

**Illinois State Board of Education
Innovation, Intervention, and Restructuring Task Force**

**November 23, 2009
Minutes**

The first meeting of the Innovation, Intervention, and Restructuring Task Force was called to order at 10:09 a.m. by Dr. Sam Redding of the Center on Innovation and Improvement. One member of the task force was absent and one member was represented by his designee. A list of the task force members in attendance appears on the final page of this document. After welcoming the task force members, Dr. Redding asked the members to introduce themselves. In addition to the appointed task force members, Jonathan Furr was in attendance to support the Illinois State Board of Education. No additional guests arrived at the meeting to participate during the public participation period.

Senator Steans, who introduced the legislation that called for the task force to be created, provided the task force members with some background. Robin Steans, of Advance Illinois, Senator Steans, and the Governor's office worked closely together to draft this legislation to help the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) build capacity and increase flexibility for schools in Illinois. Senator Steans is also the co-chair of the Independent Charter School Authorizing Task Force. She commented that it might be possible for members of this task force to learn from the successes that charter schools have had in Illinois and apply those lessons to improve struggling schools.

Dr. Redding observed that the scope of work for the task force overlaps with efforts that are currently underway at ISBE to prepare for the application for Race to the Top and 1003(g) school improvement grants. Gina Burkhardt mentioned that Illinois is guaranteed to receive funding through 1003(g) grants, but Race to the Top will be a very competitive process. Susie Morrison commented that the recommendations of the task force may help ISBE develop a long-term framework for improving struggling schools that extends beyond the Race to the Top timeline. She then pointed out that the U.S. Department of Education is using similar criteria and goals for all of the federal funds that will be available over the next few years. She anticipates that structure will be helpful for ISBE and the task force as they develop plans to improve struggling schools. Gina Burkhardt urged ISBE to use this opportunity to identify successful strategies for improving struggling schools and then expand those best practices beyond the bottom 5 percent of schools.

Jonathan Furr and Susie Morrison reviewed the process that ISBE is using to identify the lowest-achieving schools in the state. They are basing their process on the federal criteria that outline priorities for three tiers of schools. The first tier, the highest priority schools for intervention, includes those schools in the lowest 5 percent of Title I schools that are currently in some type of NCLB status and high schools with less than a 60 percent graduation rate. Tier II schools are similarly low-achieving secondary schools that are eligible for Title I funds, but do not receive them. Tier III will include any other Title I school in some type of NCLB status. Last year the state received \$12-15 million dollars for 1003(g), but expects to receive approximately \$124 million this year. The schools in the bottom 5 percent will be identified based on the percentage

of all students in the school (not subgroups) who scored below the level of proficiency on state assessments (ISAT or PSAE) during the last three years. ISBE will also include on the final list low-achieving elementary schools that feed into low-achieving high schools in order to strengthen the pipeline in districts that house several low-achieving schools. ISBE will release the final list of schools in the bottom 5 percent within the next month. Resources to support intensive interventions in low-achieving schools will be provided first to the schools in tier one and tier two and then made available to the schools in tier three if federal funding was not depleted after serving schools in the first two tiers.

These low-achieving schools will choose one of the four models identified by the federal government: (1) school closure; (2) turnaround – in which the principal and the majority of staff would be replaced; (3) restart – in which the school is closed and opened again as a charter school or under the leadership of an Education Management Organization (EMO); and (4) the transformational model in which the climate at the school would be transformed by improving the quality of teachers and leaders in the building, strengthening curriculum and instruction, and increasing learning time for both students and adults. Donald Feinstein commented that most districts in the state will opt for the transformational model. In the proposed priorities for the 1003(g) grants, the U.S. Department of Education stated that a district with 9 or more low-achieving schools could not use one of the four models in more than 50% of its schools. In Illinois, the only district with 9 or more schools in the bottom 5 percent statewide will be Chicago – a school district that has used all four models in the past. As a result, ISBE does not anticipate a problem with this federal requirement.

