

Illinois State Board of Education
Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission

Wednesday, February 22, 2012

Minutes

Attendance

Commission Members:

Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia	Dr. Michael Johnson	Mike Nekritz
Dr. Brent Clark	Dr. Vanessa Kinder	Dr. Darlene Ruscitti
Rep. Roger Eddy	Scott Kuffel	Jane Russell
Dr. Norm Durflinger	John Meixner	
Dr. Michael A. Jacoby	Susie Morrison	

Presenter:

Dr. Robert Daiber

Welcome and Introductions

The first meeting of the Streamlining Illinois' Regional Offices of Education Commission was called to order at 9:02 a.m. by Dr. Norm Durflinger, chair of the commission, who then facilitated introductions of the commission members and welcomed the group. Dr. Durflinger noted that if any one of the commission members is not able to attend the meetings, he or she should contact another member to get updated. He then stated that he has a bias on the subject of this commission and that there must be some sort of regional delivery in the state of Illinois. Dr. Durflinger then went over the ground rules:

- Respect each other and what each person has to say.
- No individual commission member is to take more than 5 minutes of time reporting his or her view of an issue. After all who wish to speak have spoken, individuals will be allowed to have 3 additional minutes.
- The group will work toward consensus. If the chair does not feel consensus is possible, he will call for a vote on the issue. The time is limited, and the commission is charged to have a report completed by April 1, 2012.
- If a group of three or more wishes to develop a minority report on an issue, it will be placed in the commission's final report.
- Final decisions for the commission report will have prioritized options for the Governor and the General Assembly to review.

Dr. Durflinger reported that the charge of the commission is to explore and examine (1) all duties of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), (2) Regional Offices of Education (ROEs), and (3) boundaries of the educational service regions in order to do the following:

- Determine which duties and responsibilities will be provided regionally.
- More appropriately and efficiently deliver services.
- Determine whether ROE boundaries can be expanded to streamline the ROEs.

According to 105 Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS) 5/3A–18, “The Commission shall ensure that its recommendations include specifics as to the necessary funding to carry out identified responsibilities.”

One other task—not in the law but requested by the Governor and a member of the ISBE agency—is to determine if the regional superintendent positions should be elected positions. Should the commission consider other options for appointing or selecting regional education officers? Dr. Durflinger stated that commission members technically do not have to look at this particular task if they do not want to.

Dr. Durflinger then moved on to introduce Dr. Robert Daiber, who presented on the duties, roles, and responsibilities of the ROEs.

Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS) Perspective

Dr. Daiber stated that the focus of his presentation will be on the duties of the regional superintendents and the ROEs. He stated that in Senate Bill 2147, regional offices are offices of public service, ROEs serve public and private schools by helping with professional development, the organization is directly connected to the state board and Legislature, and they partner in the delivery of education. He stated that this model works and that the difference between the ROEs and ISBE is that the ROEs are an implementation agency while ISBE is a policymaking agency.

He continued by stating that there are 44 ROEs that serve 102 counties; the Intermediate Service Center (ISC) has three offices in Cook County. Dr. Daiber continued to talk about the structure of the ROEs, which cover six areas and 102 counties; some are single or multiple counties because of the boundary lines stated in statute. There are 2,700 employees that are paid for by local funds, and they serve more than 2 million students each year.

Duties, Role, and Responsibilities of ROEs

Dr. Daiber presented on the duties and responsibilities of the ROEs, which are spelled out in school code 105 ILCS 5/3-14 through 5/3-15.7; there are 925 citations for regional superintendents. Dr. Daiber talked about compliance, which entails supervision to schools and districts, as well as compliance visits, which verify instructional programming, school governing operations, and other duties. ROEs also coordinate inspections to ensure compliance with the Health/Life Safety Code for each school building by statute. They also review and certify 10-year surveys, amendments, and building plan reviews; issue building permits; conduct building inspections at zero cost to districts; and issue occupancy permits.

