I. Roll Call

Present
Jeff Aranowski – Chicago
Christina Campos – telephone
Rochelle Davis - Chicago
Lori Fanello – telephone
Karen Fox – telephone
Jennifer Gill – telephone
(Rick Sanders, proxy)
Heidi Grove – telephone
Matthew Rodriguez – telephone
Diane Rutledge - telephone
Deanna Sullivan - Springfield
Antoinette Taylor – Chicago

Not Present
Karen Hunter Anderson
Jean Becker
Stephanie Bernoteit
Diane Grigsby-Jackson
Madelyn James
Shenita Johnson
Beth Malik
Joseph McMahon
Melissa Mitchell
Harold Sweeney
Scott Wakeley
Crysta Weitekamp
Kevin Westall

II. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The meeting began at 10:05 a.m. A quorum was not reached.

III. Approval of Minutes from the February 23, 2017 Meeting

The minutes from the February 23 meeting were not approved as there was no quorum.


Julie West of the Illinois MTSS Network had previously presented to the Commission along with Michele Carmichael of ISBE and wanted to provide an update on the professional learning opportunities the Network continues to develop and provide through training, coaching, and technical assistance to assist districts build their capacity to deliver MTSS. Trainings are offered statewide either in person or by virtual means through webinars and voice-over PowerPoints. There is content available on their website as well as opportunities for people to sign up for professional learning opportunities. Although anyone across the state can access their training materials, their target audiences are district and school-level teams. MTSS provides the framework for improving student outcomes, and its focus is on the whole child in the following areas: academics, behavior, attendance, social/emotional, and overall wellness. MTSS helps districts develop and maintain the continuous supports necessary to assist students and staff with a systemic approach. That enables a proactive approach to identify and meet those needs by using data to inform decision-making across all levels - district, school, and classroom levels. Once a district has this framework in place, they can effectively implement and sustain any evidence-based practice to make improvements in every area, including attendance.
Ms. West said there are 17 districts the Illinois MTSS Network is currently supporting with on-site training and coaching activities with follow-up technical assistance. Among other supports, the Network builds upon District Improvement Plans (DIP) and School Improvement Plans (SIP) rather than have districts/schools create new action plans. Multiple improvement plans can cause silos to form, so the Network helps coordinate plans.

Included in the Network’s Transformation Zone category are the Springfield and Granite City districts as they are implementing the statewide improvement plan with a focus on MTSS and early literacy with onsite coaching once a week. Other support categories for districts include -

- **IL-Aware** which is focused on building tiered interventions for social/emotional needs into districts’ systems of support,
- **IL CSI** which is a collaboration with the Center for School Supports to help districts on a variety of issues, and
- **Special Circumstances** through which districts receive assistance either at their request or as a result of a monitoring issue.

Rochelle Davis asked about assessments of need for districts, and Ms. West said there are multiple measures of need and determination of priority areas.

Ms. Taylor asked what the extent of the involvement is between the Illinois MTSS Network and the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), and Ms. West said the two districts in the Network’s Transformation Zone - Springfield and Granite City - are the pilot programs for the SSIP.

Ms. Taylor also informed Ms. West that two bills had been introduced, one in the Senate and one in the House within the Illinois General Assembly to define chronic absence. As an external partner to ISBE, Ms. Taylor asked about the Network’s potential involvement with districts’ efforts to address chronic absence. Ms. West indicated her organization is very eager to begin this work. She said the data that will be produced as a result of the legislative action to define chronic absence will enable the Network to support districts in their efforts to respond to student need. Ms. Taylor expressed her feeling that through involvement with the Illinois MTSS Network, districts can learn to drill down into their data and uncover the reasons for student absence, the populations affected, and the grade levels at which absences are occurring.

Ms. West concurred and said attendance data is automatically part of their programming with districts, part of their early warning system. Districts are always encouraged to use their data when seeking to problem-solve.

