Area 1, remarked that it is essential to examine the context piece as connected to the customers to determine who is driving much of what is going on. She commented that the services that ROEs provide are often delivered in partnership with other organizations and facilitating these relationships is an important role of the ROEs. Jodi Scott, of Area 3, commented that the first consideration of what services to provide is often what is legally mandated. Beyond that, it should be services that impact teaching and learning. Rebecca Woodhull agreed with that assessment, remarking that the Task Force should begin with the end goal in mind, which is student improvement, and then all of the ESA's services and resources should be aligned with that end goal. Dr. Ruscitti supported that goal and urged the Task Force members to examine the context of students that are now in the system (e.g. technology-driven, post-9/11) and to think about how ESAs in the state can help to educate the next great generation of students. What services can the ESAs provide to ensure that these students will be successful? Ms. Burkhardt asked the Task Force if they are directly or indirectly impacting teaching and learning through their core services. Gineen O'Neil, Susanne Carrescia's designee to represent the Illinois Association of Administrators of Special Education, clarified that some ESAs, particularly EFES and special education cooperatives, do provide direct services to students.

Ms. Burkhardt thanked the Task Force members for the information they generated during the morning session and commented that this foundation will help the group to create the ideal framework for ESAs in the state during the afternoon session. Before moving on to the development of an ideal system, she asked the Task Force to develop criteria against which they will benchmark the ideal systems that they create. Dr. Fielder then introduced the discussion of criteria with two practical examples: purchasing a television and investigating living options for aging parents. He encouraged the Task Force to consider criteria that currently exist in legislation or other documents that describe mandated service as well as criteria related to collaboration between educational service agencies, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of services, improving the alignment of services, equity, on-time delivery, affordability, fairness, meeting both urban and rural needs, 21<sup>st</sup> century delivery systems, quality of service, and political feasibility. Dr. Fielder directed the Task Force to

brainstorm a number of criteria and then come to consensus on the five primary criteria on which they would like to judge their ideal systems.

In their small groups, the Task Force identified five general themes for their criteria:

- *coordination and alignment* (e.g. avoid duplication, create clear communication channels, develop a central point of contact for districts, work in partnership with ISBE)
- *funding* (e.g. improving the efficiency and effectiveness of services, leveraging other sources of funding, ensuring services are both cost-effective and research-based with a proven record of success)
- *needs and mandates* (providing services that meet the needs of local districts and support compliance)
- *access and consistency* (e.g. equal access to core services across the state, consistent quality access across state, equity vs. adequacy)
- *accountability* (e.g. analyzing outcomes, ensuring quality across the state, ESAs holding themselves accountable).

After lunch, Ms. Burkhardt remarked that the outcomes of the afternoon activity will be the driving force behind the recommendations that the Task Force makes to the Governor and the state Legislature . She asked the members to propose what the statewide systems of ESAs should look like in the future, based on the context, customers and services that they discussed in the morning. She requested that they base their ideal design in reality, but work to design the system that will best serve the state of Illinois moving forward. In designing their systems, she urged the Task Force members to keep in mind both challenges related to context and funding and the system of criteria that they proposed in the morning.

After discussing their ideal designs, the small groups then shared the highlights from their conversation. Dr. Woodhull's group proposed that ISBE should hold regional units accountable (through a third party), provide funding for core services, set minimums for delivery of core services, develop a communication system utilizing technology to facilitate better communication between ROEs that includes an ISBE point person for ROEs, and reduce the number of competitive grants in favor of providing more formula grants. Michael Johnson commented that the state should only set standards for services that they are willing to fund. In response to a question about whether these proposed regional units would be based on geography or responsibility, Dr. Woodhull indicated that the units should be based on geography and student population.

The group also proposed that ROEs should consolidate whenever possible and formalize locally designed collaborative systems through intergovernmental agreements in order to share services and reduce duplication. For example, a special education cooperative might coordinate services with the three districts with which they work. Representative Roger Eddy noted that he supported the vision for local participation in inter-governmental agreements because this model allows for local decision making. Because of a lack of funding for mandates, much of the funding that supports ESAs is local. He argued that his school board would say, "this is our money, are we still going to receive services?" He further urged the Task Force members to think about one of the missions of the Task Force being to eliminate duplication and to consider how to eliminate services that are obsolete or duplicated. As just one example, both ROEs and ISBE deal with teacher recertification. He

recommended the implementation of an appeals process to replace the current system in which multiple people handle the same recertification request.

