



# OVER THE BACK FENCE

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*Please duplicate and send to members in your district.*

*"Pursuing Excellence in Small and Rural Schools"*

## ADVOCACY ACTION DAY

You have a chance to show your support for HB750 on Wednesday May 18, 2005 in Springfield, Illinois. You can join thousands of advocates at the *better funding for better schools coalition rally* at the capitol building. The rally begins at 11:00 A.M. (You must have a photo I.D. to enter the capitol building).

For more information you can contact the Illinois PTA Office at 1-800-877-9617.

You should use caution when participating in such activities. District funds should not be used to support referendums, etc. For this reason, many administrators are using personal days and those bringing students are taking field trips that are being paid for by an outside organization such as the PTA.

Here are some reasons to support HB750.

1. Local government agencies, colleges and universities, hospitals, mental health agencies, senior citizens, veterans groups, libraries, and schools have gone too long with too little State financial support.
2. The time is now for the State to pay its fair share for needed services to the children and adults of our County and State.
3. Property taxes are an increasing burden to property tax payers due to diminishing State financial support.

## AIRSS SUPPORTS HB750

The AIRSS Board of Directors voted to endorse the adoption of HB750 to bring adequate, equitable funding for public schools. Property tax payers need property tax relief now!

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD HIGH SCHOOL?

President Bush has made high school reform his top education initiative for his second term. *The Rural School and Community Trust* has a set of standards and a detailed rubric you can use to assess your school. Their criteria are divided into seven areas.

1. Curriculum and Instruction: Students do sustained academic work that draws upon and contributes to the place in which they live, engaging every student in learning at the highest level of his or her capabilities and preparing each child well for college, work and citizenship.

2. Community: The school is located and structured so it is connected to the community on many levels. The school and community actively collaborate to make the local place a good one in which to work, live, and play.

3. Democracy: Schools mirror the democratic values they seek to instill in students. All stakeholders' voices are heard and respected in the decision-making process affecting them.

4. Staffing: School staffing resources are adequate; staff is competent, caring, and aligned with stated goals.

5. Support: School policies, calendars and resources are arranged to maximize community involvement, ensure student academic success, and provide teachers with the means to succeed.

6. Facilities: Facilities are clean, safe, orderly and well-equipped to support strong academic goals, co-curricular activities, and community activity.

7. Leadership: School leaders provide competent and knowledgeable management that supports teaching and learning at high levels and encourages community connection.

For a detailed rubric you can use to assess how your high school measures up to these principles visit [www.ruraledu.org/docs/beatingodds/Rubrics\\_for\\_Observation\\_and\\_Assessment.pdf](http://www.ruraledu.org/docs/beatingodds/Rubrics_for_Observation_and_Assessment.pdf).

## MARSHALL NEW AIRSS PRESIDENT

Outgoing President Kathy Hanneken turned the gavel over to Dr. Shari Marshall at the April AIRSS Board of Directors meeting. Dr. Marshall submitted her resignation because she has accepted a position in Arkansas for next year. Dr. Ralph Marshall, Superintendent at Hononegah District # 207 will assume the duties of president for the next two years.