Deanna Sullivan inquired if the Illinois MTSS Network had presented to the Illinois Balanced Accountability Measure (IBAM) committee because she felt the Network would be instrumental in guiding efforts to gather data and offer supports, and Ms. West responded that she was unaware of any communication between the Illinois MTSS Network and IBAM. Ms. Taylor said it was essential that a connection is made, so she will see that representatives from the two initiatives are connected.

Ms. Taylor also informed the Commission that Illinois has an Early Childhood MTSS Committee (formerly a steering committee), and Ms. West has been invited to serve on that committee to link early childhood programming with the statewide MTSS effort.
V. **School Report Card Terminology** (10 minutes)
Mr. Aranowski reminded the group that at the last meeting, there had been some discussion about the terminology that is embedded within the state’s interactive school report card. He had promised he would supply appropriate definitions and information to clarify the data collection process. He provided the Commission with copies of the instructions for school districts to complete the school report card form. He enumerated the categories for district data collection: student attendance, chronic truants, parental contact, student mobility/turnover, school year, health and wellness, elementary class size, amount of time devoted to certain subjects, high school class size, and ethnicity. He wanted to make a distinction between the average daily attendance that is reported on this report card (throughout the school year) and the average daily attendance figures (best three months of attendance during the school year) that are used to determine the allotment of state aid to districts through the funding formula. When student attendance is referred to in the school interactive report, it is a reference to two data collections through ISBE’s Student Information System (SIS): one that is taken on the last day of September and another before the school year ends. Those numbers are reconciled which allows for consideration of mobility statistics, the number of children moving in and out. By capturing the data on two separate dates, districts get a better picture of what the reality of their attendance data is.

There are three different attendance metrics on the interactive school report cards: number of attendance days (176 required), number of days of student attendance (a compilation of how many students were in school each day), and the average daily attendance figure for state aid (the best three months of attendance). Mr. Aranowski also noted that the form provides space for attendance data of certain subgroups: limited-English-proficient, migrant students, students with IEPs, and low-income students.

With regard to the definition of a school day of attendance, Mr. Aranowski said there is very little in the School Code that offers anything that rises to the level of a definition, but there are statutory requirements about what constitutes full and half days of attendance. The School Code defines what constitutes average daily attendance (average of three best months of attendance for GSA purposes). In districts that do not hold year-round classes, days of attendance in August are added to the month of September and any days of attendance in June are added to the month of May. In districts, however, in which all buildings hold year-round classes, days of attendance in July and August are added to the month of September, and any days of attendance in June shall be added to the month of May.

VI. **Legislative Review – Definition of a School Day of Attendance** (20 minutes)
105 ILCS 5/18-8.05 (F) (1) (c) stipulates that a school day is “not less than 5 clock hours of school work per day under the direct supervision of: (i) teachers, or (ii) non-teaching personnel or volunteer personnel when engaging in non-teaching duties and supervising.” This does not include recess, lunchtime, or passing periods as it only includes instructional time. There are, however, some students who are enrolled on a part time basis within school districts, so there are separate calculations for children in the following groups:
- special needs under 6 years of age – 4 hours constitute a full day, 1 hour constitutes a half day
- remote educational programs- credited 1/5 hour for every clock hour a student is enrolled off-site and completing work
• home/hospital instruction – 4 hours of instruction constitute a full day, 1 hour constitutes a half day of instruction
• kindergarten and first grade - 4 hours of instruction constitute a full day, 2 hours constitute a half day of instruction.

Other exceptions include home-schooled or private school students who show up on district enrollments due to drivers’ education training or other coursework and for whom there is a separate attendance calculation (1/6 of an hour for every 40 minutes of instruction).

There are district-wide calculations as well with so many configurations:
• Parent/Teacher Conferences
• Teacher In-services
• State Assessment Administration

A district can count as a full day a day with 3 instructional hours for students and 2 hours of in-service training for teachers or parent/teacher conferences. Districts can also bank time for full days of in-service trainings or conferences. Days when student assessments are administered are counted as instructional days.