In response to a question about which services the group considered to be core, Dr. Woodhull responded that these services were those that were legally mandated including professional development, school improvement planning, safety, and alternative programs. Rich Myers, of Area 2, suggested that a good core service might be for ROEs to help districts connect school improvement plans to recertification plans. Kay Poyner-Brown, of Intermediate Service Center 2, agreed that school improvement plans should be driving the structure of services provided by ESAs. Ms. Burkhardt and Dr. Andrea Brown urged caution with this approach as researchers often find that school improvement plans are pieces of paper that are not connected to implementation of improvement efforts, the delivery of services, or outcome-based accountability systems.

In presenting his group's proposal, Larry Fillingim, of Area 6, encouraged the Task Force to consider reorganizing current boundaries to align services provided by ROEs, EFEs, LTCs, and special education cooperatives. He also recommended that ESAs in Illinois explore the cooperative purchasing structure that has been successful in Iowa. In order to provide services in a cost-effective manner, ESAs will have to consolidate staff, reduce the number of jobs and the size of the payroll, and improve technology and reporting capabilities. As with the first group, they agreed that their core services should be those that are legally mandated. Finally, they believe that ISBE should hold ESAs accountable.

The discussion digressed for a short conversation about the role of EFEs in the future. Marc Kiehna, of Area 5, noted that districts in his region will now be entering their own codes into the Illinois Student Information System. However, the EFE used to take responsibility for that task, but now their role is being downsized through technology. He commented that more part-timers are taking positions as directors of EFEs because of the reduction of duties for directors. He asked the group about the future best role for EFEs. Don Smoot, representing the Illinois Association of Career and Technical Education, responded that the role of the EFE should return to the role that was originally intended, to assist schools and districts with curriculum development and to supervise alignment of the curriculum with standards. Over time, the EFEs have become so administrative in nature and so focused on grant administration that they no longer serve their original purpose.

Dr. Ruscitti presented the final proposal for her group. She argued that they are looking at a new framework that would call for radical efficiencies. In terms of criteria, her group discussed different (to serve the next generation), better (higher standards), and cheaper (what can ESAs do more cost-effectively). She remarked that ESAs statewide need to embrace a systems approach, develop a streamlined delivery system that is focused on best practices, and build local and regional capacity to ensure sustainability of the system statewide. In their group's vision, ISBE would be at the core and supported by the surrounding ROEs. ISBE would define the core services and each region would provide those core services within their regions. In addition to these basic services, ROEs might collaborate to deliver non-essential services, like gifted education, or ROEs might develop specialty services that they could market statewide. Her group envisions a system in which all of the ESAs work together to support schools and to help every child be successful. Finally, the group discussed a system that would allow for both accountability and flexibility and for both core values as well as core services. For example, ISBE might develop a rating system for regional superintendents to be rated in the same way that judges and lawyers are currently rated. The group did not have time to

explore these questions, but wanted to raise them for the Task Force: where does Chicago fit in this statewide system of ESAs and what pieces of the system are driven by the federal government?

Mike Kelly, Superintendent of Carlinville Community Unit School District 1, added to his group's proposal that the Governor and Legislature, advised by ISBE, should create state policy informed by research and the ROEs should implement this policy statewide through their leadership and coordination. Regional superintendents also need to be accountable, either through political accountability to boards that are elected (rather than superintendents) or through third party, external evaluations conducted by groups like North Central. Regional superintendents should want to prove that they are delivering for their constituents and have a strong report card. Finally, he observed that there is too much inefficiency in the system now. Each region needs to have experts on special education and technology, but this expertise does not have to reside in a regional superintendent. As a result, boundaries need to be changed to facilitate a more efficient and effective system.

Mark Kiehna was intrigued by the research and development focus in this proposal and commented that it was much like the Center for School Improvement and Research Collaborative that is part of the updated version of Illinois' Race to the Top application. Representative Eddy remarked that research is important, but implementation is more important. Consequently, universities should not be involved in school reform unless they are on the ground and understand the realities of schools and districts. Ms. Burkhardt added that there is a place for academics who are conducting rigorous research, but that research is not typically tied to a system of application and accountability. Thus, ISBE or organizations working in partnership with ISBE should help navigate the application of academic research to practice in schools and districts. Dr. Woodhull spoke on behalf of universities and urged the Task Force to tap into the national research expertise and research-base about what works when making decisions about education.

