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## Fwd: Video gaming was a real bad bet - for schools

1 message

Jason Bauer <jbauer@panaschools.com>  
To: nblodgett@panaschools.com

Fri, Jan 25, 2019 at 7:54 AM

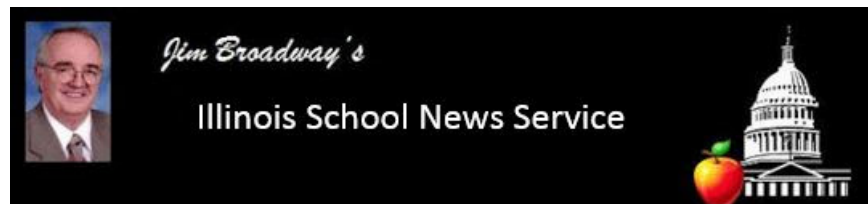
January board meeting

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Begin forwarded message:

**From:** State School News Service <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>  
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**To:** jbauer@panaschools.com  
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## Video gaming was a real bad bet - for schools

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

Legislators were all smiles back in 2009 when they enacted a bill to legalize video gambling throughout the state. It would solve the state's problem of accumulated pension debt, they said, and it would generate huge increases in dollars for the public schools. (They always use the schools as an excuse for bad votes.)

Well, the games didn't light up until 2012, which sounds like a bad thing - but it wasn't. Once every bar and bistro and VFW hall had some electronic "gaming" machines for folks to lose their kids' lunch money in, attendance starts falling off at the riverboat casinos. Total gambling dollars grew, there was this venue shift.

What's the problem? Both forms of stupid behavior generate dollars for public schools, right? Sure, but the state's share of the money losers drop at the casinos is 50%, but the owners of the video gaming establishments only have to give up 30% to the state. And gambling has been a [very good thing for them](#).

The details were reported last week by [ProPublica Illinois](#) and the wonderful public broadcast outlet [WEBZ in Chicago](#). "As gambling moved outside casinos, tax revenue earmarked for state education funding dropped, resulting in a \$70 million decline in education funding between 2013 and 2017," the journalists wrote.

**But the negative social effects of gambling** did not drop, and ProPublica, WEBZ and the Chicago Sun-Times documented it. Example, people who have the least lose the most. Sure, there's the

occasional [William Bennett](#) (his fumble still gives me schadenfreude), but generally the less a gambler has the more he loses. The lower-income status of a neighborhood, the more bars and restaurants and clubs it will have that offer video gambling.

As [John Kindt](#), professor emeritus of business administration at the University of Illinois, has documented in research for many years, [gambling is a losing proposition](#) for any state, especially when the social deficits are accounted for. Currently, sports betting is the start on the gambling horizon - [and in Kindt's research](#).

But if it helps schools, shouldn't educators support it? A great public servant and an old friend, the great Judy Topinka, used to joke that she would like to quit smoking but she didn't want to stop supporting public schools. Yes, it is common for schools to be used as an excuse to promote objects of a "sin tax."

Another principle might be to not promote any activity that a teacher could not recommend that students participate in. This is not an argument for prohibition. That's been shown to have disastrous effects. But for the public revenue derived from dumb behavior to be used to "educate" such behavior away - might be good.

**Not many School Code bills** [were added Tuesday or Wednesday](#) to the 2019 legislative policy agenda. A couple more renditions of the State Charter School Commission defanging were filed. Will it work? Gov. JB Pritzker says he favors *abolishing* the SCSC, which survived intact following several scares last year.

So the outlook seems grim for them. But charter promoters have money - and money talks in the policy process. That's how they survived 2018. Although many of us can't see the usefulness of the Commission, my guess is that some bill will pass that purports it is indispensable in some way, somehow. Money talks.

Another curriculum mandate has surfaced ([computer science for all](#)), and another proposal to [tinker with PTELL](#) reached the public record, but most of the damage is yet to come. Here's a link to [all bills that seem to be of interest](#) to education advocates at the moment, but more bills will slide down the chute Monday.

