

Approved
1/14/2025

Illinois State Board of Education
ISBE Board Room, 4th Floor
100 N. 1st St., Springfield, IL

Finance and Audit Committee of the Whole Minutes
December 17, 2024

1. Roll Call

Committee Chair Dr. Patricia Nugent brought the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was present with six members attending in person. Dr. Sherly Chavarria attended via video conference. Dr. Anna Grassellino and Dr. James Anderson were absent. State Superintendent Dr. Tony Sanders also was in attendance.

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

Chair Nugent stated that members would consider the participation of Dr. Chavarria 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.

Members Present

Committee Chair Dr. Patricia Nugent
Dr. Steven Isoye
Dr. Donna Leak
Dr. Christine Benson
Dr. Sherly Chavarria (virtual)
Roger Eddy
Laura Gonzalez

Members Absent

Dr. James Anderson
Dr. Anna Grassellino

Staff Present

Dr. Tony Sanders, State Superintendent
Jo Ireland, Board Services Coordinator
Kim Clarke, Executive Assistant to the State Superintendent
Isabel Schoeman, Special Assistant to the State Superintendent
Kristen Kennedy, Chief Legal Officer
Dr. Kimako Patterson, Chief of Staff
Dr. Matt Seaton, Chief Financial Officer
Dr. Jason Helfer, Chief Education Officer – Instruction (virtual)
Jennifer Saba, Chief Education Officer – Operations
Tassi Maton, Chief Internal Audit Officer
Melissa Oller, Chief Operating Officer
Edobor Efam, Chief Information Officer
Irma Snopek, Chief Policy & Communications Officer
Ann Whalen, Chief Advisor to Early Childhood Transition
Joyce Gronewold, Executive Director of Specialized Instruction
Rae Clementz, Executive Director of Data, Accountability, and Instruction
Dr. Ronda Dawson, Executive Director of Teaching & Learning
Tom Bazan, Director of Budget & Financial Management
Marci Johnson, Director of CTE
Dr. Nakia Douglas, Director of Special Education
Milton Leathers, Director of Accountability
David Turovets, Director of Charter Schools
Donna Schroeder, Supervisor of Software Solutions
Emily Fox, Director of Educator Effectiveness
Casey Wills, Principal Consultant for School/District Improvement (virtual)
Dana Stoerger, Director of Legislative Affairs (virtual)
Nick Heckel, Supervisor of School/District Improvement (virtual)

Tiffany Burnett, Executive Director of Safe & Healthy Climate (virtual)
Twylia Bennett, Assistant Director of Special Education (virtual)
Dr. Christine Paxson, Executive Director of Improvement & Innovation

2. Public Participation

Bryce Hansen, Director of the Bloomington Area Career Center, spoke on Career and Technical Education (CTE) funding. He began by thanking the Board for the \$10.3 million increase in CTE funding for fiscal year 2025 and elaborated on the positive impact this funding has had on CTE programs and students. He advocated for continued increased funding for CTE in FY 2026 in the form of an increase of \$10 million in CTE funding and a \$25 million allocation annually for area career centers and high school CTE program expansion. He shared that Bloomington Area Career Center has experienced significant growth in the past year and acquired a new facility for the next year, making an area career center line item especially valuable to his program and would allow for significant socioeconomic mobility for participants and return on investment.

Juletta Ellis, Director of the South Central Illinois Regional Workforce Training and Innovation Center (SCI Litchfield), spoke on CTE funding. She described the unique challenges that SCI Litchfield faces as a CTE facility that serves nine rural school districts and their plans to add an industrial technology maintenance program to support manufacturing careers in the fall of 2025. Ms. Ellis explained that this new initiative is made possible by a grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Job Training and Economic Development Program, but she is concerned about maintaining these impactful programs after the grant funding ends. She requested a continued increase in CTE funding, including a \$10 million increase in the CTE line item in the FY 2026 budget and the creation of a \$25 million line item to develop and expand area career centers.

