



Nicole Blodgett <nblodgett@panaschools.com>

Fwd: Illinois education metrics all above average

1 message

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

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October Board Meeting

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **State School News Service** <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>
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Subject: Illinois education metrics all above average
To: <jbauer@panaschools.com>

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Illinois education metrics all above average

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

Yes, it's almost like [living in Lake Wobegon](#).

Compared with other states - and especially with those in the southern tier - Illinois ranks in the *above average* zone in characteristics associated with education, according to the [WalletHub web site](#), an Internet venue that seems to have a handle on just about every category of differentiation among states.

According to the panels of experts that do the analysis for WelletHub, Illinois ranks 16th on the question of which states have the [best \(or worst\) school systems](#). We rank a tad better - 15th - among the [most \(or least\) educated](#) states. Our best rank - 6th in the nation - relates to the [best \(or worst\) states to be a teachers](#).

WalletHub is a financial advice site, but it does invest heavily in state-by-state comparisons on a wide range of topics. It uses credible data sources accessible to anyone. Its judgments are based on rational grading systems. And their rankings are guided by panels of experts - typically faculty and leaders of universities.

Metrics included in the "best school systems" analysis, for example, included dropout rates, test scores (math, science, SAT, ACT), pupil-teacher ratios, school safety criteria, teacher credentials. Five panelists, from University of Connecticut and Howard University, provided the rationale for the choices of metrics.

Why is Illinois such a great place for teachers - and then *why is the state grappling with such a severe teacher shortage?* WalletHub and its panel of experts (University of Denver, Pennsylvania State University and University of Tennessee) identified 23 "relevant metrics" to include in their scoring system.

The focus was on two "key dimensions." One related to questions about salaries, pensions, credentials and tenure. The other was about criteria for the quality of school systems in a state (like those listed above), plus class size and funding and such issues as teacher turnover, recruiting, administrative support.

Answers came from the U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Education Association, National Center for Education Statistics, Council for Community and Economic Research, TeacherPensions.org, ProCon.org, National Council on Teacher Quality, Projections Central - State Occupational Projections, Learning Policy Institute, Education Commission of the States and The Thomas B. Fordham Institute data bases.

The five best - and worst - states in relation to numerous issues (such as teacher salaries, turnover, teacher-student ratios, district spending per student) are named on the WalletHub site. Illinois is not mentioned at either extreme. It is, like the kids in Lake Wobegon, "above average" - but not exceptional.

As to the Illinois teacher shortage, ISNS readers have seen much verbiage about that in this space over the last year or so, just as you have seen predictions of a severe shortage on the horizon for the last several, make that many, years. The most recent [regional superintendents' report](#) says it's just getting worse.

An [excellent piece on the subject](#) appeared in last week's Illinois Times. It was written by David Blanchette, a veteran journalist who's been around for a long time (and yet [looks so young](#)). Anyway, the "IT" article quotes all the sources who cite all the reasons - pay, pensions, test-prep, the *lack of* support and *respect*.

You've all read my rant, the recitation of history from the Reagan Administration attack through A Nation At Risk, through the standardization movement of the 1990s and the No Child Left Behind fiasco, and the Race To The Top (Bottom). Now the war seems to be winding down - but *reconstruction will take years*.

Yes, it was a national war. Every state's educator community was attacked. And the consequences of denigrating educators for decades are noticed in every state. The [ISNS home page](#) links you to school news in all states. I clicked on Wisconsin at random. First item was about the ["Help Wanted" sign for teachers](#).

[NOTE: Wisconsin has an elected state superintendent, like Illinois had for a century - and still should. The Wisconsin superintendent gives a "state of education report" annually, as I suggested - in bill language - for Illinois many years ago; Republicans put a stop to it. Wisconsin's last superintendent *is now their governor!*]

"Chicago Public Schools: A Transformation Story." That is how the Harvard Graduate School of Education began its [online promotion](#) of Thursday night's event, a "conversation" with CPS CEO Dr. Janice K. Jackson, an overachieving educator who's whole life has been intertwined with Chicago schools.

As the Harvard online invitation points out, it was in 1987 - more than 30 years ago - that U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett "said he wasn't sure if there was a school system worse than Chicago Public Schools." (ISNS: Bennett was not well positioned to dispense moral advice, but he prolifically did so anyway.)