Yes, Monday is another ["perfunctory" legislative session day](#) for the House. On such days, bills can be filed and other actions can be read into the record, even though the legislators themselves are not at the Capitol. But all legislators will be in Tuesday through Thursday, filing bills with both hands. I'll try to keep up.

**Legislation to address the teacher shortage** appears to be positioned as one of the most challenging policy issues of the current session. On the pending bills list I linked you to, there's a group of [bills with a cost or revenue impact](#). Their short titles refer to them as bills dealing with "DAILY PUPIL ATTENDANCE."

It looks to me like the bills would ease the teacher shortage, but that they would do that by putting some non-teachers in the front of a lot of classrooms. The tension, it seems to me, would be between the goal of putting a "qualified" person in charge of the students and the goal of maintaining a strong definition of "qualified."

There is no doubt about the severity of the teacher shortage. I've been predicting one for years. (You don't grow a vibrant corps of professionals in any field that is conspicuously disrespected, as corporate CEOs and "pro-family" homeschooling advocates have done to public school educators [since April of 1983](#).)

**The ROEs and ISCs**, whom I greatly admire (see item below), [quantified the problem](#) more than a year ago. The question is, what blend of policy adjustments will bring the stakeholders together on a solution? It will take serious negotiation, I think, to get it done. The best solution may not actually please anyone very much.

Who are the stakeholders? In this situation, I think everyone is. The outcome of this stressful policy problem could set in stone a dramatically different public education structure for decades to come. My own inclination is to agree with Advance Illinois and the other signatories to [the statement they recent posted](#).

The Senate's version of the "daily pupil attendance" bills - [SB 28](#) - has been posted for a [hearing at 1 p.m. Tuesday](#) before the Senate Education Committee. The sponsor is [Sen. Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant](#) (D-Plainfield), who chairs the committee. (You may be able to [watch the hearing at this link](#) in Room 212.)

House committees are still forming, so no hearings have been set.

**Speaking of Advance Illinois**, I was pleased to learn that, effective today, [Robin Steans has returned](#) to the leadership role on that excellent education advocacy organization. Robin was the founding executive director of AI in 2008 and gave it instant impact, powerful bipartisan influence, among school support groups.

"Under Robin's leadership, Advance Illinois will continue its important work, building on recent progress and helping us shape an equally dynamic set of priorities as we head into our next ten years," wrote John Edwardson and Marin Gjaja, co-chairs of the board of directors at Advance Illinois in a recent letter to stakeholders.

For the last two years, Ginger Ostro followed Robin's model of sterling leadership for Advance Illinois. Ostro "helped shepherd school funding reform across the finish line, building and strengthening partnerships to end the most inequitable school funding formula in the nation," Edwardson and Gjaja wrote.

Speaking of school funding reform, getting the policymakers to stay even close to being "on track" with appropriations for evidence-based funding will be as difficult - and as important in the long term - as addressing the teacher shortage. There is no shortage to the challenges Advance Illinois can help education leaders address.

**I was a lobbyist in the 1980s and 1990s.** But I have not lobbied since 1998. So at the end of the current legislative session, I will have been *clean for two decades*. Actually, I was a very lucky lobbyist. I didn't make as much money as most, but I never had to work for a client or a policy that I didn't really believe in.

As longtime ISNS readers know, I provided government relations for the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools for more than 10 years. I'm proud of the fact that, as their fate in the policy process improved, so did the quality of their leadership and of the service provided by the [Regional Offices of Education](#).

They were not an easy client to represent. Why not? Mainly because they were "intermediate" agencies. Everyone knows about their local schools, and most civically literate folks are aware of the Illinois State Board of Education. But the folks in the middle of the education system can seem almost invisible.

Most of the bills I wrote, and gained passage of, for the IARSS are still in the School Code. But I never wanted to change the character of the intermediate offices. The 35 ROEs and three Intermediate Service Centers (the ISCs provide ROE services in suburban Cook County) were always inherently creative and vital.

I was most impressed by their services for the benefit of the square pegs, the kids who just were unable to function in the regular school setting. The ROE/ISC offices kept tens of thousands of them in school, progressing toward graduation, every year. [This video clip](#), sent to me by the [West 40 ISC](#), is a good example.

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