

## **UPDATE ON P-16 PARTNERSHIP**

**Submitted for:** Action.

**Summary:** The Illinois P-16 Partnership for Educational Excellence, formalized in March of 1999, is the result of the State Board of Education (ISBE), the Community College Board (ICCB) and the Board of Higher Education's (IBHE) commitment to improve their working relationships. The Joint Education Committee is the formal mechanism for recommending new or revised P-16 Partnership policies, goals, and directions to the individual boards when individual board action is needed, and under the leadership of the Governor's office, serves as the forum for developing consensus among the education agencies.

**Action Requested:** That the Board of Higher Education reaffirm its commitment to support the Joint Education Committee and its P-16 partners as they improve student preparation for colleges and the workforce, improve the quality of teachers in K-12 classrooms, and implement new learning technologies to increase access, diversity, and quality at all levels.



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**UPDATE ON P-16 PARTNERSHIP**

In March 1999, the three education boards adopted an agreement entitled “P-16 Partnership for Educational Excellence.” The agreement identifies three areas of shared activity:

- “*College-Ready Kids*” (smoothing the transition from high school to college),
- “*Classroom-Ready Teachers*” (improving the recruitment, preparation and development of classroom teachers), and
- “*Log-On Learning*” (increasing learning opportunities through technology).

An important aspect of the P-16 agreement was the decision to revitalize the Joint Education Committee (JEC). This Committee was created by statute several years ago. It consists of two members from each of four state Boards: ISBE, ICCB, IBHE, and the Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB) and is chaired by the Governor’s Office. In order to operationalize the P-16 agreement, new leaders at each member Board decided to reconstitute the JEC with a new policy agenda driven by the P-16 agreement. Policy directives from the JEC are translated into actions and programs through each member Board.

**College-Ready Kids**

**Prairie State Achievement Examination**

As a part of Illinois’ standards-led reform, the state is establishing new tests based on the Illinois Learning Standards adopted in 1997. Statutes establish that the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) be given annually during the spring of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade in five subjects: reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social science. The test will be given for the first time in April of 2001. Unlike high-stakes testing in some other states, passing the PSAE is not required for graduation. Instead, the state has taken a developmental and incentive approach, providing for “Prairie State Scholar” designations for high performance, aligning a variety of tangible incentives with the test, and increasing time and opportunities for remediation in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade prior to entering college or the workforce.

In a recent development, the State Board of Education partnered with ACT to provide elements of the examination. As a result, several benefits will accrue:

- A student will receive a PSAE score in each of the five mandated subjects, a “portable” ACT score for use in college admissions applications, and two “portable” Work Keys scores for use in pursuing employment;

- Students will take the ACT at state expense, with the option of a retake in their 12<sup>th</sup> grade year at state expense. (Note: Historically, 65 percent of Illinois students, either high school juniors or seniors, annually take the ACT at their own expense);
- The IBHE, ICCB and IWIB have formally endorsed the PSAE, with the intention of using the PSAE scores in admissions and employment considerations; and
- Schools receive test preparation materials at state expense.

With the support of the JEC, ISBE is pursuing scholarship and award options for strong test performance. It is the goal of the PSAE effort to make college and employment accessible to more students through a strong correlation with proven attainment in achieving the Illinois Learning Standards.

### **GEAR-UP Federal Grant Proposal**

To ensure that low-income students are academically and financially prepared for postsecondary education, ISBE, IBHE, ICCB, and ISAC formed the Illinois GEAR-UP Alliance. They submitted for federal funding a state grant proposal to increase enrollment in postsecondary education among low-income students by targeting resources to middle grade students and their families. This will increase the capacity of families with limited financial resources to encourage attainment of high academic standards and college attendance; build the capacity of middle-grade personnel to foster high academic expectations for all students, especially from low-income families; assist local GEAR-UP partnerships in building a capacity for continued growth and development; and provide scholarship support to GEAR-UP students by building the financial capacity of local partnerships. The state has been notified that it will not be given the funds for which it applied. Reasons for this decision are not yet known.

### **Classroom-Ready Teachers**

#### **Teaching Standards**

The ISBE and the Illinois Teacher Certification Board have adopted a new set of core teaching standards and a comprehensive set of content-area standards. These standards, based on the NCATE 2000 Standards, comprise the foundation for all efforts related to teacher preparation and ongoing professional development, including certificate renewal every five years. The development was a joint effort across K-12 and higher education, and involved hundreds of educators and Illinois residents, both through direct project participation and through public comment and feedback.