Dan Montgomery, representing IFT, observed that the Task Force's discussion has been fairly heavy on accountability and fairly light on support. He heard a great deal during the last meeting about how starved ISBE and the ROEs are for funding, but with the absence of funding, ISBE and the ROEs will have a limited ability to support change in schools and districts throughout the state.

Ms. Burkhardt thanked the group for their efforts. The facilitators and ISBE will take what the Task Force members have provided and craft one or more scenarios to explore at the next meeting. Dr. Koch observed that he will host a separate meeting with the ROEs to discuss ISBE's role. He observed that ISBE is the ROE for Chicago, so this will have to be incorporated into the final recommendations. He commented that the funding piece will be an important challenge to address because ISBE cannot delegate services if there is no funding to support it. The state's Race to the Top proposal outlines a more efficient delivery of some services, but the state needs to do more to link services to needs, to build capacity, and to streamline the delivery of services across the state.

The meeting was adjourned by Ms. Burkhardt at 2:49 p.m.

## **Illinois State Board of Education**

### **Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force**

**Wednesday, July 21, 2010**

#### **Minutes**

At 10:08 a.m. the third meeting of the Streamlining Illinois' Educational Delivery Systems Task Force was called to order by Gina Burkhardt, the CEO of Learning Point Associates, who is facilitating the Task Force. Ms. Burkhardt welcomed the group, reviewed the agenda for the day, and noted that Craig Burford, Executive Director of the Ohio Educational Service Center Association (OESCA), would share lessons learned from Ohio's recent streamlining process and serve as a critical friend and external expert on educational service agencies during the meeting. She then facilitated the introductions of the Task Force members.

Dr. Christopher Koch, the Illinois State Superintendent, reviewed the work of the Task Force to date. He noted that the Task Force has begun to examine structures for educational services agencies in other states and has generally agreed that Illinois currently has a disjointed system that is not as efficient as it could be in serving students in the state. Dr. Koch also met with some regional superintendents separately before this larger meeting to discuss a proposal that they put forward to streamline the delivery of services that are currently provided by ISBE. ISBE will be examining that proposal more closely soon. Dr. Koch remarked that the state will need to complete a careful study of the resources they have and determine the most efficient way to distribute those resources. In addition, it will also be important to move in the direction of higher standards for the work that regional offices of education do to ensure that they are doing the job well.

Dr. Koch then introduced Craig Burford, of the Ohio Educational Service Center Association, who provided an overview of the structure of the system of educational service agencies in Ohio and described their attempts to streamline their system. There are 612 school districts in Ohio that serve 1.8 million students. There are 56 Educational Service Centers (ESCs), which are closely aligned with the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). Although the previous state superintendent wanted the state agency to deliver services directly to the field, the current superintendent's vision is to build relationships with ESCs to deliver services to districts through state support teams. The model is now one in which ODE designs the state initiatives and ESCs implement them. ESCs have typically focused on districts as their primary customers, but now see themselves as also adding value to the state and their larger reform efforts. Through regional councils, ODE works collaboratively with the ESCs to identify needs, set priorities, and coordinate the implementation of services for districts to ensure that they are aligned with state strategic priorities and maximize resources. In order to coordinate this system, it is essential to assign a senior person at the state education agency who will work collaboratively with the ESCs across the state to align resources with both the state's policy priorities and the needs of districts. Under this system, ESCs are viewed as an asset to ODE, but they must also demonstrate, in return, that they are providing the highest quality services possible in exchange for the state's investment in their work.

In Ohio, ESCs provides services for schools and districts throughout the state, except those in the eight largest urban districts. ESCs provide a range of services, the most common of which are professional development, dropout programs, and services for students with disabilities. The majority of funding that ESCs receive is local funding, but they also receive funding from state, federal, and other sources. Although ESCs no longer have to submit a comprehensive budget to the state education agency because ODE does not have the capacity to review these budgets, the state Legislature does have to commit to funding the ESCs. ESCs receive funding through a formula based on district enrollment numbers and are not paid until the state verifies those numbers.