The state education agency recognizes that districts need additional support to intervene in the lowest-achieving schools. The state has never taken over a school for reasons related to performance and ISBE does not currently have the capacity to direct intensive interventions in all of the lowest-achieving schools in the state. Moreover, the regional offices of education in Illinois, that provide some supports to schools in the state, have not historically engaged in efforts to turnaround low-achieving schools in their region. Given the needs of these low-achieving schools and the capacity of the state education agency, ISBE developed the partner zone concept, which is designed to build state capacity to work with the lowest-achieving schools in the state. Districts that house low-achieving schools in the bottom 5 percent statewide will have the opportunity to work with a lead partner organization, which will be funded by ISBE, if they can demonstrate a commitment from their school board, district superintendent, and union leadership. In collaboration with ISBE, school districts will be able to choose lead and supporting partners that will work closely with the district to intervene in the lowest-achieving schools in the district. Accountability for improving these schools will be shared between the school district and the lead partner organization. The partner organizations will help to develop district capacity to support these schools, will structure instructional approaches in the schools, will bring coherence to the programs in the school building, and will continually gather data to determine which programs are having the greatest impact on student achievement. Lead partners will work with ISBE, the district and the school to perform a needs assessment and then to develop and coordinate the implementation of an intervention plan that meets the needs of the school. Supporting partners will provide assistance related to human capital strategies and building district capacity. ISBE's role in this process will be one of oversight, coordination, and

evaluation. If they receive federal funds through the Race to the Top competition, they will create an ISBE office of turnaround schools to supervise intervention efforts statewide.

In the spirit of full disclosure, Gina Burkhardt and Donald Feinstein noted that their organizations had responded to the RFP to become both lead and supporting partner organizations in Illinois. Mr. Furr commented that approximately 60 organizations expressed interest in responding to the RFP and that ISBE expected approximately 40 applications by the due date, the end of the day on November 23, 2009. ISBE plans to review these applications quickly and then select the highest-quality organizations to be part of a pre-qualified talent pool from which districts can choose partners to support improvement efforts in their lowest-achieving schools.

During the task force's discussion of the partnership zone concept, Mr. Furr clarified that the state currently has the statutory authority to replace staff in those schools identified by the state as chronically low-achieving and that authority supersedes collective bargaining agreements. The state intends to pay careful attention to hiring practices in partnership zones. ISBE will encourage districts that house the lowest-achieving schools in the state to work closely with their union leaders to develop collective bargaining agreements that allow for some flexibility in hiring and replacing staff so the state does not have to intervene. For example, Chicago Public Schools has worked with the union to develop contract and performance schools, models that offer more flexibility with staffing than the traditional schools in the district. Ms. Burkhardt urged ISBE to be cautious with the requirement about replacing 50 percent of the staff in the building because although some of the teachers who leave might be better teachers in other environments, the effect might be only to transfer ineffective teachers to other schools.

Dr. Feinstein remarked that the collective bargaining issues with large-scale staff replacements will be challenging. In New York City, for example, schools were allowed to dismiss teachers, but the district must continue to pay those teachers their full salary for some time. In large districts with several low-achieving schools, the costs associated with paying teachers who are dismissed could be substantial. He then reviewed the process utilized by the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL). His organization has contracted with Chicago Public Schools to close and restart 14 schools in Chicago. All of the teachers are dismissed when the school closes, but they can choose to reapply for their jobs. All new applicants and teachers who were formerly at that school are interviewed and observed teaching a class, using an observation tool based on the Charlotte Danielson's framework. These observations are conducted by former principals who completed the evaluation training course as required by the state of Illinois. The district does not currently have the capacity to evaluate teacher effectiveness through value-added analysis, so it is not possible to include student growth data as part of the hiring process. Some of the school's former teachers have been rehired by AUSL. Of the teachers that were dismissed from AUSL restarts, approximately 70% were rehired at some school in the district and the remaining 30% were dismissed. The collective bargaining agreement in Chicago allows all tenured teachers who are dismissed to collect their salary for one year after dismissal. If they are not hired by another school in the district within this time period, they will be terminated.