Reporting also is a major duty. By statute, the district is required to file documents with the ROE, and the regional superintendent certifies State Board of Elections lists of districts under supervision. ROEs also are responsible for the oversight of school consolidation and reorganization. They provide guidance during the consolidation process, validate petitions, and publish hearing notices. They are an election authority during the consolidation. Dr. Daiber continued to list other duties and responsibilities, which included efficiencies and the detachment process. He stated that not all ROEs offer the same services because they are so diverse and complex, but they conduct all statutory duties the same. They also offer professional development for teaching; offer services in certification, bus driver training, General Educational Development (GED) testing, and cooperative education programs (technology support); operate regional safe-school programs, truancy intervention, McKinney-Vento homeless services (federal grant program), early childhood programs, the Illinois Virtual School (manage), and new-principal mentoring; assist with grant applications; and conduct professional development.

Dr. Daiber then pointed to Appendix B of the ROE report regarding the \$10 million matching support that is brought by the ROEs. He stated that one will find, by county, the population census and amount of money (local match) that make up the \$10 million. He explained that in addition, there are “on-behalf” contributions of office space because regional superintendents are elected officials and additional revenues are brought into these offices through enterprise activity. He continued to talk about the effectiveness of the ROEs. He stated that he believes they are an effective system because they provide support to the districts. In Fiscal Year 2010, they managed \$10 million, and they got high marks on the Lieutenant Governor’s survey, which rated the ROEs the highest on responsiveness to schools. The survey is done by the school boards and has not been done since 2008. He also stated that greater effectiveness may look more at policy coordination, research development, and the Central Records Depository program.

Dr. Daiber described the role of the ROEs and how they serve students at every stage of life as a resource office for education in the state of Illinois. They ensure a safe and secure educational environment and act as a guide to monitor school district compliance. ROEs also partner with the General Assembly in the development and implementation of current and future education policy. He then ended his presentation by stating the following five recommendations that the regional superintendents would like to bring forth to the commission.

Five Recommendations

1. Examine the boundary lines of existing ROEs to see if they best serve the school districts throughout the state. The regional superintendents recommend that boundaries continue to be based on census data and that counties should not be divided. They also would like this boundary map to be completed by September 2013 if a new regional boundary map is adopted. In addition, the current regional superintendents would have the right to fulfill their terms until 2015.
2. Implement recommendations from P.A. 96-0798, which focuses on ROEs/ISCs taking the lead on coordinating all educational services in their regions to ensure effective and efficient approaches toward student success.

3. Provide opportunities and incentives to develop a network of shared services that focuses on cooperative efforts in management, professional development, and technology support for school districts.
4. Reallocate education dollars in the ISBE budget to support the regional delivery system by reducing or decentralizing ISBE. The accountability should be measured by direct services to teachers in the classroom and school district operations.
5. Further define the partnership between the ROEs/ISCs and ISBE to assess, reform, and implement policy for education in Illinois. It is recommended that a statewide coordinating council be formed, which would meet quarterly to carry out these duties and responsibilities.

Questions From Commission Members

Dr. Durflinger took questions from the commission members. Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia, commission member, stated that for home-rule cities, there seems to be duplication of cities, and she wanted to know if that was a true statement. John Meixner responded by stating that the superintendent has the authority to have jurisdiction. Rep. Chapa LaVia stated that two entities come to inspect in the city of Aurora, according to a superintendent in Aurora. A commission member stated that the bill that came out a couple of years ago stated that the ROEs are the authority. Rep. Chapa LaVia asked if schools have to pay for permits to the city in which they reside. The overall response from the group was no, but Dr. Vanessa Kinder believes that some cities may try to charge the district.

Dr. Daiber asked if there is duplication throughout the state because many districts are not being inspected by the state fire marshal's office. Dr. Darlene Ruscitti stated that in her school, they look at different things. Dr. Michael Johnson stated that they look at the fire code and track it, but this is a continued concern because not all fire marshals look at the same things.

Scott Kuffel asked if the regional superintendents are going to stay as elected officials. Dr. Daiber stated that he believes they will stay as elected officials because there's \$10 million that they manage and there are 2,700 people that are working to deliver these services.

Dr. Brent Clark asked about the mechanisms that cause counties to access the monies used by those particular counties to support the ROEs. Dr. Daiber stated that every dollar that he has in the budget takes a lobbying effort to get that budget approved. He is competing with the sheriff's budget and the probation budget; they also have put additional money in to have a computerized GED test, which they have to establish by 2014, and they need to do that if they want to get more funds from the county. Mr. Meixner responded that, by statute, they are required to give a portion for office space. Dr. Clark asked if it is certain that a percentage is tied to the county. There is a relationship with the size of the county and its population. Dr. Durflinger asked if it is possible to get what the budget amounts are, or at least get what statutes say, by the meeting on Monday, February 27, 2012.

