

## **ISBE/STATE ISSUES**

### **New program allows Illinois to modify how it meets No Child Left Behind / Rockford Register Star**

By Katie Backman, Rockford Register Star

ROCKFORD — Illinois is one of six states that will participate in a pilot program aimed at helping schools meet the progress requirements set by the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

The new program, approved by the U.S. Department of Education, will allow the state to vary the “intensity and type of interventions” used to improve schools.

Andrea Preston, spokeswoman for the Illinois State Board of Education, said “Differentiated Accountability” could help tailor the needs of low-performing schools in Illinois so they can succeed and boost their progress scores. Potentially, all the schools in the state will be affected by this program, Preston said, but schools most in need of improvement will be first.

“No Child Left Behind is a one-size-fits-all requirement, which doesn’t work,” Preston said. “So this will let us think outside the box.”

Under No Child Left Behind, school districts use standardized tests to track the progress of schools from year to year. Schools that do not make adequate progress must implement corrective actions, such as free tutoring or after-school assistance. The main goal of NCLB is for all students to meet or exceed standards in reading and math by 2014.

Under the pilot program, the time period schools or districts have to improve and meet requirements will be extended. Also, schools will continue to move through the process of improvement each year that they don’t meet the Adequate Yearly Progress measures, but they now will be classified as “focused” or “comprehensive” schools instead of those in “need of improvement.”

Preston said portions of the pilot program will be implemented for the 2008-09 school year, and full implementation will be the following academic year. Preston said the program was announced in March and states applied for the program in May. Because of the short notice to apply, Illinois’ exact plans still will be adjusted, she said.

Michael Williams, vice president of the Rockford School Board, said some Illinois schools have struggled to meet the federal goals and the state setting its own bar would be a positive change.

“It will allow the state to do what’s best for the students and set goals that match the students,” he said.

But Rockford Education Association President Molly Phalen said the only way to work with NCLB requirements would be to get rid of them.

NCLB hasn’t worked because it hasn’t received adequate funding and the standards are set too high, she said. Each year, the bar gets raised and students keep falling more behind, she said.

Although under the new program Illinois will begin offering additional tutoring earlier to students in low-performing schools, Phalen said students already receive tutoring — which might not be the best solution to the problem.

NCLB needs to be overhauled, Phalen said, then maybe students will be able to improve.

“It’s too little, too late,” Phalen said. “This program will just be tweaking at best.”

## **DISTRICT FINANCES**

### **District 80 ends year in the black / Mt. Vernon Register-News**

By Tesa Culli, Mt. Vernon Register-News

MT. VERNON — District 80 has ended the 2007-08 fiscal year with a balanced budget for the second year in a row.

“I was very pleased where we ended the fiscal year,” Superintendent Kevin Settle told members of the board on Wednesday. “The state came through with the final two aid payments, and that kept us in the black.”

Settle reported that in addition to the final two state payments, the district has been vouchered \$217,707 for transportation and \$358,466 in special education funds.

“If you factor out the money we borrowed for special projects ... the bottom line is we’ll end up for fiscal year 2008 with about \$750,000 in the black, and we’ll need it,” said Settle.

Settle said five years ago when the district invited the Illinois State Board of Education to analyze the expenditures of the district and make recommendations, one of the main items of advice was to set up ways to project expenses into the future. Settle said the biggest expenditure that can be projected is salaries, and projections are not good for next year.

“Next year will be a difficult year for us,” Settle predicted. “We have several people who will be retiring and people who will be topping the salary scale. We will need the surplus this year to get us through next year.”

Another piece of good fiscal news received by the District 80 board was the state has “given back” \$189,650 in special education extraordinary money, which was taken away from the school district last summer.

“Only 252 districts in the state were affected, and most were down here,” Settle said. Settle said the Illinois School Administrators Association took up the cause and made it a No. 1 priority to continue to lobby the state to get the funding reinstated. “Because of the small number of schools in the state that were affected, I wasn’t holding out much hope of getting it back, but I’m glad to say I was wrong. ... It’s money we already had that was taken away, and now has been given back.”

Settle said in addition, the bill signed by the governor for the special education funding has provisions that don’t require the funding to be reauthorized every year.