3. Approval of Minutes: Nov. 21, 2024

Dr. Leak moved that the Finance and Audit Committee of the Whole hereby approve the Nov. 21, 2024, meeting minutes. Ms. Gonzalez seconded the motion, and it passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

4. Superintendent's Consent Agenda – December 18, 2024

There were no questions regarding the Superintendent's Consent Agenda.

5. Upcoming January Board Action Items

A. Contracts & Grants Over \$1 Million – Approval of Two Developers for Educator Effectiveness Applications

Supervisor of Software Solutions Donna Schroeder discussed this item and the next.

Chair Nugent asked if there is a list of what will be done with the Annual Program Report reporting system. Ms. Schroeder replied that Director of Educator Effectiveness Emily Fox can provide that information. Chair Nugent mentioned her awareness of the requirement to collect information about the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan and her desire to ensure all bases are covered as the agency moves forward. Ms. Schroeder offered to obtain a list from Ms. Fox, and Dr. Sanders affirmed that the team could provide a list to Chair Nugent by the following day. Chief Information Officer Edobor Efam agreed.

B. Contracts & Grants Over \$1 Million – Approval of Invitation for Bid – One Developer for Nutrition Systems

Dr. Leak confirmed with Ms. Schroeder that the current contract ISBE has with this developer expires in June 2025. Dr. Leak asked if the projections for the contract in this memo are in line with the amount of ISBE's current contract with the developer, and Ms. Schroeder estimated that the two would be close to equivalent. Ms. Schroeder added that this contract would average to about \$100 per hour, which is the average expected cost, and a top contract would cost significantly more by about \$30 per hour, so an Invitation for Bid (IFB) is much cheaper. Dr. Leak reaffirmed her desire to compare ISBE's current contract with this proposed cost, and Ms. Schroeder confirmed that this is the average price for a developer IFB.

C. Contracts & Grants Over \$1 Million – Approval of Request for Proposals IDEA, Part B, Preschool Discretionary Grant Project – STAR NET

Executive Director of Specialized Instruction Joyce Gronewold discussed this item and the next.

Chair Nugent requested matching statistics for FY 2024 and FY 2025 to those included in the memo for FY 2026-2028 to be able to do a comparison. Ms. Gronewold said she could provide those.

Dr. Leak asked for a reminder of which regions discussed by Ms. Gronewold were combined. Chair Nugent and Ms. Gronewold confirmed that regions 1 and 3 were combined. Dr. Leak commented that the combined region is

very large. Dr. Leak then asked what the size of the population served in that combined region is by comparison to other regions. Ms. Gronewold said she did not have those numbers at this moment but could provide them soon. Dr. Leak expressed her interest in making sure we can serve the population in that region to the best of our ability if it is comparatively large.

D. Contracts & Grants Over \$1 Million – Approval of Request for Proposals IDEA, Part B, Discretionary Grant Project – Early CHOICES

Chair Nugent confirmed that the relevant data from 2023 included in the report provided to the Board was related to a three-year grant cycle, and Ms. Gronewold confirmed. Chair Nugent highlighted that two member initiatives for FY 2024 and FY 2025 were also included for \$500,000 each and asked for more data on how the money has been used in previous years to compare what that spending looked like as opposed to what is being requested. She further requested any additional information on increases in funding requested. Ms. Gronewold said she would have to discuss with the early childhood team and interim director. Chair Nugent expressed appreciation and her belief that this information will be very helpful for when the Board votes on the measure in January.

Dr. Leak also noted the member initiative for FY 2024 and FY 2025 and asked if it is an ongoing member initiative. Ms. Gronewold said she would have to confirm but believes that for FY 2025 it was just a new allocation. Dr. Leak replied that she was interested in seeing if this is a rolling initiative with Early CHOICES. Mr. Eddy added that member initiatives need to be done every year and the member must request it be included in the budget annually. He hypothesized that since this is a federally funded member initiative, it is likely easy to renew, but they still must request it each year.

Chair Nugent noticed that the FY 2025 member initiative mentions expanding statewide support for the services and shared her interest in seeing if they were successful in doing so. Mr. Eddy wondered if in order to get continued support for this member initiative it had to be expanded to more regions. Dr. Leak agreed that she wonders if the initiative is ongoing for one area or if there has been more statewide support with the money set aside by the federal grant.

