



**School Code Mandate Reduction Council
Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, January 15, 2026
3-5 p.m.

Present

Edward Brophy, Northbrook SD 28
Chris Buikema, East Coloma-Nelson CESD 20
Dr. Susan Coleman, Golf ESD 67
Mary Edly-Allen, State Senator, 31st District
Amy Elik, State Representative, 111th District
Kedrick Evans, East St. Louis District 189
Laura Faver Dias, 62nd District
David Friess, State Representative, 115th District
Tonia Havard-Dew, Illinois Federation of Teachers
Meg Loughran Cappel, State Senator, 49th District
Alison Maley, Illinois Principals Association
Kathy Marshall, Regional Office of Education 28
Unique Mickens, Illinois Education Association
Michelle Mussman, State Representative, 56th District
Laura Nussle, CUSD 308
Dr. Matt Seaton, Illinois State Board of Education
ShiAnne Shively, Illinois Education Association
Dr. Dana Smith, Flossmoor SD 161
Dr. Martina Smith, District 300
Melissa Taylor, Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education
Emily Warnecke, Illinois Association of School Administrators
Diana Zaleski, Illinois Education Association

Absent

Darby Hills, State Senator, 26th District
Seth Lewis, State Senator, 24th District
Leonor Torres Whitt, Chicago Teachers Union

ISBE Staff Present

Jeremy Mehochko, Jennifer Saba, Patricia Peyton, and Connie Werts



Welcome and Roll Call

State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tony Sanders called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the initial meeting of the School Code Mandate Reduction Council, created under Public Act 104-0391. Dr. Sanders thanked Senator Edly-Allen and Representative Mussman who sponsored the legislation, as well as the rest of ISBE's legislative partners for their commitment to the education of 1.9 million students across the State of Illinois. Jeremy Mehochko took the roll call, and there was a quorum.

Appointment of Chairperson

Dr. Sanders moved to item number two on the agenda, appointing the chairperson. Per PA 104-0391, the state superintendent of education shall convene the council for an initial meeting and shall select one member as chairperson at that initial meeting. He appointed Dr. Matt Seaton, chief financial officer for ISBE, as chairperson of the council. Dr. Seaton introduced members of the council who were appointed according to the public act. Dr. Seaton went on to introduce ISBE's team that will be working alongside the council: Jennifer Saba, chief education officer for operations; and Jeremy Mehochko, lead of project management.

Public Comment

Joe McGinnis, director of the Collinsville Area Vocational Center, discussed that there are some well-intentioned mandates that continue to grow, which often limits local flexibility and places a strain on students, educators, and school systems. Mandate reductions are not about lowering expectations; they are about trusting local schools to make decisions that best serve their students and communities. He went on to say that every district serves a population with different workforce needs, postsecondary pathways, and student interests. Flexibility allows schools to respond to those needs more effectively. One example that is currently under discussion, is the proposed two-year foreign language requirement. While foreign language instruction is valuable and should remain an important option for students, a universal mandate can limit access to other meaningful coursework. For some students, especially those pursuing Career and Technical Education courses, dual credit, or workforce credentials, that seat time could be better used for courses aligned to their life goals. Reducing mandates is not about reducing opportunity, it is about expanding it. Schools can still encourage and offer foreign language courses while also providing students with greater choice, relevance, and engagement in their high school experience. By reducing mandates, Illinois can empower schools, respect local decision-making, and better prepare students for diverse paths.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Review of Purpose of Council: Dr. Seaton explained that the School Code Mandate Reduction Council was created to evaluate and assess mandates in the School Code for the purposes of



modifying, combining, or eliminating mandates that are outdated, duplicative, unnecessarily burdensome, or no longer necessary to providing an efficient system of high-quality public educational institutions and services. The council may choose to focus on specific areas of mandates or certain articles and sections of the School Code as they see fit for the purposes of mandate reduction.

As prescribed in PA 104-0391, the council is to file a report with the General Assembly no later than October 1, 2026, that includes a list of mandates recommended to be eliminated from the School Code. The report shall include references to each appropriate statute that contains the mandates recommended to be eliminated, and a list of mandates to be modified or combined with other mandates in the School Code and how these mandates should be modified or combined. The report shall include references to each appropriate statute that contains the mandates recommended to be modified or combined with other mandates.

Approval of Rules of Procedures for Council: As is customary with councils of this nature created in statute, it is necessary to adopt Rules of Procedure to complete this work. The Rules have been sent to each member ahead of this meeting for review and vetted by ISBE's legal team. Dr. Seaton asked for a motion to adopt the Rules of Procedure as presented. Senator Loughran Cappel motioned for approval. Dr. Susan Coleman seconded the motion. The motion passed in a unanimous vote.

Dr. Seaton then went on to the nomination and approval of the vice chair for the council. The vice chair must be an appointed council member. Emily Warnecke motioned to nominate Dr. Coleman. Alison Maley seconded the motion. Hearing no more nominations, Dr. Seaton accepted the motion to appoint Dr. Coleman as vice chairperson. The motion passed in a unanimous vote.

Introduction of the List of Mandates: Dr. Seaton discussed with the council that as it stands the list has over 1,000 mandates that are due for review by this committee. We will continue to refine the list in the coming months; if any council member notes any discrepancies or omissions from the list, please contact him and we will add the necessary information.

Framework for Review of Mandates: Dr. Seaton addressed creating committees to review mandates on subject-specific basis. Currently, there are 10 subject-specific areas identified: assessment, curriculum, facilities, fiscal, health or safety of students, non-instructional services, operations, personnel, reporting, and other. There is anticipation that there will be 3-4 committees established; each committee will be assigned a listing of mandates from a grouping of these subject-specific areas. Those wishing to be assigned to a particular subject mandate may



submit a request to Mr. Mehochko. Requests will be considered; however, final appointments will be made to ensure there is a balance of members on each committee. Committee assignments will be discussed at the second meeting.

Dr. Seaton discussed with the team how to evaluate whether each mandate is a candidate for modification, combination, or elimination per the charge given in the statute. He provided an example of a key question that he will personally ask himself: What is the group, groups, or individuals that may be positively or negatively affected by any change to this mandate? He then inquired the council on their thoughts on this approach. Several council members offered their thoughts, such as cost impact, redundancy, relevance, how mandates help students, consideration of downstate schools, transparency, unintended consequences, how mandates affect local control, impact to educators, oversight, and accountability.

Tentative Calendar to Meet Statutory Requirements:

January 15, 2026 – Council

February 2026 – Council

March, April, May 2026 – Committees

June, July, August 2026 – Council

September 2026 – Council

Possible February dates were discussed, including an interest in keeping the meeting time at 3-5 p.m. ISBE will reach out to council members individually to check availability for a February meeting.

Committee Work: Dr. Seaton explained that committees will be assigned a representative from ISBE to assist with the technical questions or information gathering that will be needed. Each committee will be assigned a chair who will work with ISBE staff to schedule committee meetings and create agendas, minutes, and reports or recommendations to the entire council.

Adjournment

Dr. Seaton asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kathy Marshall motioned to adjourn. Ms. Maley seconded. The motion to adjourn passed in a unanimous vote. The meeting adjourned at 4:04 p.m.