Dr. Johnson responded by stating that there's a requirement for Cook County to get the difference of ROEs. If your region is 2 million or more, you are exempt from county support. Dr. Kinder stated that there's no financial support for Cook County ISC costs; therefore, they get

grants and some state support but not county support. Dr. Durflinger asked Dr. Kinder if it would be possible to get a breakdown of Cook County funding streams; she stated that she can.

Rep. Chapa LaVia asked if there is a uniform basis for all ROEs to do the same work. It was stated that all ROEs do the same work. Rep. Chapa LaVia asked if any ROEs go above and beyond. Dr. Daiber stated that some ROEs frequently step up and go above and beyond to help in the delivery of education. Most ROEs are involved in the delivery of the Common Core State Standards. He stated that his ROE is the fiscal agent for technology support and the IlliniCloud. They also serve 16 counties on technology support. Not every ROE can do this, and some ROEs could be looked at doing more, but all ROEs do the same essential things that are mandated.

Rep. Roger Eddy stated that recently there has been a lot of publicity on raising the graduation age. Services are provided by ROEs; but if the age is raised, more truancy services may be needed. ROEs can continue to offer regional services for safe schools, but has the amount the counties contributed toward fulfilling a lot of the traditional stuff increased? Some ROEs assess tuition, but the contributions from the county have not picked up the reduction of some of these services.

Mike Nekritz stated that he appreciated the school evaluation survey in 2008 and wanted to know if the area's local superintendent has done something similar. Dr. Daiber responded by stating that he thinks most have. His school services line item was \$2.2 million, and it was \$4.5 million in 2010. ROEs must continually assess and evaluate what services they can provide to districts; this is an ongoing task for ROEs.

Reviewing the Recommendations of the ROE

Dr. Durflinger further facilitated discussion to review the recommendations one at a time. He asked commission members to turn to page 8 on the ROE report that was handed out at the beginning of the meeting. (The five specific recommendations can be found on pages 3–4 of these minutes.)

Recommendation 1

The commission began with reviewing and reading Recommendation 1, and Dr. Durflinger asked if anyone had any questions or comments regarding this particular recommendation. Dr. Daiber stated that there are rumors as to how the regions would be recreated. In some regions, the boundary would divide counties; our recommendation is that no counties be divided between two ROEs. Dr. Clark asked if the concept conflicts with local distribution. Dr. Daiber responded, saying that ROEs do not have the ability to levy taxes like the community colleges can. Mr. Meixner stated that community colleges have a conflict with the taxation issue. Mr. Kuffel wanted to know if there is a district that has two ROEs, and then who is responsible for that district. Mr. Meixner stated that the primary ROE would be responsible.

Dr. Daiber stated that in the code, there must be 43,000 inhabitants in a region. Rep. Eddy stated that that should not include Cook County. Rep. Eddy recommended adding some consideration of size of geographic square miles to the first recommendation. Dr. Daiber stated that is why the

county line is in there—so that there are not five ROEs in DuPage County. Dr. Clark asked about the largest geographical ROE. Rep. Eddy responded that ROE 11 or ROE 20 would be the largest ROE geographically. Dr. Daiber responded, stating that ROE 11 may be the largest in square miles. Dr. Durflinger stated that the number of inhabitants should not be 43,000. Dr. Daiber believes this number can be up for discussion and that ROE 14 is nonexistent.

Dr. Durflinger told the commission that in looking from a policy level, there may be something missing. He asked the commission if there should be a review after every census. Rep. Eddy asked if this process should be similar to the General Assembly process. Mr. Meixner asked if having fewer ROEs is more efficient or effective; he feels that the current number of ROEs is pretty effective. Mr. Kuffel voiced a concern on the number of inhabitants because it does not reflect the number of students or educators. Dr. Durflinger asked if there should be another number instead of 43,000. Dr. Ruscitti responded that Kane County has nine districts, but they are big; DuPage County has 42 school districts, so you cannot go by districts, either.