Ms. Taylor asked about charter schools and how their longer school days are accommodated in the calculations of whole and half days. Mr. Aranowski said minimum calendar requirements and provisions in Article 18 of the School Code are not expressly applicable to charter schools, so charter schools are basically exempt from everything in the School Code except those provisions that were passed expressly for charter schools. When charter school contracts are being negotiated between the charter management organization and the school district, or for a charter school that is being seen over by the Charter School Commission, you will see that their calendars reflect the one utilized by the district in which they are located and is part of the negotiated agreement. Mr. Aranowski added that ISBE now has a Quality School Options staff who are good resources for questions about charter schools.

Ms. Taylor recalled that there had been a discussion at a previous meeting of the need to establish, beyond what has already been legislated, what is meant by a full and a half day of school. She asked the Commission administrator to read Outcome #1 from the legislation that created the Illinois Attendance Commission:

“A standard for attendance and chronic absenteeism, defining attendance as a calculation of standard clock hours in a day that equal(s) a full day based on instructional minutes for both a half day and a full day per learning environment.”

She then asked Rochelle Davis if the references to full and half days of school in the legislation cited by Mr. Aranowski was sufficient. Ms. Davis recalled that she had been more concerned about the need for a definition of chronic absence as referred to in Outcome #1 and was now satisfied as one had been introduced legislatively and the same definition was written into the state’s plan for implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). She further recommended that the Attendance Commission extend formal support to the definition of chronic absence as enunciated in the state’s ESSA plan as well as the inclusion of attendance as a school quality indicator in ESSA’s new accountability metric.
Mr. Aranowski proposed that that one of the Commission’s workgroups ensures that the work of the Commission intersects with the state’s implementation of ESSA.

Ms. Taylor said she worries about the average parent or guardian, sometimes a grandparent or a great-grandparent, who might not understand the language within the School Code. Ms. Davis said she thinks that is part of the mission of Outcome #5:

“New initiatives and responses to ongoing challenges presented by chronic absenteeism.”

VII. Workgroup Update (10 minutes)
The Commission administrator explained that the workgroups were formed around the Commission’s legislated outcomes: Definitions, Data Systems, Best Practices, Attendance Awareness Campaign, Special Populations, and Legislative Bridge.

Mr. Aranowski said there is a new director of Illinois Empower, the new statewide system of support platform, and many efforts and initiatives will coalesce under this office. Illinois Empower is currently engaged in the vendor approval process with potential service providers.

Ms. Taylor said there would be more discussion at the April meeting of the workgroups, and members will be encouraged to sign up to serve on one. There will also be a discussion on the Open Meeting Act mandates regarding to Commission subgroup meetings.

VIII. Ethics Statements (5 minutes)
The Commission administrator informed the group that seven Commission members had not submitted evidence of completion of the 2017 Ethics Training for Appointees to Illinois Boards. Ms. Taylor set a deadline of April 14 for all certificates of training completion to be submitted. Mr. Aranowski informed Commission members that noncompliance with this mandate could result in an audit finding for ISBE as the agency was appointed to provide administrative support to the Illinois Attendance Commission.