In response to a question from Dr. Koch, Mr. Burford replied that state funding has been insufficient in the past when the state has been in a deficit situation, which can result in a difficult mid-year adjustment that involves a significant loss of revenue for the ESC. Mr. Burford then replied to a question from Darlene Ruscitti, of Area 1, about caps for fees that are charged for services, by stating that ESCs charge whatever the market will bear. In fact, for every \$1 of services funded by the state, ESCs in Ohio provide approximately \$24 of services for a fee. Prices for fees are reasonable, in part, because most of the staff who work for ESCs receive salaries that are comparable or lower than the average district salary in the region because most of the employees are not represented by a collective bargaining unit. Although the salaries are often lower, educators often prefer to work for an ESC because they can work with multiple districts, have more flexibility in their schedules, and prefer the work environment. In response to a question from Representative Roger Eddy question about the percentage of services that are mandated, Mr. Burford responded that a systematic analysis has not been conducted, but in many districts state funding does not cover mandated services. ESCs also provide entrepreneurial services, including cooperative purchasing programs, such as an insurance cooperative that supports not only school district employees, but other government employees as well.

The traditional county board is now also the ESC board, which is elected by the general public, but not in a partisan election. Some districts within the ESC might not be represented on the board, but that will be changing soon to ensure that each district is represented. The requirements for board members are the same as for district superintendents. ESCs are not taxing authorities, nor can they borrow money through bonds.

At one time there were 88 ESCs, but they have consolidated over time, with some mergers being voluntary and some mandated by the state. In Ohio, ESCs traditionally serve school districts within their boundaries. However, districts in Ohio can transfer to another ESC if they are not satisfied with the service provided by the ESC in its region. ESCs are required to accept all of the districts that select it. Rather than forcing mergers between ESCs, this choice process enables voluntary consolidation as those ESCs that are not competitive are forced out of business. This streamlining of services over time has reduced the duplication of services, improved efficiency, and increased the quality of services that districts receive.

ESCs in Ohio are the central points of contact to provide professional development and deliver special education services. Districts in the state can choose where state dollars are directed. For example, state funding for special education services may flow directly to the district or, alternatively, districts may choose to have the dollars flow to the ESC so the ESC will take responsibility for providing those services. When several districts utilize the services of the ESC, it allows the ESCs to leverage resources and to create economies of scale across multiple school districts.

In response to a question from Dr. Koch about special education funding, Mr. Burford responded that, in Ohio, funding for special education services is weighted by disability, as low-incidence disabilities are linked to more funding. This funding formula, which takes into account costs related to personnel and caseload ratios, was created by a parent advocacy group and then adopted by ODE. Although these dollars flow to the districts, districts typically ask ESCs to provide these services to students because of the expertise that ESCs have demonstrated over time. Districts will hire some special education personnel directly and the ESCs will hire other special educators who serve multiple districts. In response to a question from Preston Williams about cross-district collaborations, Mr. Burford responded that ESCs employ economies of scale and may have students from multiple districts attend regional centers for particular services. However, although the ESC provides services, ultimately the district is responsible for ensuring that all students meet proficiency. Thus, students with special needs, regardless of where they receive services, are counted as a student in their district of residence.

In addition to weights for special education funding, per-pupil funding for general education is also weighted in Ohio on the basis of state-defined education challenge factors for communities including: the median income of the district, the percentage of students who receive free or reduced lunch, and the educational attainment level of parents in the district. Thus, some districts will receive more funding than others for mandatory services because the state's expectation is that wealthier districts will be able to supplement state funds with local property tax dollars. On average, 51% of local funding is state funding, but this varies widely across the state.

In response to a question from Rebecca Woodhull about services related to career and technical education (CTE), Mr. Burford commented that, in Ohio, these services are not provided by ESCs, but are embedded within high schools, joint vocational districts, or CTE centers. That system in Ohio is currently under review for duplication of services and a lack of alignment. Students apply to attend schools in joint vocational districts. When students attend these schools, the joint vocational districts take responsibility for the accountability associated with student achievement, and in return, receive per-pupil funding, plus a weight for CTE. As a result, there is some tension in Ohio between these CTE districts and other school districts because districts of residence often claim that the CTE districts are creaming high-performing students.