The district Head Start program also received a donation, Settle reported. According to Settle, retired Benton educator Gene Alexander painted a map of the United States on the playground at the Benjamin Franklin Early Childhood Center and made a donation to the program of \$500. When director Aleta Lawrence sent Alexander a thank-you note, the former Franklin County principal responded with an additional \$1,000 donation.

“It was so generous and so unexpected,” Settle said. “Aleta was like, ‘Wow.’”

### **D300 stands alone in not backing TIF / Courier News**

By Cigi Ross, Courier News

GILBERTS -- Community Unit School District 300 was the only taxing body to vote against the village's proposed tax increment financing district at Thursday's joint review board hearing.

Representatives from Elgin Community College, Rutland-Dundee Fire Protection District and the Village of Gilberts all supported the plan to help bring development to Gilberts. The joint review board's vote only serves as a suggestion for the village board, which could have approved the TIF even if all of the taxing bodies rejected the plan.

If approved, the TIF would include the area bounded by Interstate 90 on the southwest, Riemer Way on the east and Higgins Road on the north, and would include the historic downtown area along Railroad Street and Galligan Road north of Higgins Road. The area is about 240 acres and includes 168 parcels of property and 55 residential units.

In a TIF district, the distribution of property taxes to local governmental bodies such as school districts is frozen at current levels. As property values grow, the increased property tax revenue from that -- known as the increment -- is reinvested in the area instead of being distributed to the taxing bodies.

Cheryl Crates, chief financial officer for District 300, voted against recommending the TIF despite having previously said Gilberts' TIF plan was one of the best she'd seen. Crates said the school district has a policy against supporting TIFs.

"We feel there are other ways for the village to raise bond funds or redevelopment dollars, rather than taking it from the school district," Crates said.

Village Administrator Ray Keller said money generated from the TIF will be used to make infrastructure improvements, like water, sewer and street and sidewalk upgrades. Keller said the village may use money generated from the TIF in conjunction with low-interest loans from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and possible Special Service Area financing districts to pay for the improvements. The village hopes the infrastructure improvements will help attract businesses to the area, especially in the industrial park south of Higgins Road and north of Interstate 90.

The village will hold a public hearing on the TIF at 7:30 p.m. Aug. 5 at village hall, 87 Galligan Road.

## ILLINOIS

### **Dist. 127½ seeks gym waiver / The Reporter Online**

*Because it can't provide physical ed every day, officials say*

By Matthew Piechalak, The Reporter Online

Chicago Ridge School District 127½ is seeking a waiver that would allow it to forego the state requirement of daily physical education for all students.

The District 127½ board of education voted unanimously Tuesday to approve petitioning for the waiver through the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). District secretary Lisa Demma and board member Jamie Albon were not present for the vote.

The waiver process is very common, board members said.

Under Illinois law, daily physical education is required for all public school students. If a school district cannot adequately provide physical education five days a week, it can apply for a waiver to scale back the requirement, Chicago Ridge School District 127½ Superintendent Joyce Kleinaitis said. The waiver must be applied for on a yearly basis, Kleinaitis added.

“We would need more staff and we only have one gym [per school],” Kleinaitis said of the reason for seeking the waiver.

The application must be received by the ISBE by Aug. 15. District 127½ has received a waiver from the state for at least the past five years, Kleinaitis said.

In order to obtain the waiver, the district must demonstrate it can “address the intent of the mandate in a more effective, efficient or economical manner or when necessary to stimulate innovation or improve student performance.”

Although physical education will most likely be scaled back to three days a week at Ridge Central, Ridge Lawn and Finley Junior High schools, board members pointed to the ways the district has met state requirements including alternating a health program with physical activity throughout the week. The board on Tuesday set district goals for the upcoming school year, including looking for ways to improve the physical education program.

“We need to look at what other districts are doing that have the same physical layout,” Kleinaitis told the board.

Other goals discussed included improving the curriculum, raising reading scores through programs, increasing overall school climate and teacher participation, securing grants and making a concerted effort to “go green” by making the district more environmentally friendly.

### **Effects of NCLB change unknown / Galesburg Register-Mail**

*District 205 official doesn't expect any impact initially*

By Michelle Anstett, Galesburg Register-Mail

GALESBURG — The announcement last week that Illinois will be one of six states to participate in a federal pilot program to test its own standards for determining failing schools will not affect Galesburg schools, at least not yet.

