

High School Conference Final Moderated Session

June 20, 2006

Part A: Summary of Comments from the last session of the High School Conference

During the final session of the High School Conference 2006, remaining participants addressed a series of questions in small groups. Notes were taken in each subgroup and compiled into a document, Moderator Note Taking Sheets. The following comments are intended to characterize the content of those notes.

- Participants feel challenged, see the need for focus, and seek specific strategies which can emphasize rigor and relevance for all. Participants see beyond accountability and their comments reflect a tension between NCLB accountability and focusing on student learning.
- While Illinois high schools are doing a good job providing excellent co-curricular opportunities, improving graduation rates, aligning curriculum with standards and providing caring teachers, they need to improve their use of best practices, improve reading instruction, focus instructional efforts to maximize achievement, and provide professional development to support improved instruction.
- Participants are concerned about inequities in funding among Illinois high schools, would like to see more facilitated partnering among schools, and seek professional development communities. Participants observe that the organizational structure, scheduling, curriculum, and assessment/grading systems need to be focused on student learning.
- High schools should invest in hiring the best staff possible, providing professional development, and making sure the teachers have the data and skills to do their best.
- As follow-up to this conference, participants seek monthly e-mail or a website sharing success stories and providing contact information, regional drive-in conferences for teachers, and, job alike sessions. Participants want greater access to data and time to make meaning of it.
- Participants request collaboration with one another and with post-secondary.

Part B: Listing of Comments by Question

1. **As you reflect on this conference and the call for high school reform in general, what are you feeling and thinking right now?**
 - Overwhelmed, but excited
 - Reinforced what we have believed all along.
 - Implement with staff practices for doing what's best for kids.
 - Return and tackle the obstacles that we all face.
 - almost wish she was back in the classroom (4)
 - Would have enjoyed a little different order of presentations.
 - Prospect of using interventions that have worked in some districts.
 - What do we do to convince faculty? Get teacher on board.
 - Challenged, scared about what will happen.
 - As principals a model is in order to help us go from the what to the how.
 - Depresses about conditions in state.
 - Wondering about purpose of educating with relation to workplace – do we need to change how we teach, or are business decisions driving job situation?
 - Concerned about school and business relationship.
 - Lots of high quality information was provided and now its time to Good ideas to take back, Macomb's information was helpful – brought the theoretical information together. (2)
 - One member of our group noticed the rise in scores were reflective of new principals.
 - Another member noted that his district is making AYP, but they're still concerned because the number for AYP keeps going up.
 - School not on AYP – here to look at steps to prevent not making AYP.
 - We need state support in order to make AYP.
 - Use integration = SP-ED issues; rewarding
 - Concerned about rigor and spec ed by high school, spec ed students have learned to be helpless.
 - Special ed seems to have been ignored.
 - using data to drive teaching practices;
 - Gained information to utilize and progress with the times.
 - Need to have information with various publics;
 - desire for more specific classroom “things”;
 - right people – right data;
 - keep “rigor and relevance” focus, rather than NCLB;
 - “big picture” is good; plan to bring one “BIG” speaker to one area for multiple districts;
 - we're here to promote our moral obligation;