In terms of accountability, all ESCs have performance agreements with districts that outline their scope of work. Thus, ESCs are evaluated on how they meet these outcomes. Many ESCs also conduct program service evaluations or customer satisfaction surveys. Some ESCs use a voluntary accreditation process, designed by AdvancED. The ESCs in Ohio are currently working collectively to define what their core set of services should be and how their performance in delivering those services should be measured.

What were the lessons learned in Ohio over time? First, it is essential to have the commitment of state leadership to the system of educational service agencies, not just a statute from the Legislature, to effectively streamline services. Second, state education funding policy must be aligned with the state's policy about service delivery. Third, regional service providers charged with deploying and implementing work on behalf of the state need to be part of any statewide design team. However, in exchange for this relationship with ODE, ESCs must effectively deliver services, as measured against performance standards. Fourth, it is critical to engage stakeholders. The regional system should be expanded to include all state agencies and entities that work with youth. ESCs are well-positioned to support this engagement process. Fifth, ESCs should work to improve their performance as data-driven learning organizations that will continually adapt in order to use available resources to provide

the highest quality services possible. Finally, ESCs need to maintain their ability to offer local entrepreneurial services to ensure that they are serving the needs of districts that are not funded by ODE.

Dr. Koch thanked Mr. Burford and commented that he was particularly intrigued by the Ohio practice of allowing districts to choose their service provider. Districts in Illinois currently are accountable for student performance, but if educational service agencies are out of touch with the needs of districts, there should be a way to hold them accountable. Darren Reisberg, Deputy Superintendent and General Counsel of ISBE, also asked the Task Force to consider those instances in which the regional office is not serving their clients, but ISBE does not have the legislative authority to fix the problem. How might the Task Force develop accountability measures to avoid situations like this in the future? Dr. Koch also noted that in the state's Race to the Top application, he was counting on regional offices of education to help the state implement ISBE's reform agenda in much the same way that ODE works with their ESCs. Finally, he remarked that there is another task force working on special education funding and he would share the Ohio example with them as an interesting model.

After lunch Ms. Burkhardt reviewed several recommendations that ISBE drafted for the Task Force to consider and asked the Task Force members to reflect on the recommendations. Task force members worked in two groups and then returned with feedback.

For the first recommendation related to establishing a statewide coordinating council, the Task Force suggested explicitly including not just regional superintendents and ISBE, but also representatives from EFEs, special education cooperatives, and school districts. Mr. Burford remarked that the purpose of this coordinating council should be to focus on how the work of the educational service agencies in Illinois should be aligned with ISBE's policy priorities and outcomes. He further commented that in Ohio the ESC coordinating council members are trained by the state and then those regional leaders deliver training to districts. Dr. Koch remarked that the coordinating council could help ISBE determine the best way to provide services in Chicago and to coordinate services provided by LTCs. Representative Eddy agreed with Mr. Burford's recommendation to include several state agencies on the coordinating council because, for example with birth-3 programs, similar services may be provided by educational service agencies and health and human service agencies. Dr. Koch noted that the Governor's office currently has a commission examining exactly that question. Dr. Woodhull remarked that she agreed with Mr. Burford's steering vs. rowing analogy because the state board should focus on policy, funding, evaluation, and accountability while the educational service agencies should focus on implementation of the state's vision. The Task Force also recommended that one way to strengthen this recommendation would be to incorporate a system of ongoing learning and evaluation.

The second recommendation called for the coordination of services in each region, with the regional superintendent serving as the single point of contact to facilitate this coordination. The Task Force suggested explicitly mentioning services provided by EFEs and special education cooperatives and noted that a liaison at ISBE to facilitate this coordination would also be ideal. They also agreed that adding an example, such as the aligned system that Marc Kiehna has developed in ROE V, would help legislators understand the intent of the recommendation. Matt Klosterman, representing the Illinois Association of School Administrators, supported a single point of contact because parents in his region don't know how to access services because there are so many different points of contact that they get lost in the process. He remarked that a single point of contact will go a long way toward improving communication about and access to services for parents and the community.