Dr. Durflinger reiterated that what he is hearing from the commission is that following Recommendation 1, there would need to be a population minimum and square mile maximum. The commission agreed but felt that may be difficult to determine. Dr. Durflinger further elaborated on Recommendation 1 and stated that counties should not be split but that the commission should come up with a number (i.e., 43,000) and not necessarily look at number of students or square miles.

The commission members then had a discussion on the possibility of an elected superintendent. Commission members were concerned with the calendar and fiscal issue. They feel there are a lot of ancillaries, and it seems that would be a long period of time for a superintendent to be elected. They talked about the possibility of it being lined up with school board elections. Dr. Durflinger stated that this issue needs to be revisited in the next meeting.

Recommendation 2

Dr. Durflinger asked the group to read Recommendation 2 and asked for its meaning. Dr. Daiber stated that the 2010 commission report outlined five recommendations for improvement of education in Illinois; those recommendations are on a timeline this year. The task force wanted to make the statement that the report defined ISCs. Rep. Eddy stated that there are five recommendations, and one is on developing a statewide coordinating council. He asked Susie Morrison if she knew where that is in the process. Ms. Morrison stated that they have started talking about funding and that the original intent was to have that data before the coordinating council, but then they had another committee and it slowed it down. Rep. Eddy asked if Recommendation 2 is on a core set of services and, if so, whether it has been defined.

Dr. Durflinger asked if anyone had any more questions on the second recommendation. Dr. Jacoby stated that they probably need to respecify timelines based on their current work. Dr. Durflinger stated that he had a hard time personally saying yes to the second recommendation because it does not state what the core services are. Dr. Jacoby stated that this was more the technology services and that they looked at the Iowa model, and Recommendation 2 relates to that model. Rep. Eddy stated that in talking about core services, they also need to think about bus

driver education, certification, and so forth and see where they are best suited. Dr. Ruscitti commented that it's more than a service because they do training and have people to do the school calendar and that they are always being approached by the local superintendent with questions and are asked to fix things. Rep. Eddy stated that he is not sure that ROEs can be all things to all people. Dr. Jacoby stated that part of the issue is that there are dual systems. When a local superintendent is working on a calendar and needs to call someone, the choice of whom to call likely will depend on with whom the superintendent has a better relationship; that's because there's no clear channel of support of contacts. Theoretically, if we had a conduit of communication, no district would need to contact ISBE.

Dr. Darlene Ruscitti asked if there are things that can get removed. If so, then those things can be examined, such as the things that are done with schools on school improvement. Rep. Eddy stated that maybe the commission needs to think about what duplication of core services exists. Dr. Durflinger recognized that the group cannot at this time agree on Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 3

For the third recommendation, Dr. Durflinger indicated that he has asked Dr. Lynne Haeffele from the Classrooms First Commission to give a report for the meeting on Monday, February 27, because there are lots of discussions that relate to shared services and where they should be. Mr. Kuffel asked for examples of incentives, and Dr. Daiber stated that cost savings to districts is an incentive. Mr. Meixner stated that his ROE shares meeting spaces, copy machines, and the like with its special education cooperative; those are some of the things shared by the two counties. This situation indicates that we need to have a new law for shared services.

Recommendation 4

Next, a brief discussion occurred regarding the fourth recommendation and a question was asked on what, specifically, would be reallocated out of the state budget. Dr. Ruscitti stated that she thinks it looks at what can be done more effectively and efficiently, such as bus driver training, truancy services, and so forth, because the ROE is the truant officer, although it does not get any truant grants. There was some clarification on who provides the bus driver training. Does it come from ISBE or ROEs? It was stated that the majority of it comes from the ROEs, but there was a concern on customizing the training because taxi drivers are being utilized to drive students to the schools. A suggestion was made that there may need to be better coordination between ISBE and the ROEs. ISBE currently is in charge of the annual reports, and the rest is handled by the ROE.

Dr. Daiber stated that if ROEs are going to provide multiple services such as Common Core State Standards, teacher training funds then need to be reallocated, and additional funds are going to be needed. There was a question about districts using the ROE for the Common Core State Standards. Rep. Chapa LaVia stated that she has gone throughout the state and thinks that half go to their ROEs and half of them do not. There is a concern about knowing what to reallocate without knowing what the core services are. It's hard to plan efficiency models for 44 ROEs that are very different. Dr. Michael Johnson suggested that there needs to be some system

mapping from ISBE that they can see to get some clarification as to what is done at the ISBE level and what is done at the ROE level.

