



OVER THE BACK FENCE

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Please duplicate and send to members in your district.

"Pursuing Excellence in Small and Rural Schools"

CONGRATULATIONS

The month of March can be exciting in a small school especially if your team is playing in the state basketball finals. This usually carries over to those communities involved. School pride is common to the small school and community and we want to congratulate those schools who made it to the final four in Illinois high school basketball.

Girl's 1A results: Flanagan 1st; Newark 2nd; Moweaqua Central A & M 3rd; and Jacksonville Routt 4th. Boy's 1A results: St. Anne 1st; Nokomis 2nd; Warrensburg-Latham 3rd; and Lewistown 4th.

Girl's 2A results: Warsaw –Nauvoo-Colusa 1st; Rochester 2nd; Teutopolis 3rd; and Kankakee McNamara 4th. Boy's 2A results: Chicago North Lawndale 1st; Peoria Manual 2nd; Olney East Richland 3rd; and Pinckneyville 4th.

Now, back to reality! Good luck on the ISAT and Prairie State Exams.

OUR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Individuals look to the federal government for help when it comes to improving the economy. We, the education community do the same. The amount of Federal dollars received by most Illinois school districts is less than 8% of their budget. (The 2007 average is 7.7% according to the Illinois State Report Card). But, the mandates added to schools through NCLB create additional expenses for schools and requires schools to spend additional dollars.

In his FY2009 (2009-2010) Budget proposal to congress, President Bush is short changing the educational community by level funding the Department of Education (\$52.9 billion) despite increasing mandates and rising costs for schools. Here is a synopsis of the 2009 proposed budget.

1. The \$406 million increase (2.9%) for Title I will restrict the ability of school districts to choose where to spend their dollars. State agencies will be allowed to take a greater share for their costs and local

schools will be required to spend more dollars at the high school level.

2. The federal government would level fund its investment in special education at just 17% instead of the promised 40% of the national per pupil average.

3. The proposed budget will eliminate or significantly cut funding for successful K – 12 Programs. The *Perkins Career & Technical Education* is **eliminated**. State Grants for *Education Technology, Improving Teacher Quality and Safe and Drug Free* are reduced by a total of \$562.3 million.

4. New changes in Medicaid reimbursement could have profound impact on schools. Medicaid will become the payer of last resort and schools will have to bill private insurance before Medicaid.

5. **REAP will be level funded.** If you received funds this year, plan for the same amount next year.

6. The creation of a new federal voucher program and the expansion of the private school vouchers in the District of Columbia will divert public dollars to private schools. As announced in his State of the Union address, President Bush is proposing \$300 million for a Pell Grant for Kids Program. Kids in low-performing schools would receive a grant based on a per pupil allocation that along with their Title I allocation could be used for tuition to another public or private school.

7. Revamps the after school programs and reduces the level of funding by almost \$300 million. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers would be overhauled to create the 21st Century Learning Opportunities. Instead of sending the dollars to state agencies to distribute to school districts and community organizations, the new program would flow money to private or public non-profit organizations that could oversee the establishment of a scholarship program. This program would give each student in a low-performing school, or a high school with less than a 60% graduation rate, a per pupil allocation to use at an after school provider of choice, including private providers.