

**Approved**  
**02/14/2024**

Illinois State Board of Education  
ISBE Board Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
100 N. First Street, Springfield, IL  
*Meeting also held via webinar*

Finance and Audit Committee of the Whole Minutes  
January 23, 2024

1. **Roll Call**

Chair Dr. Christine Benson brought the meeting to order at 2 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was present with five members attending in person and one attending virtually. Chair Benson, Dr. Sherly Chavarria, Laura Gonzalez, Dr. Steven Isoye, and Dr. Donna Leak were physically present, and Dr. Patricia Nugent attended via video conference. Dr. James Anderson, Roger Eddy, and Dr. Anna Grassellino were absent. State Superintendent Dr. Tony Sanders was also in attendance.

Chair Benson stated that members would consider the participation of Dr. Nugent via video conference due to employment purposes. In accordance with the bylaws of the Illinois State Board of Education, the Board may permit a member to participate by other means if they cannot physically attend a meeting because of employment purposes.

Dr. Chavarria moved that the State Board of Education permit the participation of Dr. Nugent via video conference. Dr. Leak seconded the motion, and it passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

**Members Present**

Chair Dr. Christine Benson  
Dr. Sherly Chavarria  
Laura Gonzalez  
Dr. Steven Isoye  
Dr. Donna Leak  
Dr. Patricia Nugent

**Members Absent**

Dr. James Anderson  
Roger Eddy  
Dr. Anna Grassellino

**Staff Present**

Dr. Tony Sanders, State Superintendent  
Jo Ireland, Board Services Coordinator  
Kim Clarke, Executive Assistant to the State Superintendent  
Kristen Kennedy, Chief Legal Officer  
Dr. Kimako Patterson, Chief of Staff  
Krish Mohip, Chief Education Officer – Operations  
Dr. Matt Seaton, Chief Financial Officer  
Tassi Maton, Chief Internal Audit Officer  
Dr. Jason Helfer, Chief Education Officer – Instruction  
Irma Snopek, Chief Policy and Communications Officer  
Melissa Oller, Chief Operating Officer  
Edobor Efam, Chief Information Officer  
Dr. Christine Paxson, Director of School/District Improvement  
Madan Damodaran, Director of Software Solutions  
Jennifer Saba, Executive Director of Innovation and Improvement  
Thomas Bazan, Director of Budget  
Marci Johnson, Director of CTE  
David Williams, Director of Technology Support and Infrastructure  
Rae Clementz, Executive Director of Data, Accountability and Assessment  
Angela Foxall, Director of Assessment  
Jeff Aranowski, Executive Director of Safe and Healthy Climate  
Ann Whalen, Chief Advisor to Early Childhood Transition

Iliana El-Khailani, Executive Director of Specialized Instruction  
Dr. Erica Thieman, Director of Standards and Instruction  
Derreck Langwith, Director of ROE/ISC  
Dana Stoerger, Executive Director of Legislative Affairs  
Julia Strehlow, Learning Renewal – Social Emotional Learning Lead

**2. Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**3. Approval of Minutes: December 12, 2023**

Dr. Nugent moved that the Finance and Audit Committee of the Whole hereby approve the Dec. 12, 2023, meeting minutes. Ms. Gonzalez seconded the motion, and it passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

**4. Superintendent's Consent Agenda – January 24, 2023**

There were no questions regarding the Consent Agenda items. Dr. Leak cited the item titled "Contracts & Grants Over \$1 Million – Invitation for Bid – Software Solutions & Special Education Systems – One Business Analyst, One Developer," which is both state- and federally funded, as an example of how Illinois uses federal funds to support ongoing work in the state.

**5. Discussion and Approval**

A. Contracts & Grants Over \$1 Million – Discussion and Approval of FY 2024 Continuation School Improvement Grants

Director of School/District Improvement Dr. Christine Paxson discussed this item.

Dr. Chavarria asked how local education agencies could use School Improvement funds. Dr. Paxson said that ISBE provides guidance to schools on how to develop new curriculum and implement best practices and school improvement efforts. Schools can also hire external partners through a procurement process, with 60 approved learning partners currently listed on the ISBE website. Dr. Chavarria asked if there would be evidence of the impact of the grants at the end of the five-year cycle, and Dr. Paxson said that ISBE could provide a report. Dr. Benson added that these grants allow districts to explore innovative solutions even when the local budget is tight. Dr. Chavarria agreed that this is particularly important with Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding soon to end.

**6. Upcoming February Board Action**

A. Contracts & Grants Over \$1 Million – Truant's Alternative and Optional Education Program Grant Notice of Funding Opportunities – Request for Proposals

Director of ROE/ISC Derreck Langwith discussed this item.

Dr. Benson asked if the goals and objectives of the program had changed in the last few years. Mr. Langwith said that they had not.

Dr. Chavarria asked how these programs are addressing the rising trend of truancy since the start of the pandemic, expressing interest in the most effective strategies. Mr. Langwith said that he could put together a report on the impact of the grants. He added that ISBE has held two webinars on policies and requirements on chronic absenteeism and truancy intervention strategies.

Dr. Leak requested a map of the state displaying the data on students impacted by the grants. She said she had noticed that there were more white students impacted by the program and wondered if there was a geographical reason. Mr. Langwith said that he would provide that.

B. Contracts & Grants Over \$1 Million – Approval of Amendment to Migrant Education Coordination Intergovernmental Agreement

Executive Director of Specialized Instruction Iliana El-Khailani discussed this item.

Dr. Leak asked if it would be difficult to find the necessary staff for this program. Ms. El-Khailani said that she hoped that offering full-time employment rather than part time would help to address the hiring difficulties.