Representative Roger Eddy commented that these efforts sound much like arguments for charter schools. However, while the number of charter schools has increased dramatically in Illinois,

best practices from those schools have not been replicated in traditional public schools. Part of this is because some of the flexibilities that are available in charters, related to staffing for example, are politically difficult in many districts. Dr. Redding noted that successful charters are often characterized by good instruction, practices that can be replicated in traditional schools with strong teachers and leaders.

Susie Morrison affirmed that ISBE is considering all of these reforms and is committed to systems change, not incremental reform. As one example, ISBE is currently working closely with institutions of higher education in Illinois to strengthen principal preparation programs. These program changes will be supported by legislative or regulatory changes that create new categories for administrators rather than one broad certification. These categories may include instructional leader, dean, school manager, and department head. The task force members further agreed that training for principals of turnaround schools is different than training for principals who work in traditional schools. Dr. Feinstein described AUSL's grow-your-own strategy and their model for training principals in which candidates complete a year-long residency in a turnaround school to prepare them to lead the transformation of another school. Tony Sanders commented that District U-46 has experienced a great deal of success with teacher mentoring programs, but does not have similar programs in place for principals. He encouraged ISBE to consider directing some resources to develop mentoring programs for turnaround principals, particularly in smaller districts that might not have the capacity to design principal preparation programs.

The task force members agreed that developing a statewide longitudinal data system is another essential reform to support school improvement efforts. Senator Steans and Representative Eddy recently co-sponsored longitudinal data legislation that requires a P-20 data system in Illinois. Ms. Burkhardt agreed that such a data system is necessary in Illinois and noted that the development can be funded, in part, through federal dollars. This data system is also likely to be necessary in the near future as the reauthorization of ESEA will probably include student growth rather than proficiency rates. She also urged caution in the implementation of these systems because multiple data points are necessary, assessments must be valid and appropriate for all students (including students with disabilities and English language learners), and 69% of teachers nationally cannot be evaluated using state assessment data that is currently collected.

Dr. Feinstein argued that Illinois must think about a long-term human capital strategy in order to support dramatic changes in education. Part of this larger human capital strategy might include performance incentives for highly effective teachers. Ms. Burkhardt mentioned that Denver and Minneapolis, for example, have tested models that Illinois might want to explore. As the federal government will have a new TIF competition soon, she recommended that Illinois use this opportunity to identify pilot districts that could compete for that funding. Best practices from these pilot sites could then be expanded statewide. This strategy might also help ISBE with their Race to the Top application. She encouraged the task force members to read more about best practices in educator compensation at the website for the Center for Educator Compensation Reform (<http://cecr.ed.gov/>). The task force members agreed that sustaining performance incentive systems long-term could be problematic without reforms to existing systems. Federal funds might be used to help districts start incentive programs, but they cannot be sustained through state funding streams. Dr. Feinstein mentioned that incentives might be used as a short-

term strategy in the lowest-achieving schools to attract teachers, but then those incentives can be discontinued when the school has made strong progress.

Dr. Redding remarked that two school reform strategies that are supported by the federal government will be in conflict with collective bargaining agreements in many districts – selection and retention of teachers and the length of the school day or school year. He urged the task force to address both of these issues in their recommendations to the Governor and the legislature. Senator Steans noted that many charter schools implement these two strategies. In response, Dr. Feinstein commented that AUSL chooses not to open charter schools because they can share best practices within the district more effectively if they are part of the traditional public school system. Ms. Burkhardt also mentioned a study that was recently conducted by Learning Point Associates in which the researchers found that parents often do not utilize options, like charters, because they do not have the information they need to access the options that are available. As a result, rather than expanding the number of choices for parents, it might be better to work with the district leadership to improve the quality of schools within the district. Dr. Feinstein and Ms. Burkhardt also agreed that before expanding learning time, districts need to ensure that time is being used efficiently to maximize high-quality instruction because more time for low-quality instruction will not improve student achievement. Representative Eddy remarked that every change to the number of minutes in a school day would be subject to a collective bargaining agreement. Tony Sanders added a related caution to consider that districts have collective bargaining agreements not only with teachers, but also with staff who provide services related to transportation and nutrition.