Education Secretary Margaret Spellings announced on July 1 that six states — Illinois, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Maryland and Ohio — will be able to develop some of their own programs for identifying and rehabilitating ailing schools under the No Child Left Behind Act. Currently, schools have to take certain steps at very specific times if they miss the mark on reading or math scores.

The new flexibility will allow the involved states to tailor programs more closely to the specific needs of their schools, something Illinois State Superintendent of Education Christopher Koch hopes will help schools “identify and focus our efforts on the students that need it the most,” he said in a news release.

Galesburg District 205 Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Joel Estes said that, as of Tuesday, he had not heard anything about the new plan beyond what has been written in newspaper articles. Changes in Illinois are expected to begin with the beginning of the 2008-09 school year.

“We’ll see,” he said, but “in my estimation, it’s not going to affect any District 205 schools this next year.”

District 205 does not have any schools that would qualify for the new program, which would allow schools to begin tutoring students at an earlier stage and offering school choice after a school is on the academic watch list for three consecutive years instead of two.

Five years ago, Cooke Elementary School was required to offer a choice of schools to its students after its second year failing Adequate Yearly Progress. Estes said only about 5 percent of students took advantage of the opportunity.

One year later, the district was required to solicit the services of an outside vendor to provide tutoring to students who were identified as being in need of it.

No private companies stepped forward with feasible plans, so the district developed its own tutoring program at Cooke. That next year, Cooke was taken off the watch list and the tutoring program was implemented in all district elementary schools.

Even though District 205 has two schools on the academic early watch list for the 2006-07 school year — Lombard Middle School and Galesburg High School — Estes does not think they will qualify under this program. If they do, he has not heard anything regarding new programs that must be implemented.

Under NCLB, all students in America must meet or exceed standards in reading and math by 2014. The act is up for renewal by Congress this year.

Other programs planned in pilot states include more emphasis on training principals in Maryland and allowing Georgia public schools to become charter schools.

### **Geneva school construction benefits from really nice summer / Daily Herald**

By Susan Sarkauskas, Daily Herald Staff Writer

On Aug. 20, the new Williamsburg Elementary School in Geneva is supposed to open for business.

Construction is in the home stretch. Workers have been installing landscaping this month, removing stockpiles of construction materials, installing toilet partitions, carpeting the corridors and tiling the cafeteria. There's cabinetry to install; finish work for mechanical, electrical and plumbing; rubber flooring to put on the stairs; concrete sidewalks to pour.

Will it be ready?

"Williamsburg is going great," said John Robinson, the Geneva school district's operations and facilities director. "We've had a great summer of building," with good weather.

The state fire marshal and a representative from the Regional Office of Education are scheduled to inspect the school at the end of next week. If they sign off, and the city signs an occupancy permit, the district will then give the school a good cleaning and start moving in the week after. "Everything went smooth," Robinson said.

The boxes of supplies, books and other educational materials are in the gym and cafeteria at Coultrap Elementary School, along with boxes from Harrison Street Elementary School.

"It's quite a sight to see," Robinson said.

Williamsburg is one of many projects underway this summer in the Geneva school district.

Williamsburg students previously attended Coultrap. Harrison will use the Coultrap building this year, while Harrison's building is shuttered for renovations.

Over at Harrison this month, the roof is being replaced, asbestos is being removed in the primary classroom wing (the oldest part of the building) and workers are demolishing walls inside to make room for new elevators. The asbestos is in the adhesive for the floor tiles. There is also some in caulking for windows on the northwest area of the school. That will be removed, because the windows are being replaced.

Geneva Middle School South is getting an addition for storage, and science classrooms are getting new countertops.

Mill Creek Elementary School is getting new carpeting and tile, and new data transmission wiring. It, too, is getting some roof work.

Western Avenue, Heartland and Harrison Street elementary schools are all getting new playgrounds. The equipment has been installed at Western Avenue and Heartland; now it just needs what Robinson calls the "softscape," a rubberized base. The base will be wheelchair-accessible, and lasts longer than wood chips, which compact with use or float away sometimes in heavy rain, Robinson said. Harrison's will be finished later this summer, as the district has to figure out how to schedule the job around the other construction work.

There will be more parking at Geneva High School football games this year; crews began building a lot off Gray Street earlier this week.

"It seems like we're doing a lot," Robinson said.

In the 2009-10 school year, the district is due to open another elementary school, Fabyan. Load-bearing masonry walls are being built there now.