Jackson was just a CPS student back then. She has since come a long way. She's been a CPS teacher and a principal at two successful CPS high schools. She was a CPS "network chief" and became the district's Chief Education Officer before being elevated to the top position, CEO of CPS, in December of 2017,

Her perspective on CPS is shaped by her professional experience there, by the fact that she was educated there and by the fact that she is now a "proud parent" of two CPS students. Her district is greatly changed from the time when Bennett so disparaged it; today, as the Harvard program announcement said, it is "receiving national acclaim [and] has emerged as a model for accelerating academic growth."

During Thursday's conversation at Harvard, Jackson talked about the district's progress, its record-high graduation rate, its record-low dropout rate and the fact, as CPS public communication staffer Emily Bolton told ISNS, "more CPS students are staying in school, graduating and enrolling in college than ever before."

Jackson also highlighted the district's "[Five-Year Vision](#)," a recently-released set of commitments for achievement through the year 2024. The "Vision" web page is worth reviewing. It describes "core values" and specific early childhood goals. (You can download a "Vision Booklet" (PDF document) in [English](#) or [Spanish](#)).

NOTE: For various reasons, since its inception in 1995, ISNS has focused mainly on state policy affecting the 850 or so (there used to be many more) districts *not* in Chicago. But an entire section of the statutes is devoted just to CPS. It is an important entity; policy affecting it often spills over to the other 850.

Also, CPS has experienced a lot of rough sledding in the last 25 years. Much news coming from CPS has been negative. Even now, with a [teacher strike authorization](#) making national news, managing CPS is a major challenge. Janice Jackson seems up to the task. She exemplifies the wisdom of "hiring internally."

"When purpose gets attached to power, something magical happens." Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin thus concludes a truly excellent (only 15 minutes brief) cinemagraphic portrait of three presidents. Each governed with legacies that define us still, a bit, as a nation: Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson.

This message is *about the source* of the Goodwin-hosted video, a source of great information greatly presented, on history and science and nature and technology and lifestyle. This intelligent streaming narrative distracts me from the drudgery of my treadmill. I doze off to it nightly, confident in the power and truth of its narrations.

Okay, I have a selfish motive here. It's an Internet channel called CuriosityStream. Costs me \$19.95 a year. It informs me and it entertains me to see David Attenborough get so excited about the wonders of bioluminescence or a marvelously complex ant hill. You *could* go directly to the site - *but I don't want you to*.

Go instead [to this link](#). If just three of you join CuriosityStream via my "referral page," I'll receive a nifty T-shirt. If I'm one of the top 100 referrers this month, I'll get a "limited edition CuriosityStream hoodie"! After that, I think, you get to refer your friends, too, maybe get a T-shirt. Yes, it's a pyramid scheme. But a good one.

Brain research shows Mister Rogers was right. ISNS readers have long known of my affinity for [Dr. David Eagleman](#), the brilliant neuroscientist who can also write compellingly. In *The Brain: The Story of You*, Eagleman tells how everything we do, every association we have, shapes our brain and makes us who we are.

"Each of us is on our own trajectory - steered by our genes and our experiences - and as a result every brain has a different internal life. *Brains are as unique as snowflakes*," Eagleman assures us - just as Mister Rogers did when he said, "In a way, you've already won in this world because *you're the only one who can be you*."

Educators may be more familiar with [Stanislas DeHaene](#), the prolific psychologist and cognitive neuroscientist from France who gears much of his thought and research toward understanding the brain as the organ of learning. Here's a brief video of his 2013 presentation to the [World Innovation Summit for Education](#).

DeHaene's book [Consciousness](#) is a powerful examination of the "hard problem." Toward the end he suggests machines may solve that problem, may even become self-aware. I would never follow him out on that limb, but otherwise I find his work to be informative and often even exciting. (You can [have it read to you here](#).)

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State School News Service, [347 S Durkin Dr, Springfield, IL 62704](#)

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Mr. Jason Bauer
Superintendent - Pana CUSD #8
14 E. Main Street
Pana, IL 62557
Phone: (217) 562-1500
Fax: (217) 562-1501