#### **Basic Skills Test**

Historically, Illinois has administered a “Basic Skills Test” to teacher candidates completing their preparation program. The test has been criticized as being extremely easy, and pass rates have traditionally been very high. Through a joint effort across the education boards, a new and expanded Basic Skills Test given in the late sophomore year has been proposed as an *entrance* requirement to the teacher preparation program. It will also test skills and content defined in the state’s higher education Comprehensive General Studies Curriculum. Discussions are under way to expand the focus of this test to be a more comprehensive, value-added assessment of general education. These discussions include aligning the general education/Basic Skills Test with the areas tested on the PSAE.

## **Institutional and State Report Cards (Higher Education Act, Title II)**

Shortly after the amendments to the federal Higher Education Act were passed, the three Illinois education boards committed to taking the new requirements as an opportunity to create an environment for improving teacher education programs. The desired approach is intended to be developmental, not punitive, with the ultimate goal being an exemplary set of program offerings statewide, and improved student learning. The three Boards joined an American Association of State Colleges and Universities team for the purpose of providing the best possible counsel to institutions and to the State as to how the “report cards” should be administered, the standards that should apply, and how test scores might be used. Two state groups have been meeting to make recommendations to the state on what types of contextual and supplemental information should be included for the “report card”, and to design a “data warehouse” which will provide accurate information on teacher supply and demand. On September 13, ISBE, IBHE, and ICCB in cooperation with the Governor’s office held a meeting for all teacher preparation programs and their institutions to apprise them of the federal requirements, definitions, and institutional responsibilities, and received feedback and suggestions on the selection of the contextual and supplemental information.

## **Teacher Quality Federal Grant Proposal**

The three higher education Boards collaborated in writing a joint proposal in response to the federal Teacher Quality Enhancement (TQE) Request for Proposals. The proposal focuses on improving licensure and certification for middle school teachers, the quality of middle school teachers, teacher preparation programs, and student learning in high poverty areas. A “common vision” was developed and agreed to by the staffs of IBHE, ISBE, and ICCB for the purpose of leveraging state matching and potential federal resources from GEAR-UP, TQE, and the PT3 grant programs. As a part of this “common vision,” the Illinois P-16 Partnership decided to shine a light on the unique needs of the Illinois middle grades, and “triple-team” a response to those problems. This will be accomplished by building linkages between the three federal funding programs, integrating their activities wherever possible, and making the reform of middle-grade teacher preparation in high poverty areas the number one priority of all three education agencies as the initial route for improving teacher education in the State of Illinois. The state was recently notified that it was awarded \$4.3 million in funding over the next three years beginning October 1, and requests for proposals will be developed to fund initial curriculum development and redesign, to incorporate the current needs of middle school teachers, and the assets and opportunities which community colleges can bring to the improved recruitment and preparation of teachers.

## **Log-On Learning**

### **Illinois Century Network**

One of the most collaborative and potentially most successful joint ventures under P-16 in Illinois is the creation of the Illinois Century Network (ICN), a high-bandwidth, fiber-optic information superhighway that will connect all colleges, universities, K-12 schools, public libraries, museums, and state agencies, as well as many municipalities. This network combines a preexisting network created by ISBE for its K-12 schools (the LincOn Network) with new funding for the ICN awarded to IBHE. The combined effort enormously reduces costs, greatly increases connectivity, and provides a vehicle for long-term P-16 collaboration in relation to content and services, including professional development opportunities for teachers. The ICN

staff has recently moved to their new offices at 120 West Jefferson, Suite B, Springfield, Illinois, and have employed approximately 36 people throughout the state to further implement the ICN.

### **Illinois Virtual High School**

One of the earliest content collaborations for the use of the ICN is the Illinois Virtual High School. It is jointly funded by appropriations to ICCB, ISBE, and IBHE. It will not offer a high school diploma, but will augment existing high school curricula with Advanced Placement courses, college readiness or remediation courses in mathematics and English, language courses, and other course offerings related to the Illinois Learning Standards.

### **Joint Education Committee**

The Joint Education Committee met September 12 and continued its discussion and monitoring of ongoing P-16 projects. It focused the majority of its discussion on critical data, which have important implications for the appropriate expectations, and preparation of students for a workplace that increasingly requires college-level skills, and for college level work – not remedial level work – in postsecondary institutions. The JEC directed the staff to prepare, by September 27, an action agenda and proposed revisions that expand the reach of the vision contained in the original P-16/JEC operating agreement.

### **Conclusion**

It is fair to say that, under the auspices of the Joint Education Committee, collaboration among P-16 partners in Illinois is extensive, productive, and holds great promise for the future. At a recent national conference, the Illinois P-16 initiative was featured and praised for its great progress in a short period of time.

The staff recommends adoption of the following resolution:

*The Board of Higher Education reaffirms its commitment to support the Joint Education Committee and its P-16 partners as they improve student preparation for colleges and the workforce, improve the quality of teachers in K-12 classrooms, and implement the new learning technologies to increase access, diversity, and quality at all levels.*