- college readiness vs. workplace readiness; are we promoting one over the other and is that good.
- How many students failed their classes last year. What do we do to help those students and parents to bring them up to standards?
- Good opportunity to hear from big names – large conference facilitated that, but smaller group follow-up (small group workshop) would be preferred or break-out sessions. (3)
- Enjoyed Mr. Martiere’s discussion. How do we use this data?
- Liked the conference, but would like break-out sessions afterward.
- My job as principal to show the teachers what we need to change.
- Likes to see the different perspectives
- Would like to see the conference moved to the school year.
- High schools have huge jobs ahead of them
- How can we change the culture of schools and teachers?
- Universities need to change C & I programs to focus on new needs.
- So many ideas – where do I begin? (3)
- It would be productive to bring a school team who can begin to have the school improvement discussion right away.
- Meaningful change is a big load on administration and staff.
- Statistics/data have provided a clear view of the problem.
- School board members do not see the problem we see.
- Once reform is begun, we need to follow thru to make sure teachers continue to change (curriculum, instruction, methodology).
- Data can be discouraging, but positive leadership can result in successes (as we have seen)
- Nobody feels like they have the levers to move things forward, so we have to do it together.
- Build in a work session(s) to hit the topics while fresh – application.
- Study the data at home to see where “were are at and what we care about”.
- With knowledge of what the conference entailed – probably would love to bring a team of teachers.
- Foundations built at 9-10 level
- Restructure 9th grade – good info relative to 9th graders who need support – stop teaching to the bottom.
- Strategies needed to counteract the overwhelming.
- Accountability is good – will eventually go to post-secondary level
- Basic classroom instruction is key, getting improved classroom instruction
- On right track – new NCA cycle
- Urgency – data has been out long time – tough nut to crack
- Don’t feel real good about ourselves after today
- Aggregate okay – but subgroups are future
- Definitely must focus
- Restructuring is possible

- Exposure to more people, more organizations, more cultures would be helpful. Getting other groups (not just educational organizations) involved in these kinds of discussions.
- If we don't do something we will all be on the list.
- Some obvious things we are not doing- early identification and tracking.
- Why don't we do school improvement like coaches coach football.
- Focus on getting good teachers to match up with weak students.
- How well are we doing as a state compared to other states.
- Resources were invaluable and plan to use/share them with others in my school/district.
- Sometimes the numbers are not what they appear to be. Task is becoming more difficult as high performing students leave, also losing teachers to outlying areas.
- Demonstrated the need to think in a different manner. Can't twist new ideas into an old framework
- Creating common curriculum and assessments and using them as one approach is being tried.
- Seeing that others are facing what we are facing.
- Frustrating when you know these interventions work, yet people will not employ them.
- The major research presentations are on the west or east coast – state could get these national experts to us.
- Make opportunities to put a plan in place: Where do you start? How to stay the course? Who is there to look at the data?
- How about some instructions to go with the PSAE/ACT disc?
- Conflicting views throughout sessions and conference.
- District size issue – one size fits all?
- “Good is the enemy of Great” – missing certain groups of students, although test scores have been good, need to breakout of complacency.

2. What do you think Illinois high schools are doing well and what do they need to improve?

2A Illinois High Schools are Doing Well:

- “Doing” but not as a cohesive unit.
- Excellent Opportunities
- Excellent extra-curricula opportunities (7)
- Graduation Rates up
- Fine Arts support
- Curricula and extra curricula balance (2)
- Character building
- Holding kids accountable
- Offering dual credit (2)
- Collaboration with other schools (2)
- Vo-tech (3)
- Partnerships
- Preparing well for college (2)
- Providing safe schools w/caring staff
- Tailoring ISBE requirements to fit local community
- Standards are well written at state level
- Alignment with standards (3)
- Teachers care about kids. (3)
- Charter Schools
- Providing rigorous curricula for upper-end students
- Resources for Spec Ed
- Recognizing/addressing issues
- Using assessment data more effectively (3)
- Addressing content
- Making teacher certification as complicated as possible to get the most highly qualified.
- Serving ALL kids not select groups.(2)
- Lots of choices
- Restructuring
- Data is quantitative and qualitative
- Increased rigor – graduation requirements
- NCLB is forcing all to look at their data and then assess it. (2)
- Keeping kids in school until they’re 17
- Doing the best we can with what we have

What do you think Illinois high schools are doing well and what do they need to improve? continued

2B Illinois High Schools Need to Improve:

- Fluency w/curriculum and K-12 approach
- Not using/following best practices. (5)
- Minority achievement
- Not enough connection w/higher education
- Inequity in resources (4)
- Too many little high schools that can't offer high quality curricula (2)
- Getting teachers to change
- Changing culture
- Data Collection – start of year and end of year. Follow through
- Direction for improvement efforts
- Dialogue
- Faster turnaround on data feedback
- State a Dagget's presentation is in conflict – one requires more math an Dagget was telling to let freshmen take electives.
- Better dissemination of information from this conference to districts.
- Schools are too boring
- Need more programs for at-risk students (2)
- Reading instruction (4)
- Tracking/using data to identify and measure student progress over time. (2)
- Find ways to help kids visualize future goals.
- Increase meaningful parental involvement.
- Too much focus of AP at the expense of others.
- Not meeting the needs of all groups. (2)
- Technology not being used for all groups equally.
- How to bring standards into the classroom daily.
- Addressing learning skills, character education, social skills (the whole child) (2)
- We have reacted to NCLB by becoming defensive.
- Educating student's w/learning disabilities.
- Non-college bound kids need direction.
- Curriculum, alignment, assessment
- Professional Development for special ed for regular ed teachers
- Professional Development is key to making improvements (2)
- Professional Development shouldn't be content
- Allow more time for teacher professional development
- Too much complacency and/or patting ourselves on the back
- Student engagement
- Flexibility in staffing and utilizing resources
- Quit making excuses – PSAE does test what we want students to know/be able to improve
- Need more informed and better leadership

- Need collegiate collaboration
- We exclude – think it's ok that 38% of certain groups meet standards
- Secondary teachers need to take the Work Keys test.
- Change culture of academics to be more important than athletics
- Give less alternative choice for essential courses
- Allow students to shift their choice midstream by making sure a core curriculum exists
- Staff needs to be moved in the right direction
- Don't use community businesses enough
- State needs to push tech-prep, which is great application
- Need to support vocational education
- Curriculum is “a mile wide, but an inch deep” – always want to add, but slow to drop what's not working
- Career and Technical needs to make connection to support core curriculum
- Improved technology
- Lack of academic rigor

3. Based on what you've learned from this conference thus far, what should the state of Illinois do next?

- Put funding on the same level as the importance of test.
- More funding for at-risk programs
- Eliminate inequities in funding system. (15)
- Look at HS funding – restructuring professional development funds for summer.
- Equalize across the state the amount spent for each child's education.
- Make PSAE an exit exam.
- Item analysis for state assessment (PSAE). We need to know more about which areas to improve.
- Allow more time for PSAE testing.
- Return ISAT/PSAE results sooner so we can use the data more effectively. (3)
- Change PSAE – provide item analysis (2)
- Connect PSAE performance to the workforce
- More direction, instruction on PSAE implementation – alternative assessments, uploading student data into the ISBE PSAE system
- Review whether ACT is an appropriate measure, especially for spec ed students.
- 50% of HS graduates to fail State Farm test – why? Take a look at this.
- Pay for the subscription of the Student Data link on the IIRC – all districts regardless of AYP status
- After you fail AYP several times you are penalized – be proactive before there's a problem.
- Make teaching a true profession with the positive acknowledgement it deserves and the compensation. (2)
- Improve recertification process
- Professional development opportunities (7)
- Remove barriers to true reform and change.
- Legislators should force some small high schools to consolidate. (4)
- Require every student to take core curriculum.
- Revisit the state standards to ensure we have a curriculum that is rich and deep, rather than a mile wide and inch deep.
- Develop school improvement framework that is flexible, adaptable, and effective.
- Government officials should visit “real-life” high schools to see for themselves. More funding would provide a basis for change, reform and school improvement. (2)
- Improve their school improvement planning
- Reduce legislative curricular mandates.
- What is the real role of the state in education versus child rearing
- Is a 180 day work year realistic?
- Gather folks to discuss best practices for the classroom level.