## **6 from Lake Co. in running for principal of the year award / Daily Herald**

By Lee Filas, Daily Herald Staff Contact Writer

Six school administrators from Lake County are in the running to be named principal of the year in Illinois.

The Lakes Region of the Illinois Principal's Association announced the local winners during its annual summer banquet June 19.

The local winners are: Jason Lind, of Millburn Central Middle School, who won elementary principal of the year honors; Chris Willeford, of West Oak Middle School, was middle school principal of the year; John Ahlgrim, of Mundelein High School, was named high school principal of the year.

Also on the list are: Stanton School's Jeff Sefcik, who was named assistant principal of the year; Stanton School principal Bill Lomas, who was awarded the Herman Graves Award for his years of service and loyalty to the principal's association; Antioch High School's Mike Nekritz won the Innovative Education Award for the "Seminar for Scholars Program."

Illinois Principal Association Lake Region Director Jeff Knapp, who is principal of Woodview Elementary School in Grayslake, said all are excellent administrators and should do well in the state competition.

"We are very happy for all the winners," Knapp said. "These six were nominated for the award by their peers and now, their applications will be sent to the state competition."

The Illinois Principal's Association is expected to make decisions on the principal of the year in December, Knapp said.

## **Summer school gets upgrades / Herald News**

Herald News

PLAINFIELD -- Learning and teaching -- and the work to improve learning and teaching -- in Plainfield School District never stop, not even over the summer.

Several changes were made this year to the district's traditional summer school program designed to increase access to the program, accommodate parents' needs, enhance learning and better serve and support students.

"Historically our summer school program has been remedial and supportive, but we're moving toward a program that will offer more challenging learning for all students," said Assistant Superintendent of Student Services Sharon Gronemeyer.

"We have always had a strong program of remediation and support, to help those students who failed a class or who need extra help," Gronemeyer said. "Now we are also working on expanding our offerings to increase the learning opportunities."

#### Schedule change

At the elementary level, classes were extended to a fifth day each week to better accommodate parents' schedules.

Elementary summer school was limited to four days a week.

Parents often would have to arrange for special care for the children on the fifth day, keep them out of school altogether, or have older students stay home -- missing their own summer school classes -- on the fifth day to watch their younger siblings.

Preliminary figures for elementary summer school show a slight increase in attendance through the first week of July.

The district also changed eligibility requirements for elementary students to increase the number of students able to enroll in summer school.

Work has also begun to add more elementary-level "enrichment"-type courses over the next several years as the district expands its elementary gifted program. This change will provide additional challenge for gifted students who crave more stimulating work than they can get during the regular school year.

Similarly, at the high school level, plans call for additional summer school elective courses such as art studies.

This change will let students take more high-end courses during the regular school year. As well, it will let students who already take a heavy load of rigorous courses during the year to take some of the electives that their schedule currently won't allow.

#### Bridge program

At the middle school level, this year the district offered a new mathematics "bridge" program for students who took algebra in 8th grade and need an extra boost to continue their success in high school, Gronemeyer said.

"This is not a remedial program. These students have already done well at 8th grade, and this bridge program will increase their likelihood of continuing to be successful in high school," she said.

Many of these changes were motivated by the limits imposed by the regular school year calendar.

Principals saw that some students who needed some continued support or extra help, that wasn't available because of all the other requirements loaded into the regular school calendar.

As well, Gronemeyer said, there is an entire group of special education students who are overqualified for the traditional summer school special education program, but not quite ready for the regular summer school education program. They, too, needed and deserved extra help and support.

"Traditionally in education, 'time' is the constant and 'learning' is the variable," Gronemeyer said. "Classes are held for a certain amount of time, and students learn whatever they can in that time.

"We are moving to a point in education and in District 202 where 'learning' is the constant and 'time' is the variable," Gronemeyer said.

"We want to create a model that lets us extend the classroom experience. Creating extra time through summer school and other programming, students who learn differently will have more and better opportunities to achieve, whether they need to make up a class, get extra support or need extra challenges to keep them engaged and learning," Gronemeyer said.

### **Arcola school district hires new superintendent / Champaign News-Gazette**

By Tim Mitchell, Champaign News-Gazette

ARCOLA – The Arcola school board voted unanimously Wednesday night to hire Jean Chrostoski as its next superintendent.

Chrostoski has served as school superintendent for the Nokomis, Ill., school district since July 2003.