IX. Public Comment (5 minutes)
There were no comments from the public.

X. New Business and Open Discussion – Update on Legislation (15 minutes)
The ESSA plan was approved by the State Board of Education and will be submitted to the U. S. Department of Education by April 3. Illinois’s ESSA plan contains a definition for chronic absenteeism which is the subject of some proposed legislation before the General Assembly. She reminded Commission members that the Commission had deliberated a definition for chronic absence at the December 2016 meeting but had not reached consensus. The Commission administrator had attempted to call for a meeting in early January to continue the discussion, but there was limited availability of the necessary v-tel rooms between Springfield and Chicago. Commission members were also asked at the December 2016 meeting to submit their ideas for a definition of chronic absenteeism to the Commission administrator. Ms. Taylor also met with Beth Purvis, chair of the P-20 Council and Sara Boucek, chair of the IBAM committee as these groups were also forming definitions for chronic absence in conjunction with ESSA implementation planning as school attendance is a school quality indicator in that plan.
House Bill 3139 and Senate Bill 1947 were submitted and have both passed out of committee, according to Deanna Sullivan. She explained it is helpful that the bills in each house are consistent with one another with identical language around the collection of chronic absence data and provision of supports to chronically absent students. Ms. Taylor thanked Roger Eddy, the executive director of the Illinois Association of School Boards (for whom Ms. Sullivan works) and a former legislator, who also serves on the IBAM committee for his involvement with the legislation and other initiatives to define chronic absenteeism in Illinois.

Amends the School Code. Provides that beginning July 1, 2018, every school district, charter school, or alternative school or any school receiving public funds shall collect and review its chronic absence data and determine what systems of support and resources are needed to engage chronically absent students and their families to encourage the habit of daily attendance and promote success. Provides that school districts, charter schools, or alternative schools or any school receiving public funds shall provide a system of support to students who are at risk of reaching or exceeding chronic absence levels with strategies such as those available through the Illinois Multi-tiered Systems of Support Network. Requires schools to make resources available to support and engage students.

House Committee Amendment No. 1
Provides that certain schools are encouraged to (rather than shall) provide a system of support to students who are at risk of reaching or exceeding chronic absence levels. Provides that schools are additionally encouraged to (rather than shall) make certain resources available to families to support and engage students and their families.

"Chronic absence" means absences that total 10% or more of 10 school days of the most recent academic school year, including absences with and without valid cause, as defined in Section 12-26-2a of this Code, and out-of-school suspensions for an enrolled student.

Mr. Aranowski updated the Commission on a bill (HB261) that was introduced in the General Assembly on behalf of homeless students. This bill would permit districts to provide housing assistance rather than transportation costs. This bill has passed out of committee.

Amends the School Code. Provides that if a child loses permanent housing and becomes a homeless person, within the meaning of the Act, and the parent or guardian of the child finds temporary housing or shelter that still renders the child homeless within the meaning of the Act and if the school district of the child’s school of origin is thereby required to pay the transportation costs of the child to and from his or her school of origin and the school district can save money by providing housing assistance to the parent or guardian of the child such that it would allow the child to attend his or her school of origin instead of providing transportation to and from the child’s school of origin, then the school district may, at its discretion, provide rental or mortgage assistance. Sets forth provisions concerning the amount of assistance, providing the assistance indirectly through a homeless assistance agency, providing assistance to those at
risk of homelessness, the length of assistance provided, and the school district funds from which the assistance may be drawn.

HJR11 promotes a public relations campaign around school attendance and was adopted out of the House and is being picked up in the Senate by Senator Jacqueline Collins.

Encourages the Illinois State Board of Education and each school district in this State to consider the benefits of the attendance awareness campaign "Every Student Counts, Every Day Matters" encouraged by the Illinois Attendance Commission.

Ms. Taylor reported that the National Student Attendance, Engagement, and Success Center will convene a virtual conference on April 3-4 under a grant obtained during the Obama administration. Ms. Taylor said the future of the Every Student, Every Day initiative is uncertain due to the change in national leadership, but the grant providing funding for this seminar will run for two years. Robert Balfanz of the Everyone Graduates Center (EGC) and Patricia Balana of Jobs for the Future (JFF) are the keynote speakers for the virtual conference.

Ms. Sullivan informed the Commission that Senator Robert Pritchard introduced a bill (HB3059) to require school districts to report attendance by grade level for the purpose of increased transparency.

Amends the School Code. Requires a school district’s school report card to include average daily attendance by grade level.

XI. Adjourn
Since a quorum had not been achieved, there was no need for a formal adjournment.