



Illinois State Board of Education

Jesse Ruiz, Board Chair
Dr. Christopher Koch, State Superintendent

Illinois State Board of Education announces special meeting

State Board of Education Chairman Ruiz hereby calls a special meeting under the Open Meetings Act. The purpose of the meeting is reflected in the agenda below.

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Special Board Meeting via teleconference

Conference Call Phone Number: 1-866-297-6391
Confirmation # 1 5 5 8 9 1 6 2

August 31, 2006
4:00 p.m.

AGENDA

- A. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call
- B. Public Participation
- C. Chicago Public Schools K-12 Virtual Charter School Proposal
- D. Adjourn

NOTE:

Persons wishing to attend this meeting may come to one of the following locations:

Conference Room A, 14th Floor, James R. Thompson Center, 100 W. Randolph, Chicago
Board Conference Room, 4th Floor, 100 North First Street, Springfield

All State Board of Education meetings listed on this agenda will be accessible to persons with disabilities. Persons planning to attend who need special accommodations should contact the Board office no later than the date prior to the meeting. Contact the Superintendent's office at the State Board of Education, Phone: 217-782-2221; TTY/TDD: 17-782-1900; Fax: 217-785-3972.

Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First Street
Springfield, IL 62777

**Illinois State Board of Education Meeting
MINUTES
August 31, 2006
Special Board Meeting
(via teleconference)**

<p>ROLL CALL/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE</p>	<p>Mr. Jesse Ruiz, Chairman, called the special Board meeting of the Illinois State Board of Education to order at 4:05 p.m.</p> <p>Chairman Ruiz asked Ms. Jean Ladage, Assistant to the Board, to call the roll. Dr. Randy Dunn, State Superintendent of Education, was also in attendance by phone.</p> <p><u>Members Present via Teleconference:</u> Mr. Jesse Ruiz, Chairman Dr. Christopher Ward, Vice Chairman Dr. Vinni Hall, Secretary Dr. Andrea Brown Mr. Dean Clark Dr. David Fields Mr. Edward Geppert, Jr. Ms. Brenda Holmes Ms. Joyce Karon</p> <p>Chairman Jesse Ruiz announced that there are people attending the meeting in both Chicago at the James R. Thompson Center, Conference Room A, 14th Floor and Springfield at the Illinois State Board of Education in the Board Conference Room, 4th Floor by conference phone.</p>
<p>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION</p>	<p><u>Springfield Public Participation</u> Tom Lodrigan from McGuire Woods Consulting/Supports</p> <p><u>Chicago Public Participation</u> Rene Heybach from the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless/Opposed Dione A. Jenkins from Chicago Public Schools/Supports Sharon Hayes from Chicago Public Schools/Supports Audrey May from Chicagoans United for Education/Opposed Marilyn Stewart Chicago Teachers Union, President/Opposed Lydia Bullock Chicago Public School Teacher and Member of the Illinois State Teachers Certification Board/Opposed Sandra Schultz former Special Education Teacher/Opposed Dr. Conner Fitch-Blink Phi Delta Kappa, Chicago Chapter President/Opposed Sue Walters Illinois Federation of Teachers, Union Special Development Director/Opposed Karen Priebe Chicago Public School Teacher/Supports Rodolfo Martin Parent of 4 Children/Supports Barbara Eason-Watkins, Chicago Public Schools Chief Education Officer/Supports Patrick Rocks Chicago Public Schools/Supports (Mr. Rocks also shared several letters of support from current and former legislative officials).</p>
<p>CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS K-12 VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOL PROPOSAL</p>	<p>Dr. Dunn stated that staff has done a very careful review of the statutory elements in the proposal and the proposal does try to address all of the elements. Superintendent Dunn commented that whether it is this Board or a successor Board, there will need to be developed a standard to address these kinds of proposals. Charter school law does push for the notion of innovation.</p>

The statute is clear about the non-home-based requirement, yet K-12's own website uses the term that it is a home-based public school program. This is a clear contradiction of the statute and will need interpretation; therefore, it is coming to the Board as a policy issue. Dr. Dunn indicated that his recommendation is to deny the certification of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Chicago Virtual Charter School (CVCS), primarily on the non-home-based statutory requirements.

MOTION 1:

Mr. Ed Geppert moved that the State Board deny certification of the proposed contractual agreement between the Chicago Board of Education and the Chicago Virtual Charter School and authorize the State Superintendent to, by certified mail, notify the Chicago Board of Education and the Virtual Charter School as to this determination, which notification shall explicitly include a statement to the effect that certification is being denied because of a determination by the State Board that the Chicago Virtual Charter School's proposed contractual agreement does not satisfy the "non-home requirement of Section 27A-5(a) of the School Code. Dr. David Fields seconded the motion. Chairman Ruiz opened the discussion for comment.