"She is an excellent choice," said interim Superintendent Richard Wilson. "She has a lot of educational experience, and she brings a good work ethic to the job. She has a great personality and works well with children. All those things added together mean good things for Arcola."

Chrostoski will begin her duties in Arcola on Sept. 1.

Wilson said the school board hired a consulting firm out of Monticello, Consulting Research, Inc., to complete background checks on all the candidates for superintendent. Chrostoski will fill the spot left by Reggie Clinton, who resigned in November to become superintendent at the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired in Jacksonville. The board hired Wilson, a retired former principal from the Taylorville school district, in January to serve as interim school chief while it searched for a permanent replacement.

"I have enjoyed by time here in Arcola," Wilson said.

### **County bails out education watchdog / SouthtownStar**

By Angela Caputo, SouthtownStar

There should be no shortage of teachers in suburban classrooms come fall -at least not because they couldn't get certified on time - thanks to a taxpayer-backed loan from one cash-strapped, patronage-stacked branch of Cook County government to another.

The Cook County Board in late June loaned \$190,000 to the Suburban Cook County Regional Office of Education - which acts as a liaison between suburban school districts and the state on matters such as teacher certifications.

Regional education officials had told county commissioners that if the board did come up with the cash - and fast - some suburban schools would face a teacher shortage come fall because the office wouldn't have the money to process all of the necessary teacher applications, County Commissioner Mike Quigley (D-Chicago) said.

There are no stipulations on how the loan can be spent. On Thursday, Regional Supt. Charles Flowers said, via e-mail, that it will provide a "safety net" to "ensure that the services and assurances of the (regional office) will not be interrupted due to the delay in funding by the state."

Commissioner Elizabeth Gorman (R-Orland Park), who cast the sole "no" vote on the loan, said she wasn't buying the plea from the regional superintendent's office, which came on the heels of a spate of patronage hires by Flowers.

"How could we justify this?" Gorman said. "We're raising taxes to bail out another friends-and-family organization?"

Commissioners apparently felt the matter was so urgent that they voted to suspend the rule that requires giving public notice so they could adopt the measure on the spot. A caveat to their approval was that the money must be paid back by June.

In his e-mail, Flowers said his office plans to repay the loan using operations and certification fees. He declined to take phone calls on the issue.

### Shaky ground

When Flowers took control of the office in July 2007 it had \$413,434 in net assets but was already on shaky financial ground. His administration managed to boost revenue slightly through homeless education outreach and universal preschool grants. For months, Flowers has also pledged to turn things around by tapping into the Cook County government for additional resources.

Still, financial troubles persist for the agency, which does background checks, processes certification and conducts school safety inspections, among other things. In fact, the office's financial outlook is so bleak that for years the state's Auditor General has warned that, based on historic revenue growth and spending, officials soon won't have enough money to operate in full capacity.

That hasn't prompted Flowers - a former special education director in Tinley Park-based Kirby School District 140 and Park Forest School District 163 - to cut any corners.

Top-tier administrators now earn more than double in some cases than people who held the same positions under former Regional Supt. Bob Ingrassia - with salaries ranging between \$75,244 and \$100,325. Flowers also has hired three relatives on his payroll: two administrative assistants and a \$15 an-hour floater.

Despite the hires, service from the regional office remain tough to come by, Forest Ridge School District 142 Supt. Margaret Longo said. It's not uncommon for phone lines at the Westchester-based office to register a busy signal or ring unanswered throughout an entire day. After getting the runaround, staffers in Longo's Oak Forest district went straight to the state Board of Education to get their certification and background checks worked out this spring.

"It takes that kind of maneuvering to get it done," Longo said.

Given the office's track record and financial outlook, Gorman is less than confident that the loan will do much for schools in her district. She's even more leery of Flowers' office's ability to repay the \$190,000.

"The way that this office is run, I don't see us getting it back," she said. "I hope I'm wrong."

## NATIONAL

### **Economy Takes Toll On Education Funding / National Public Radio**

By Larry Abramson, National Public Radio

Morning Edition - Education budgets are getting hit by higher costs for fuel and food, and by lower tax revenues due to the real estate downturn. School budgets often take a slap when the economy sputters, as it's doing now. But some states are trying to protect schools from lousy economic conditions.