Mr. Burford observed that each regional office does not need to be all things to all people. In Ohio, the ESC is the single point of contact, but they often subcontract with other organizations that specialize in a particular area or have developed relationships in a particular region. The regional superintendents in each region, and the statewide coordinating council, can also work collaboratively to identify ways in which educational service agencies can specialize in particular services. Darlene Ruscitti, of Area I, suggested strengthening the second recommendation to incorporate the idea of tiers of services. All regional offices would provide some services, such as training for bus drivers and certification for teachers, but then regional office could also specialize in developing entrepreneurial services in which their agencies have special expertise. These services can be marketed either within the region or statewide. For the third recommendation, focused on funding core services, Mr. Burford reiterated the importance of aligning funding with state priorities and implementation of those priorities. The Task Force also emphasized that the definition of core services could help to relieve the state of some of their burden as regional offices could begin to deliver some of the services that are currently provided by ISBE. Kay Poyner Brown argued that core services not be “flavor of the month” services, but rather big picture services that extend over longer periods, with the understanding that appropriate funding will follow.

The fourth recommendation was related to conducting an independent review of all existing funding structures that are in place across the state and the use of all federal and state dollars to determine what funds are available, how these funding streams interact, and how these funds can be used more efficiently in the future. Kay Pangle, of Area IV, recommended that ISBE conduct this review internally. However, several Task Force members countered that ISBE could not conduct an independent review of their own organization and welcomed the objectivity an external reviewer would bring to the process. Ms. Burkhardt remarked that it would be important to have an independent organization review data from multiple sources, obtain input and feedback from the field, and then enable the state to make decisions based upon the highest quality data. Task Force members also suggested that this recommendation include a target date for completion.

The final recommendation was related to implementing an accountability system for educational service agencies in Illinois. The Task Force suggested that ISBE work collaboratively with the regional offices to develop the performance standards for this accountability system. Kay Pangle noted that the annual audit could serve as the beginning of the development of the accountability system. Michael Johnson, representing the Illinois Association of School Boards, argued that these standards should also apply to ISBE when services were provided by the state agency. Marc Kiehna, of Area V, agreed that it makes sense to shine a light on the work of the regional offices and allow them to be judged in the court of public opinion. He welcomes a public and transparent report that outlines the strengths and weaknesses of his office. Larry Fillingim, of Area VI, remarked that regional superintendents who are not doing their job harm the reputation of the entire system of regional offices. Thus, he supports recommendations “with teeth” to remove leaders who are not performing. Representative Eddy mentioned the importance of training people in the regional offices about the standards for services that will be developed and the rubrics that will be used to evaluate those services.

Representative Eddy commented that, overall, these recommendations did not tackle the original intent of the legislation to improve communication with private schools and increase the efficiency of the delivery of services provided by educational service agencies within a particular region. Ms. Burkhardt agreed that the private schools piece could be added to the communication recommendation. However, she countered that to get to the end result of a more efficient system, the independent review of funding would be an essential first step.

Gineen O'Neil, Susanne Carrescia's designee to represent the Illinois Association of Administrators of Special Education, and Don Smoot, representing the Illinois Association of Career and Technical Education, remarked that they have to report back to their constituents, who are concerned that special education cooperatives and EFEs will be dissolved. Dr. Koch responded that it would be important, during the independent review, to examine the funding streams and identify inefficiencies. He noted that even if special education is funded differently, there is still a role for the special education cooperatives to play. The structures may evolve, but the same services will still need to be provided to support students with special needs. He recommended that Dr. O'Neil report to her board that the system is changing, regardless of how the Legislature acts on the Task Force's recommendations, because an increasing number of districts are withdrawing from special education cooperatives. Those cooperatives that are responsive to the needs of districts are well-positioned for the future, but the others will have to work harder to be more responsive. Preston Williams, Superintendent of Urbana School District 116, remarked that several smaller districts purchase services from his district because they are not getting the services they need from the cooperatives. Representative Eddy observed that restructuring doesn't mean that students would not receive services, but only that cooperatives might not provide all of those services in the future. Matt Klosterman agreed, noting that, of course, districts will look for the most efficient way to serve kids, especially as they receive less funding every year.

Ms. Burkhardt began to wrap the meeting up by remarking that ISBE will take what they heard today to recraft the recommendations and then circulate those revised recommendations to the group before submitting them to the Legislature and the Governor. Marc Kiehna encouraged Dr. Koch to share this vision with every ISBE employee and all of the regional offices of education. He commented that much of this vision can be implemented before any legislation is passed if everyone at ISBE and the educational service agencies share the same vision and work collaboratively to pull the wagon in the same direction.

The meeting was adjourned by Ms. Burkhardt.