Dr. Redding then delivered a presentation to review the research related to turnarounds and the national context. He mentioned that the concept of a turnaround school emerged from business turnarounds in the private sector. However, it is important to note that 70% of those restructured businesses fail. Consequently, it will be important to identify strategies that are successful in turnaround schools. Dr. Redding was a member of a panel sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences to review the research on turnaround schools. The panel identified four research-based recommendations for turnaround schools. Three of recommendations (strong leadership, committed staff and quick wins) are methods to support the most critical recommendation – maintaining a consistent focus on improving instruction. He then reviewed the options for restructuring under NCLB. Because “other” was the chosen option 96 percent of the time, the U.S. Department of Education is revising those options and providing more structure and guidance about the “other” option, which is being reconceptualized as a transformational model. This model must include a performance evaluation system, a high-quality instructional program, expanded learning time for students and teachers, and autonomies for leaders related to budget, staff, and the calendar. Dr. Redding then highlighted leader actions associated with school improvement and reviewed a model of differentiated supports and interventions for struggling schools. He emphasized that it was essential to perform a good diagnostic review of a struggling school in order to align the needs of the school with the appropriate supports and interventions. He remarked that the school improvement plan process that is currently in place in Illinois may not be the most effective process because schools know what language the state wants to see in the plan, but then they do not necessarily take action to implement those plans. Both states and districts will need to build their capacity to support successful school improvement processes. Finally, he briefly described the Academy of

Pacesetter States – a model designed to build state capacity to improve their statewide systems of supports and incorporate turnarounds and rapid instructional improvement within their systems. Illinois is one of nine state members of the Academy.

In the task force's discussion of Dr. Redding's presentation, Dr. Feinstein noted that one of the key pieces of a successful turnaround will be training the staff. Teachers in turnaround schools must be provided with high-quality, intensive, and job-embedded professional development. The AUSL model is teacher-centered and they have found that a great deal of teacher training makes a difference for kids. Representative Eddy noted that the state should not mandate too broadly and require all districts to change their evaluation systems, for example, particularly if they are already high-performing. Mr. Furr commented that some standardization will be necessary to meet federal requirements. Ms. Burkhardt further noted that this is an equity issue because the state should not create a ceiling for advantaged students, but instead should raise the bar for all students. Dr. Feinstein agreed and noted that districts do not have to give up the qualitative process of teacher evaluation that is already in place, but should add the quantitative information that will be available from the longitudinal data system that links teachers to student outcomes.

After reviewing ISBE's plans for the partnership zone to improve struggling schools in the state, Ms. Morrison provided the task force with additional information about ISBE's plans for the future. Illinois will compete for Race to the Top funds in the first round of the competition. In order to strengthen their application, the state has agreed to adopt the national common core state standards and plan to adopt them in the fall of 2010. The development of these standards began with the design of college and career readiness standards. Soon, focused K-12 standards will be backmapped to prepare students to successfully meet the college and career readiness standards. A team that will develop statewide science standards will begin meeting in January 2010. The state will also join the national consortium that will develop assessments that are linked to the common core standards. Because the state will no longer have the ISAT and the PSAT, they will use the funds that were previously directed to those assessments for formative assessments that teachers can use in the classroom. The state will work with vendors to ensure that products are competitively priced and provide districts with guidance about the appropriate uses of these assessments. ISBE will also use existing and new assessments to develop an early warning system that will help schools to identify struggling students in 8th or 9th grade. This system may involve the administration of the EXPLORE in 8th grade, the PLAN in 10th grade, and another assessment in 9th grade. The use of technology is also being explored to provide professional development, to make data from the longitudinal system available for multiple users, and to help teachers identify student areas of need and then link those needs to instructional resources that have been rated by teachers. She emphasized that ISBE is engaging in comprehensive systems change and views all of the reform elements that have been discussed by the task force as important pieces of the whole picture.