Dr. Vinni Hall stated that as a Board member she is challenged to figure out ways to harness the power of the markets to improve educational opportunities while still trying to protect against the harm that unleashing the markets can do. For this reason Dr. Hall stated there must be careful alignment between the rules, incentives and the goals of any kind of educational policy. Dr. Hall is concerned that the virtual environment does not nurture socialization, nutrition, physical education and safety. For many students these needs are fulfilled at school. Dr. Hall stated that she is not opposed to the CVCS but has concerns on the curriculum, and if the curriculum is so good how come we aren't putting it in our schools where we can be insured of the supervision and parents can have a choice. Dr. Halls feels that the CVCS does not address many of these important issues.

Chairman Ruiz commented that this is not an easy decision for the Board to make; we have received many letters and communications from parents who ask that they be given the opportunity to make a choice and have another option for their children. Chairman Ruiz noted that the Board works hard to find ways to be innovative and creative and yet provide the safeguards that Dr. Hall has mentioned. The onus will be on Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Virtual Charter School, if they were ever to receive a charter we would all be watching and holding them accountable. Chairman Ruiz also stated that whatever we decide today we will revisit again because this is innovation that is right.

Mr. Ed Geppert spoke in favor of the motion to deny the Chicago Virtual Charter School. Mr. Geppert stated that he has nothing against the use computers or technology; he has a problem when we allow them to not just supplement the educational service, but to supplant it and take the effective role of the teacher out of the classroom. Mr. Geppert commented that he is aware of the hard work the CPS and the CVCS have done in order to meet the statutory requirements, but it is impossible to meet those requirements under such a structure. Having a structure in which children are appearing in a single location in a city like Chicago once a week is just a very impractical way of doing things. Mr. Geppert believes that many of the people who are asking for the support of the CVCS are parents of children who are gifted and he

earnestly recognizes their desperation to find a public solution to many of their problems. We do not have good solid solutions for gifted education in Illinois, and may be working in a format of virtual education will be the answer. CVCS is not the one to approve. It is time for us to use this basic threshold issue to tell the proponents to go to their legislators and get the language changed and in the meantime work to include teachers in the technology and in the support of students. Virtual schools so desperately need this kind of relationship.

Mr. Dean Clark commented that he would argue the other side of the issue. We have heard from current and former legislators that the home-based element of the law is not there. It was not their intent to exclude this type of program; it wasn't something they could envision at that point. Chairman Ruiz commented that he also found it compelling because all of these technologies did not exist. Mr. Clark said that he has not heard from a single legislator saying otherwise. He continued that we have to assume there is a strong argument that legislative intent is not being violated if the charter is granted. Mr. Clark commented that CPS has made a compelling case and this would be a program they could expand on and offer to more children in the city of Chicago.

Ms. Brenda Holmes commented that she concurs with Mr. Clark and Chairman Ruiz that parents and students are provided with choices and options. Ms. Holmes stated that CPS has thoroughly studied and reviewed the issue and Dr. Watkins has assured the State Board that the Chicago Board and the administration of the Chicago Public Schools supports the issue and will fully monitor it. Ms. Holmes does not believe that this particular option is necessarily available to every child and doesn't think it should be. It is strictly one option that the thousands of students within the CPS system have. Ms. Holmes stated that the Chicago Board has made its recommendation and she would be voting against Mr. Gepperts motion.

Dr. David Fields stated that he appreciated all the work that has gone into preparing this proposal but he is troubled by the short timeline in which we received it. Dr. Fields does not feel there is adequate time to review the proposal, and it would be a considerable change without going through the procedures established by the Board. Dr. Fields stated that he will be voting to recommend the denial.

Ms. Joyce Karon noted that she can see both sides of the issue. She does have concerns about using technology without teacher supervision. On the other hand she concurs with providing a more innovative and different way of educating, but more importantly she is deeply concerned that the oversight is carried out by CPS and that they will be ready to pull the plug if the program is not working in a way that is appropriate. Ms. Karon says that she sees this as a major concern and that if CPS is unable to do this, we could not allow that to go on to a point that is detrimental to the children.

Dr. Andrea Brown commented that she feels this is about learning and the learning process is changing all the time. There are a lot of things going on that are not working and this, too, may not work. However there are children that we are leaving behind every single day and we have to try to find new alternatives for these children. Dr. Brown believes that is what is happening with the virtual charter school. Dr. Brown commented that she will be voting against Mr. Geppert's motion to deny.