- Organize best practices for schools, organize resources to give to all student leaders – getting information to the building principals, curriculum directors, ect.
- Industrial partnerships
- Improve state of technology in Illinois.
- Create Business/Education partnerships (corporate sponsorship program)
- Need leadership in Springfield to stand up. (2)
- What will the state do when more schools fail?
- More standardized curriculum statewide.
- Accessibility to “model schools”
- Pair similar demographic schools so that they can learn from each other.
- High School site on ISBE website.
- More expertise at ISBE
- Need to reward or recognize upward growth
- Support technical and vocational ed to provide hands-on approach for math.
- State Superintendent needs to be a position of long-term leadership.

4. What should the high schools be doing next?

- Hire the best staff possible. (3)
- Professional development (5)
- Get data into the teacher's hands and what it means (3)
- Train them on best practices
- Do what is best for students based on best practices. (using research)
- Adopt a common mission
- Stay the course, keep working hard, make AYP
- Teacher reading in the content areas, while keeping the rigor. (2)
- Use data to drive improvement efforts, as well as instruction in the classroom
- Articulation between 8th and 9th grade
- Need to create a mid-line assessment at district level (4 to 8 week assessment)
- Observe successful schools (2)
- Tied into SIP – set goals for own students by 2009 – student achievement is the focus (2)
- Bring in high-performing schools to meet with schools of similar demographics to discuss reform plan.
- Professional communities – adopt mentoring programs (2)
- Establish school/business partnerships to exchange information and expertise (2)
- School counseling models that really reflect answers to need.
- Better engage students with real-life situations.
- Get financial support from state.
- Incorporate “advisory” activities for 9th grade students.
- Get parents involved and hold them accountable for student's progress (4)
- Plan what we want our schools to look like in 3-5 years.
- More communication – shared decision making

5. What would you like to tell the conference planners to do for a follow-up to this two-day conference that will help support your efforts to enhance the rigor and relevance of your high school education for Illinois students?

- Compile all the thoughts, ideas and summarize for all to review. (3)
- Monthly e-mail of what has been done in districts who attended. (10)
- Gather regional groups to continue these topics (4)
- Bring this conference to those that really need to hear it . . . the teachers!! Give this as a one-day presentation next year in several regions as a drive-in – drive-out conference. Let it count as a work-day. (9)
- Video clips of high performance classrooms in action
- Plan a statewide professional development plan based on Dr. Daggett’s philosophy of Restructuring the High Schools. Make the plan part of the Administrative Academy and make it a mandate for all administrators.
- Similar conference for District School Board Association for school board members. (2)
- Have legislators attend the conference and mingle with the educators. (2)
- Enjoyed Macomb’s success stories and would like to hear more practical applications. (5)
- Get deeper into how each school made the difference in test scores (2)
- Data bank of lesson plans tied to standards available to teachers and administrators
- Have legislators take the PSAE.
- Would like to see more college faculty at the next conference.
- Look at major educational issues.
- Team time – workshop time
- Visit to high performing schools – matching demographics (2)
- Match/pair the schools that attended by region for the purpose of sharing data and continuing dialogue
- Provide a list of the 25 high poverty/high performing schools
- Panel discussion of exemplary high schools.
- Publicity about what took place
- Standards Aligned Classroom (SAC)
- Publicity about what took place
- Have break out session for: teachers, central office, building administrator
- Involve student voice (2)
- Reduce introduction time for speakers – all the awards, etc. aren’t necessary.
- After presenters have a twenty minute opportunity to discuss topics presented.
- In the mail – best practices – what works and where – or possibly a website
- Share or link schools to funding to attend this conference and provide other professional development
 - Web-cams and discussion sessions

6. As we come to a close to this table discussion, anything else any of you would like to share?

- Utilize break-out sessions
- Small groups needed – allow questions and networking
- Identify 12 or so high performing schools around the state and have a regional conference
- Look at “high schools” that work from Champaign ROE
- Need more post-secondary collaboration
- More ACT practice tests written for 9th grade
- I want an itemized analysis from ACT on my students. Are we here kids or adults?
- Provide more participant engagement in this conference (honor adult learning theory)
- Special Ed and inclusion need discussion
- Good Conference (2)
- How do schools capture time to allow teachers to work together?