If you're an educator in a state like Michigan, you probably feel like someone keeps plunging your head into a bucket of ice water. During economic booms, you get to take a breath. But right now it's time for another dunking.

Twenty-two Michigan districts are facing deficits. Don Wotruba of the Michigan Association of School Boards says that as operating costs go up, there's only one way to cut staff.

"A lot of our younger teachers are the ones who get laid off, because they are the lowest on the pay scale as far as the union goes," he says. "And then those [teachers] leave the state to go work somewhere else. So we are having the problem of eating our young a little bit."

The irony is that Michigan legislators this year approved a small increase in per pupil spending, but it's not enough to keep up with the cost of education. Combine that with the fact that enrollment is declining rapidly in places like Detroit, and you can see why educators are running out of hair to pull out.

#### Universities Also Feel The Pinch

When it comes to higher education, the picture is equally bleak. Budget problems led the University of Nevada at Las Vegas to ax the all-time favorite instructor of a student named Hepi Mita. So, Mita held a going-away party for his teacher, complete with a call to action on Facebook.

"I just said the budget cuts suck," Mita says. "That actually started getting a lot of reaction" in the form of student protests against a looming 14 percent cut in funding, he says.

The university has already suffered cuts of about 7 percent over the past year, leading Provost Neal Smatresk to write an angry screed, much of it in all caps, calling the shortfall "a dagger in UNLV's heart."

#### Some States Boost School Funding

But the news isn't all bad for education funding around the country. Some states are trying to protect school budgets.

Pennsylvania, for example, is raising state funding by as much as 15 percent in some districts. And despite economic troubles in Arizona, school districts there got a 2 percent increase in state money. That's because voters passed an initiative in 2000 that requires funding to keep pace with inflation each year.

But that hasn't protected the Mesa Public Schools, the state's largest district, from having to consider school closures. Once again, the culprit is declining enrollment.

Educators are often reluctant to admit when they are doing well. Richard Miller, a vice president at the University of Wyoming, clearly does not want to crow about the generous allowance his school is getting, thanks to oil and gas revenues. Miller says the university received a 15 percent budget increase over the most recent two years.

Wyoming has been using its energy bonus to boost spending both on K-12 and higher education.

Miller says the university is trying to make sure the energy money will keep flowing, by training workers for energy fields.

"We have an enhanced oil recovery institute that's being funded now," he says. And the state is providing the university money to research clean-coal technology, he adds.

Alaska and North Dakota schools are seeing a similar boost. But educators in those states say that while they are benefiting from high energy prices, they want to avoid boom-and-bust funding for education.

### **State to make student test scores accessible online / The Salt Lake Tribune**

By Lisa Schencker, The Salt Lake Tribune

Soon, teachers and parents may be able to more easily analyze student test scores. And it will only take the touch of a few buttons.

The state has decided to award \$7.5 million to DigitalBridge to create the statewide data system lawmakers called for in 2007. The system will allow teachers and parents to track online their children's test scores, the test scores of their children's classrooms and those of other classrooms and schools, said Patti Harrington, state superintendent. School transcripts also will be kept electronically so they can be transferred more easily between schools when children move.

"When a child moves, even just down the street, sometimes it will take more than just a few days to get information down to the next campus," Harrington said. "We want that to be immediate."

She said it will be up to schools whether or not they want to participate, and, though the public will be able to see overall school, district and state scores on many tests, children's names will be kept private except to parents and school officials.

Lawmakers passed a bill in 2007 appropriating \$3 million for the creation of such a system. The rest of the money for the system is from federal grants, Harrington said. The law called for the system to be created within two years.

She said she expects the system to be up and running by the end of this year. The state and DigitalBridge are now in contract negotiations, said Melanie Dougherty, a DigitalBridge spokeswoman.

After the system is implemented, participating school districts will likely be responsible for paying for ongoing maintenance and operational costs, according to the law. Dougherty said 13 Utah school districts, including the Iron County School District, are already using the Student Achievement Management System.

"I feel like we've moved light years in terms of looking at individual students," said Jim Johnson, Iron County School District superintendent.

Johnson said he can instantly see data on any student in the school district. He said he spends about 20 to 30 minutes a day on the system and sometimes calls parents when he sees students who are passing end-of-year tests but failing their classes.

Teachers also use the data to collaborate with one another and can look at student data before the school year starts, Johnson said.

"They know those students before they even arrive in class," Johnson said.

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