



ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Capitol Watch

IASA
ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS



Kicking Off the 104th General Assembly

Hello and Happy Friday!

This Capitol Watch kicks off what will likely be a weekly communication, keeping you informed of all the developments in Springfield from now until the conclusion of the spring legislative session and the passage of the final budget at the end of May. The 104th General Assembly is preparing for what is anticipated to be an eventful legislative session, with over 1700 bills filed in the House and several hundred in the Senate, to date. Although it is premature to speculate on which bills may gain momentum, there is notable information regarding legislative initiatives from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the agency's budget recommendations to the Governor that have come to light in the last few weeks.

Budget Recommendations

ISBE, and other state agencies, have faced significant challenges in formulating budget recommendations amidst a projected \$3 billion state budget deficit for FY26. The agency has prioritized several critical funding areas:

- **Evidence-Based Funding:** An increase of \$350 million
- **Mandated Categorical Funding:** An increase of \$142 million
- **Early Childhood Block Grant:** An increase of \$75 million

Discussions surrounding mandated categorical funding have been particularly complex. Years of stagnant funding, coupled with cost increases, have resulted in low proration levels estimated for FY25. ISBE estimates that restoring proration to mid-80% levels for transportation and fully funding private facility reimbursements would require a \$350 million increase in the FY26 budget. Alternatively, maintaining the current proration levels for FY25 would necessitate a \$142 million increase for FY26. Ultimately, ISBE recommended a \$142 million increase for mandated categorical funding in FY26, acknowledging that this amount would still result in relatively low proration levels for districts next fiscal year. The Governor's budget proposal will be announced on February 19 during the State of the State address, and we will be closely monitoring how it aligns with ISBE's recommendations.

Legislative Proposals

ISBE's legislative agenda was approved during the December board meeting following extensive discussions. The memo with the full agenda can be found [here](#). Although the specific language for ISBE's legislative proposals is still under development, the proposals include the following:

Licensure

This initiative aims to address the teacher shortage and strengthen the pipeline by:

- Establishing a paraprofessional pathway program for expedited licensure in specific content areas.
- Streamlining licensure requirements for school support personnel with active professional licenses.
- Replacing coursework requirements for out-of-state or internationally trained educators with exam coverage.
- Eliminating outdated references to preparation standards.

Student Discipline

This proposal seeks to reform early childhood discipline practices by:

- Prohibiting expulsions for students in kindergarten through Grade 2.
- Requiring superintendent approval for suspensions of students in prekindergarten through Grade 2, limited to the duration necessary for implementing a Behavioral Intervention Plan or safety plan.
- Amending the Alternative Learning Opportunities Programs (ALOP) statute to permit push-in services for kindergarten through Grade 3 while prohibiting waivers for pull-out models for Grades K through 5.

Educator Misconduct

This measure aims to enhance transparency and support districts in managing educator misconduct by:

- Allowing the state superintendent to share information about pending investigations with a licensee's current employing district.

Learning Partners

This initiative grants the state superintendent authority to:

- Designate Regional Offices of Education or Intermediate Service Centers as learning partners within the statewide system of support.
- Revoke such designations at their discretion.

Charter Schools

This proposal enables:

- Local school boards to negotiate charter transfers prior to ISBE's decision on state-authorized charter renewal applications, provided both the local school board and the charter school agree.

Community College Partnerships

This measure mandates that approved educator preparation programs:

- Partner with community colleges upon request to offer licensure programs for individuals holding bachelor's degrees.

Student Ticketing

This proposal addresses disciplinary practices involving fines by:

- Closing statutory loopholes that permit fines as a disciplinary consequence or referrals to law enforcement for fine issuance.

Opportunities to Engage with ISBE

ISBE continues to prioritize hearing directly from educators about key initiatives the agency is advancing. Currently, there are two valuable opportunities to engage with ISBE staff on topics aligned with the Vision 2030 platform:

Statewide Assessment and Accountability System

ISBE is working to enhance the statewide assessment and accountability system. Over the next three months, the agency will host a listening tour with stops across the state. These sessions will provide educators the opportunity to learn about ISBE's work in this area and offer vital feedback from school districts. See the flyer [here](#) for tour dates and registration information.

Transition to MyISBE System

After years of collaboration with stakeholders, ISBE is planning a refresh from the IWAS system to the new MyISBE system, set to launch in FY26. To gather input on this transition, ISBE will also host a listening tour where districts can provide feedback on the proposed changes. See the flyer [here](#) for tour dates and registration information.

What's Next?

Legislators will return to Springfield on Tuesday, January 28, and committees are already scheduled to hold hearings on important pieces of legislation next week. If you are interested in reviewing when legislators may be in Springfield between now and the end of May, the Senate legislative schedule can be found [here](#), and the House schedule is located [here](#).

Additionally, bills will continue to be filed through the filing deadline, which is currently scheduled for Friday, February 7, in both chambers. As bills are filed throughout the next two weeks, the association's bill tracker will be updated. As a reminder, this tool can be found on the IASA website behind the membership paywall and can be used to stay up to date with all the action in Springfield!

As always, thank you for taking the time to stay up to date with all the legislative activity taking place in the state capitol!

Sincerely,

Emily Warnecke
Chief of Staff