E. Contracts & Grants Over \$1 Million – Approval of Budget Amendment – Qualified Language Interpreters Training

Director of Special Education Dr. Nakia Douglas discussed this item.

Chair Nugent remembered that the last time the Board saw this data they questioned why there were so many spots in the program taken but still high numbers of participants not completing the program. Dr. Douglas said she is happy to see that the numbers for completion have increased. Chair Nugent asked Dr. Douglas if there is additional support for students who are still unable to pass as well as the estimated number of qualified language interpreters we need and how long this program must continue in order to meet the need. Dr. Douglas said she needs to confirm the total number for need, but she knows that we have not yet reached that number and ISBE must continue to grow the program and make more seats available. Dr. Douglas added that the training currently focuses on Spanish, but multiple other languages must be added in order to meet need and they are still investigating the need in those areas. Chair Nugent noticed that there were two sessions in the summer and two sessions in the fall offered and asked if one step towards growth has been to add more sessions. Dr. Douglas confirmed that her team is working to expand seats and has already increased the spaces available from 44 to 88 per semester. Dr. Nugent said that the increased capacity explains the increased ask for funding as well.

Dr. Leak asked if the program has a waitlist. Dr. Douglas confirmed there is a waitlist and that it fills up very fast. Dr. Douglas remarked that ISBE has a strong partnership with the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign in trying to meet need but there is still a high demand.

F. Contracts & Grants Over \$1 Million – Approval of eGMS System Upgrades Request for Sealed Proposal

Chief Financial Officer Matt Seaton discussed this item and the next.

Mr. Eddy asked if one of the results of these upgrades will be that data for different grants will be stored in a way that they can be connected to one another. Dr. Seaton replied that one of his team's goals with this system is to build an application program interface that would allow for communication between grants so that common information entered for grants would be shared amongst all platforms. Mr. Eddy and other board members expressed excitement for this initiative, and Mr. Eddy shared some other possible upgrades he can imagine being included with this system. Dr. Seaton said his team is familiar with products used by other states with much more modern functionality and they are hoping to interview candidates in that space to see what their products entail.

Chair Nugent noted this vote would be on the first five years of the initiative with an option to renew after totaling nine years. Dr. Seaton affirmed and clarified that while this is more or less a five-year contract with a five-year renewal, as FY 2025 is the first year, but not much progress is expected before June 30, 2025, so there will be nine years remaining after FY 2025.

Dr. Leak thanked Dr. Seaton and his team. Dr. Seaton acknowledged the hard work of his team and shared their hopes to find a product that best supports the state of Illinois and its students. Chair Nugent stated that this initiative aligns well with ISBE's Strategic Plan. Mr. Efram clarified that it aligns with the portion of the plan related to systems optimization. Chair Nugent requested that the connection to the strategic plan be added to the memo.

G. Contracts & Grants Over \$1 Million – Approval of Illuminative Strategies Contract for Phase 2 Work

Chair Nugent asked if there is any connection of this initiative to the ELIS system. Dr. Seaton said that it is a separate system that has not yet been explored in this regard but nothing is off the table at this point.

6. Internal Audit Updates

Chief Internal Audit Officer Tassi Maton led this discussion. She shared that the FY 2023 Statewide Single Audit is likely nearing conclusion. She continued that the FY 2024 Statewide Single Audit is continuing with the audit firm KPMG; and the FY 2024 Financial Audit and the FY 2023-24 Compliance Examination are entering the review stage and should conclude within the next month. She hoped to be able to share more at the January Finance and Audit Committee Meeting of the Whole.

Chair Nugent shared that she met with Ms. Maton earlier in the day to learn about upcoming audit steps and the Board should expect more updates in January.

7. New Business: Items for the Next Agenda

There were no new items for the next agenda.

8. Next Meeting: Jan. 14, 2025

9. Adjourn

Mr. Eddy moved to adjourn. Dr. Benson seconded the motion, and it passed by a unanimous roll call vote. Chair Nugent adjourned the committee at 2:44 p.m.