### C. Contracts & Grants Over \$1 Million – Approval of Technology Support & Infrastructure ISBE Technology Infrastructure Hardware Term Expansion

Director of Technology Support and Infrastructure David Williams discussed this item.

Dr. Leak asked to confirm that this contract was for an additional three years, given that the ESSER III funds to be used to purchase it will run out before the three years are up. She asked how the agency will extend beyond that cliff. Mr. Williams explained that this was an upfront purchase, even though it provides both hardware and service support. Dr. Benson asked to confirm that this was allowed using ESSER funds, and Mr. Williams confirmed this, saying that the item had been sent to the U.S. Department of Education.

## 7. Internal Audit Updates

Chief Internal Audit Officer Tassi Maton discussed this item.

Dr. Benson asked if there were any surprises in the final audit. Ms. Maton said that there were no surprises. However, she noted that they had tested programs run with ESSER funds, and in the future, they would return to testing the programs they had originally audited before the pandemic.

## 8. Discussion Items

### A. FY 2025 Budget Discussion

Chief Financial Officer Dr. Matt Seaton discussed the superintendent's recommendations for the fiscal year 2025 education budget. He shared that the total FY 2025 recommendation for education will be just over \$11 billion, a 6.3% increase over the FY 2024 appropriation. The FY 2025 budget includes a \$350 million recommended increase in Evidence-Based Funding (EBF). Dr. Seaton also explained that Career and Technical Education funding will be recommended at \$58 million, a 21.5% increase from the FY 2024 appropriation.

The FY 2025 budget recommendation also includes \$10 million to the Resilience Education to Advance Community Healing (REACH) Statewide Initiative, as well as \$8 million for Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Hubs. Both programs – as well as Principal Mentoring, Affinity Groups, the Student Care Department at ISBE, and New Educator Coaching and Mentoring – had previously been funded with federal COVID-19 relief dollars, which will run out in September 2024. Dr. Seaton noted that only 4-5% of the ESSER funding that was given to ISBE during the pandemic will be requested to be continued using state General Revenue funds.

Dr. Chavarria asked how it was decided which ESSER programs to continue. Dr. Seaton said that each program had been analyzed and those in high-priority program areas were kept. He noted that high-impact tutoring would be discontinued because the number of students served was lower than in other programs. He added that when the budget book comes out, the programs recommended to continue will have significant data. Dr. Chavarria encouraged reflection on lessons learned from COVID-era programs.

The superintendent will also recommend \$35 million for FY 2025 to help schools meet the unique needs of newcomers to Illinois. This funding would support hiring bilingual staff and interpreters, offering before- and after-school care, providing professional development and materials, and more. Dr. Sanders mentioned that there have been over 60,000 newcomer students to Illinois across 475 school districts, making this a critical statewide issue. Dr. Leak added that social-emotional supports for newcomer students are crucial, asking that funding for this be incorporated. Dr. Seaton noted that these funds are meant to be flexible. Dr. Chavarria suggested finding ways to release funding periodically throughout the year and allowing it to follow newcomer students if they switch schools.

Dr. Benson inquired if a capital line item for CTE would be implemented. Dr. Seaton said that there were no specific funds for capital improvements for CTE included in the FY 2025 budget. Dr. Chavarria asked to confirm that the new CTE funding formula will hold harmless. Marci Johnson, director of CTE, said that the formula will ensure that no one will lose money as long as CTE is funded at an additional \$10 million.

Dr. Chavarria asked why ISBE was recommending a \$350 million increase in EBF. Dr. Sanders said that that was the initially agreed-upon number when EBF was adopted, explaining that he wanted to make sure EBF would rise adequately over the long term. He noted the need to balance EBF funding requests with other priority programs, given that the legislature would likely not fund all programs at the agency-recommended level. Dr. Seaton added that many districts have had to use EBF funding to offset mandated categorical shortfalls, so asking for additional funding in that category would free up more of districts' EBF dollars for other purposes.

Dr. Leak asked when the field would be made aware of the programs that would be discontinued, noting that some schools may be under the impression that the ESSER programs will continue. Dr. Seaton said that there has been significant communication with the field that all ESSER programs will end in September. Dr. Leak recommended communicating the same message to all universities involved. Dr. Leak also asked if ISBE is already aware of any member initiatives. Dr. Sanders said no, except for a possible member initiative related to inclusion.

Dr. Leak inquired as to why the recommended funding for assessments was decreasing. Angela Foxall, director of Assessment, stated that the number had been higher in past years due to alternate assessments and supports related to the pandemic. Dr. Seaton added that ISBE is currently in procurement stages for other assessments, which often results in a slight decrease or holding steady in the assessment cost. Ms. Foxall confirmed that, should the real cost exceed the current estimate, the agency expects to be able to cover the cost.

Dr. Leak also mentioned the SEL Hubs, which had a very high participation rate of 83% of school districts. She asked how this level of participation could be replicated with other programs. Executive Director of Safe and Healthy Climate Jeff Aranowski cited the flexible and individualized nature of the programs as particularly effective. Julia Strehlow, project lead on the Learning Renewal team, added that localized approaches, coaching, one-on-one meetings, and technical support from ISBE were all successful. Dr. Leak encouraged the agency to study the methodology that had made the SEL Hubs particularly effective in order to replicate it in the future. Ms. Strehlow added that the hubs had delivered a very wide range of services and that she would be happy to share research on SEL Hubs with the Board.

## **9. New Business: Items for the Next Agenda**

Dr. Benson suggested thinking about how to use student voice to inform the Board's discussions.

## **10. Next Meeting: February 14, 2024**

## **11. Adjourn**

Dr. Leak moved to adjourn. Ms. Gonzalez seconded the motion, and it passed by a unanimous roll call vote. Chair Benson adjourned the committee at 3:15 p.m.