Dr. Chris Ward asked General Counsel Dareen Reisberg if we are putting the State Board of Education at risk by approving this proposal from others that would quickly come to the table looking for the same opportunity for home-based instruction. Counsel Reisberg responded by clarifying that if the Board is to certify this proposal there is a possibility that they are putting themselves at legal risk and there is always a chance of being subject to challenge by anyone who is out there characterizing their program as home based.

Dr. Dunn agreed with General Counsel Reisberg's comments and further commented that the Board should remember that the K-12 website is not the proposal itself and what they have sought to do is to address that. Superintendent Dunn said that his recommendation is on this disconnect that exists between the statute and the home-based element of the program. If the proposal had come to the Agency and Board without having addressed the home-based issue at all, we would have not brought the proposal forward and reached this point where the Board is allowed to review the proposal for a final determination. Dr. Dunn stated again that he could not go forward with a recommendation to approve as long as the K-12 information is saying one thing and the statutes are saying another.

Chairman Ruiz pointed out that the K-12 website no longer references the word home-based.

Dr. Vinni Hall commented that there are things that take place in the classroom that are not easily replicated in the virtual world. The virtual world is here today and it is very exciting, and I would like to be involved when it is ready, but at this point in time and for the reasons I have stated, I cannot support this proposal. Dr Hall stated that when the virtual school details are worked out, she will be there to support them.

Chairman Ruiz stated that he has found this one of the hardest decisions to make in the last two years. The communication from parents pleading to let them have the option of a choice for their children is what makes it so difficult.

Dr. David Fields commented that colleges have utilized distance learning for a number of years. This proposal is talking about kindergarten through twelfth grade, areas that cannot address large portions of the curriculum such as physical education and the importance classroom teachers who model behavior. If we look back to our own careers, the teachers who instructed us had the preventive impact on us feeling comfortable with what we did and who we were and are. We do not want to reduce the importance of the teacher to classroom learning.

Mr. Geppert commented that he agreed with Dr. Fields and that we have spent a lot of time and resources in preschool and the socialization of the student, and having a teacher involved and making them test their skills on a daily basis. Mr. Geppert stated he is a great believer in computers, but they should not replace the educational process; they should supplement it.

Mr. Clark stated that a virtual charter school would offer an alternative to children who are not thriving for a variety of reasons and need this type of educational opportunity. He noted that it should only be considered as a very strong option.

	<p>Dr. Dunn reminded everyone that a “yes” vote is to deny certification to the Chicago Virtual Charter School.</p> <p>Mr. Ruiz called for a roll call vote, since everyone is on the telephone. The motion failed with five no votes.</p> <table data-bbox="786 359 1049 632"> <tr><td>Ed Geppert</td><td>Yes</td></tr> <tr><td>Vinni Hall</td><td>Yes</td></tr> <tr><td>Brenda Holmes</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr><td>Joyce Karon</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr><td>Chris Ward</td><td>Yes</td></tr> <tr><td>Jesse Ruiz</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr><td>Andrea Brown</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr><td>Dean Clark</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr><td>Dave Fields</td><td>Yes</td></tr> </table> <p><u>Motion 2:</u></p> <p>Mr. Dean Clark moved that the State Board approve certification of the proposed contractual agreement between the Chicago Board of Education and the Chicago Virtual Charter School and authorize the State Superintendent to, by certified mail, notify the Chicago Board of Education and the Virtual Charter School as to this determination. Dr. Andrea Brown seconded the motion and it passed with the following roll call vote.</p> <table data-bbox="786 909 1049 1182"> <tr><td>Dean Clark</td><td>Yes</td></tr> <tr><td>Dave Fields</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr><td>Ed Geppert</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr><td>Vinni Hall</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr><td>Brenda Holmes</td><td>Yes</td></tr> <tr><td>Joyce Karon</td><td>Yes</td></tr> <tr><td>Chris Ward</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr><td>Jesse Ruiz</td><td>Yes</td></tr> <tr><td>Andrea Brown</td><td>Yes</td></tr> </table>	Ed Geppert	Yes	Vinni Hall	Yes	Brenda Holmes	No	Joyce Karon	No	Chris Ward	Yes	Jesse Ruiz	No	Andrea Brown	No	Dean Clark	No	Dave Fields	Yes	Dean Clark	Yes	Dave Fields	No	Ed Geppert	No	Vinni Hall	No	Brenda Holmes	Yes	Joyce Karon	Yes	Chris Ward	No	Jesse Ruiz	Yes	Andrea Brown	Yes
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<p>Motion for Adjournment</p>	<p>Dr Vinni Hall moved that the meeting be adjourned. Dr. David Fields seconded the motion and it passed with unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.</p>																																				

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Vinni Hall
Board Secretary

Mr. Jesse Ruiz
Chairman