



Fwd: Thanks to CTBA for crunching the numbers

1 message

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April Board Meeting

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From: **State School News Service** <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>
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Thanks to CTBA for crunching the numbers

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

Back in 2017, long before the historic votes were cast to enact Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) for Illinois schoolchildren, it was clear from discussions and from the language of bill drafts that making sure every public school student has what the *evidence* says is needed for an *adequate* education was to take 10 years.

Remember, the target is an "adequate" education for a child in the least affluent school district. No one said a word about "equal" educational opportunity. That might sound nice, but it is not reality in America. Still, adequacy was not a bad promise, compared with what was the reality for a large majority of Illinois children.

So adequacy, based on the evidence, was to be achieved by 2027. Sure, that short-changes the current cohort of students, but reality is what it is. How much would each of 10 annual payments need to be to reach "adequacy for all"? I was told by a legislator who would certainly know that it would take about \$680 million.

Step back again and get it straight. Every year, a new \$680 million had to be added *to the base*. The additional funds from year one would stay in the base; another \$680 million would be added to the new base in year two; and \$680 million more would be added to stay in the state's funding base forever, and so on.

It seemed to me at the time that an annual increase of \$680 million in state school funding was not going to happen. It would require a significant tax increase and the governor we had then would surely veto it. *So, to be even close to honest about the year that adequacy-for-all would be reached, 2027 could not be it.*

Where did I make my mistake? It was in thinking that being "even close to honest" was relevant. The bill kept saying 2027 would be adequacy-for-all year, but the annual base increase was set at \$350 million. And even that sank when property tax relief - \$50 million worth - was skimmed off each year's base increase.

I'm not a mathematician or accountant. I was as ignorant of the truth - How many years will it take? - as the next citizen was. Then the State Board of Education - the one appointed by the governor we had then - *gave us some answers*. To reach adequacy-for-all in just one year, FY 2019, would take [a \\$7 billion funding hike](#)!

Former State Supt. Tony Smith took a lot of flak for that display of honesty. But he kept his cool. The education agency is obligated to say what the law requires if fully funded, he told angry (Republican) legislators. That amount was \$7 billion, assuming that the funding base was increased by that amount for FY 2019.

That act of transparency by Smith and the State Board led by Chairman James Meeks (who would never allow anyone to put dishonest words in his mouth) had profound effects. When members of a House education committee thought about spending some of the EBF money for other things, that truth reined them in.

Rep. Fred Crespo repeatedly reminded members of the committee he chaired that \$350 million-times-10-years totals only \$3.5 billion, and that's only half of what the Smith-Meeks board said would be required for adequacy. It looks like a broken promise to me, but - suppose it's not - how many years would it actually take?

The Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, a think tank with a bipartisan board and expertise on its staff, reported the answer to that question in their recently-released document, "[Fully Funding the Evidence Based Formula: Four Scenarios](#)." (You need to download it to your computer for the full effect; it's worth it.)

Spoiler alert: The CTBA found that if the state "were to increase K-12 appropriations by a flat \$350 million each year, it would take approximately 31 years to fund the EBF fully after adjusting for inflation." They knew that when they voted for [SB 1947](#) - but many were angry with the State Board for telling the rest of us.

The Smith-Meeks State Board stayed intact long enough to adopt a budget proposal for FY 2020. As you know, the price of adequacy-for-all, if funded entirely in FY 2020, would take about a \$4.55 billion increase in the base of school funding, compared with the \$6.8 billion EBF total for the current fiscal year.

It was a breath of fresh transparency, again, but it's a truth you're unlikely to see again. The Meeks Board is gone, swept away by Gov. JB Pritzker's appointments of all new members but one. The new board even posted its own budget plan for FY 2020. *Coincidentally*, they call for a \$375 million EBF hike - same as Pritzker.

What is wrong with all this? After all, the state is moving in the right direction on school funding. The low starting point was caused by decades of education funding malpractice by legislators and governors of both parties. The ultimate goal may be distant, but the benefits of EBF are already starting to emerge.

In fact, there is much to applaud. Much will be achieved between now and the 31 years it will take to reach the goal (or, more likely, the far fewer years after which some governor and General Assembly will give up on reaching it entirely). It just seems galling that a big promise was *broken in the very law that enacted it*.

I told you recently about David Eagleman and [his report](#) of the genetic traits whose carriers are "*eight times* more likely [than others in society] to commit aggravated assault, *ten times* more likely to commit murder, *thirteen times* more likely to commit armed robbery, and *forty-four times* more likely to commit sexual assault."

Yes, Eagleman told us, the traits are called the Y chromosome. All men are carriers. I used the information as a rationale (not entirely jokingly) for supporting women as leaders in government. But that's not all. I also find that same motivation in an excellent organization that would never accept me as a member.

But [Illinois Women in Leadership](#) (iwil) did accept me as a participant Monday at an event recognizing Illinois' new first lady [MK Pritzker](#), and Lieutenant Governor [Juliana Stratton](#), for their years of devotion in so many ways for a better Illinois. It was a great pleasure to get reacquainted with friends of the distaff persuasion.

The president of the IWIL board is [Barbara Flynn Currie](#), who was Majority Leader of the House (second only to Speaker Madigan) for 20 years. I smiled when Barbara spoke of MK's contributions to early childhood education. It was Barbara who sponsored the bill that launched that program in 1985. She did not do it alone, she told me. In

writing the bill she had worked closely with [Dr. Sally Pancrazio](#), then at ISBE, also an IWIL member.

Snippets (all about bills):

This is about how to pass a bill. [HB 2605](#), building on the statutory basis by which a speech pathologist may receive a Professional Educator License in Illinois, passed the House 113-0 Tuesday. It was an initiative of [IHSA](#), the Illinois Speech Language Hearing Association. It was opposed by ... [nobody](#).

In hiring lawyer Jim Morpew, a highly respected lobbyist, IHSA did all it needed to do. Morpew drafted the bill, arranged for strong bipartisan sponsorship, got unanimous support in an early committee hearing and obviously touched every base required for a unanimous House floor vote. Senate approval surely will follow.

New teachers' hopes for a minimum salary higher than the current statutory floor of \$9,000 per year were advanced Tuesday when [HB 2708](#), sponsored by [Rep. Katie Stuart](#) (D-Edwardsville) passed the House [79-31](#). Teachers unions and ISBE had [supported](#) the bill. The Alliance and school districts [opposed](#) it.

Student participation in "workplace experiences" will be reflected on the State Board of Education's school report cards as of January 1, 2020, if [HB 2822](#), which passed the House 112-0 Tuesday is similarly supported in the Senate. If you read the amendment, you'll see how legislation is often improved as it advances.

Numerous School Code bills have been positioned for third-reading (pass or fail) votes by Friday's deadline for such action. Bills that pass will go to the second chamber. Bills that fail - or are not even called for a vote - will wind up in a legislative mortuary. (I'm looking forward to the debate on [HB 3086](#), the anger management for at-risk students mandate which reached the House floor after a [divided, perhaps angry](#), committee hearing.)

These ISNS features *will be updated Saturday*: the [bill-tracking web page](#) showing the status of viable bills that could affect public education policy, and a page of links to all [ISNS newsletters so far delivered](#) in 2019. (The URL for these pages was changed April 1, so only ISNS readers can access them.)

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