Dr. Redding and the task force adjusted the meeting timeline for the task force. The December 10th meeting will be cancelled and replaced with a conference call on December 18th. The task force will meet for the final time on December 21, 2009 in Bloomington at the Parke Hotel and Conference Center.

Dr. Redding then reviewed the tasks set forth by the legislature and assigned responsibilities to each of the task force members. The first task is associated with recommending ways Illinois can identify schools requiring more intensive intervention. ISBE will take responsibility for this task. Mr. Furr and Ms. Morrison will define low-achieving schools and then present to the task force both the state's methodology for selecting the lowest-achieving 5 percent of schools statewide and the list of schools. They will ask the task force for recommendations to improve the identification process and its transparency.

The second task is to identify strategies for strengthening leadership at struggling schools and district capacity to support these schools. This task is related to the state's development of their Race to the Top application and their partnership zone strategy. Mr. Furr will draft some recommendations for the task force to review at the next meeting based on the work that is already ongoing at ISBE. The members encouraged him to include the leadership competencies identified by Public Impact in its study for the Center on Innovation & Improvement, to define leadership roles to include principals as well as teacher and district leaders, and to recommend teacher and leader preparation models that are designed specifically for staff in turnaround schools.

The third task about strategies related to successful turnaround efforts will be assigned to Gina Burkhardt and Don Feinstein. They will define what a successful turnaround school is and will outline multiple measures that might be included in this definition such as: student achievement outcomes, student growth, the degree to which the achievement gap narrowed, graduation rate, climate measures, student and teacher attendance, parent contact, discipline referrals, and parent and student satisfaction with the schools. Dr. Feinstein remarked that the turnaround process is a dramatic change and there should be dramatic results. Ms. Burkhardt emphasized that the evaluation of the success of the turnaround process should go beyond the student or the school as the unit of change to evaluate the process more generally. Did the costs justify the benefits? Did the reallocation of resources support student achievement? Which strategies were most effective and had the greatest impact on student achievement?

The fourth task about autonomies, resources, and supports for successful turnarounds was not assigned, nor was the sixth task about funding necessary to accomplish the turnaround process. The task force will discuss the draft sections developed by ISBE, Dr. Feinstein and Ms. Burkhardt at the next meeting. It is likely that recommendations for both the fourth and sixth tasks will emerge from that conversation.

The fifth task is related to the dissemination of best practices for turnarounds that can be shared throughout the state. Dr. Redding will take responsibility for this assignment. Senator Steans commented that there should be a role for ISBE in dissemination and the task force should consider the capacity at the state education agency to engage in this type of work.

The seventh task, related to the identification of statutory or regulatory changes, was not assigned. Senator Steans asked for more information about current statutes and regulations so the task force can better understand where changes might need to be made. There is also an existing state-level group that examines these types of issues on a regular basis and proposes

recommendations to ISBE to address their concerns. ISBE will provide more information for the task force at the next meeting.

Finally, ISBE will take responsibility for part (d) to gather input from key stakeholder groups. They host a regular meeting of key stakeholders with whom they will share a draft of the recommendations and solicit feedback.

All members with assignments will send their drafts to Peggie Garcia by December 14, 2009. She will compile the sections and send them to the task force members in advance of the December 18th meeting.

The meeting was adjourned by Dr. Redding at 2:51 p.m.

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Name	Organization	11/23/09
Senator Pam Althoff	Illinois General Assembly	Present
Gina Burkhardt	CEO Learning Point Associates	Present
Representative Roger Eddy	Illinois General Assembly	Present
Donald Feinstein	Executive Director Academy for Urban School Leadership	Present
Susie Morrison	Deputy Superintendent and Chief of Staff Illinois State Board of Education	Present
Dorland Norris	Deputy Superintendent Curriculum Design, Educational Services and Equity Champaign Unit 4 Schools	Absent
<i>Chair</i> - Sam Redding	Director Center on Innovation & Improvement	Present
Senator Heather Steans	Illinois General Assembly	Present
Jose Torres	Superintendent School District U-46	Represented by Tony Sanders