Dr. Johnson asked Ms. Morrison about how she views the role of the ROE. Ms. Morrison stated that it is clear that in Illinois, they have to have an intermediate service agency. In the early '90s, they had 57 ROEs that did professional development only, and it's decreased since then. Their preference would be to have a single intermediate service agency; they prefer a single unit that is not fragmented. They need to clearly define roles and responsibilities of ISBE and ROEs; because they do not have a reporting structure, expectations and the whole issue of accountability are vague. She continued to state that the professional development is something that ISBE cannot offer because they do not have the expertise, so they turn to the ROEs. She added that sometimes we feel that we deal not with one system but with 47 separate entities.

Dr. Johnson stated that the commission needs to figure out what they want the ROEs to do and specialize in. Rep. Eddy stated that if we value what the ROEs do and use them for delivery, their time would be well spent. Ms. Morrison responded and stated that ISBE does not have the resources to provide that, and they need to hold themselves accountable for doing those things well. Dr. Ruscitti stated that they really need to have those roles identified and standardized. She sees that there's a lack of communication between entities; oftentimes, they need to guess and figure it out because they are trying to serve their districts and schools. She feels that they need to focus on what the system looks like and how it will add value to the day-to-day classrooms. Dr. Durflinger responded that this is a system problem, and we're trying to figure this out. Rep. Eddy responded and stated that his frustration was on having a task force to deal with ROEs; there was one before, and it was not acted upon. Therefore, there has to be something. He indicated that there must be some delivery system between districts and regional entities, and he would like to concentrate on local control and local delivery. If recommendations are going to be made on whether regional superintendents should be elected or appointed, maybe a discussion on whether school boards should be elected or appointed needs to be added.

Dr. Durflinger stated that he has a little problem with Recommendation 4 on reallocating funds; he stated that if he were a superintendent, he would respond by stating that until accountability is set up and until there is a method of removal of nonaccountable regional superintendents, he would not want to give up any of the money. He continued by stating that there are extremely good regional superintendents, but there also are the ones that are not so good. He has been approached by people who feel that regional superintendents should be eliminated; he further stated that he thinks in some of the plans, they are going to have a specific accountability process and an actual method of removal for regional superintendents. He stated that the commission needs to talk about that point before it is over.

Recommendation 5

The discussion on Recommendation 5 will take place at the next meeting of the commission, on Monday, February 27, 2012.

Discussion on Additional Information/Topics for Future Meetings

Dr. Durflinger discussed some additional topics and information for future meetings. He stated that one of the charges is to examine the duties of the ROEs, and he feels that they have done those at this meeting. He stated that if anyone has questions regarding the roles and responsibilities of ISBE or ROEs, they can let him know and he will pass it along to the appropriate person. Dr. Johnson stated that one of the things that commission members should look at is the duties of the state board because they need to see if some of the things that are part of the state board should continue to be part of it. Dr. Ruscitti would like to see where the state's accountability is because she is not sure who the customers are or who the clients are. Rep. Chapa LaVia stated that it's a lopsided ship because ISBE has lost a lot of people, and we want to make sure we provide what we have for the kids in the state of Illinois. A large percentage of those funds goes to administration. Something's wrong with that, and we need to look at those issues. She continued by asking if the ROEs have best practices. If they do, then they need to share them with the commission. Rep. Eddy stated that they need to be cognizant when they compare mandates with other states. They need to look at the layers and also number of districts and how that all works. Illinois is a very guarded, local-control state, and that costs, too.

Wrap-Up and Closing Comments

Dr. Durflinger announced that the next meeting is at 9 a.m. on Monday, February 27, 2012, at the Illinois Principals Association office. Dr. Daiber then asked commission members if they want to entertain the last matter of business that was not part of the law, which regards whether regional superintendent positions should be elected positions. He continued and stated that they will determine that in the next meeting. Dr. Clark asked if they are going to have discussions at the next meeting on variations of size. Dr. Durflinger stated that they should look at the number 43,000, and it will be further discussed at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.