

From the Director's Desk



**Tom Mandon, ESC
Executive Director**

The Clock Is Ticking

This space in the annual May issue of *The Consultant* is normally where I share my thoughts on the legislative action of the recently completed session and point out potential pitfalls or suggest prudent action for school corporations. As all of you know, the session did not accomplish its constitutional duty of providing a state budget and will be in special session in the upcoming days or weeks, at the pleasure of the Governor. We certainly have a history of special sessions in Indiana, and a state budget will eventually be negotiated and signed into law. However, the window for preparing a school budget will shrink each day without a new state budget. If tradition holds, once a budget is signed into law, after time for clarification and evaluation, the Department of Education will call all school corporations together in Indianapolis for the Budget Workshop. At that gathering the DOE, DLGF, and BOA always provide several important pieces of information, most importantly the DOE Forecast of the General Fund Basic Grant. Thereafter, schools may move ahead with some form of clarity to prepare the income side of the General Fund budget. It is worth noting here that you all should be well into the process of building your Capital Projects Fund, Debt Funds, and Transportation Funds as well as examining the expenditure side of the General Fund and Preschool Fund.

The difficulties that schools currently face going into a legislative special session are multiplied by the many unknowns in budget preparation. How many schools are without current assessed valuations? How many are without an approved 2009 budget? Are schools prepared for the affect of the 2010 circuit breaker? These and other questions compound the difficulty of school budget preparation when there is a special legislative session.

We are here to help you through the budget preparation process. We have a group of consultants who are budget experts and have spent many years successfully preparing and monitoring school budgets. Many schools utilize our services to prepare their budgets or to assist in asking the right questions and looking at your work product. I think this is the year for many additional school corporations to use our budget services because the "clock is ticking" on your budget. Contact us if you need assistance.

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Please visit us in
Booth #803 at the
IASBO Annual Meeting
on May 14th.

Lighten Up!

Stories From Across America:

From Kansas:

"The stoplight on the corner buzzes when it's safe to cross the street. I was crossing with an intellectually-challenged co-worker of mine. She asked if I knew what the buzzer was for. I explained that it signals blind people when the light is red. Appalled, she responded, 'What on earth are blind people doing driving?!'"

"I live in a semi rural area. We recently had a new neighbor call the local township administrative office to request the removal of

the DEER CROSSING sign on our road. The reason: 'Too many deer are being hit by cars out here! I don't think this is a good place for them to be crossing anymore.'?"

From Alabama:

"I was at the airport, checking in at the gate when an airport employee asked, 'Has anyone put anything in your baggage without your knowledge?' To which I replied, 'If it was without my knowledge, how would I know?' He smiled knowingly and nodded, 'That's why we ask.'?"

Of course, no one in Indiana would be this silly, right?

ESC Consultant Honored by Indiana Association of School Business Officials

At IASBO's annual meeting being held in Fort Wayne in May, one of our own consultants will be honored. **Bill Gall** will be given the Association's highest honor, the John F. Young Lamplighter Award, in recognition of Bill's years of service to IASBO. Bill is a Past President of both IASBO and ASBO International. The award is named for Dr. John Young, an IASBO Past President, and one of the founders of IASBO.

RevTrak, Add to My Wish List!

The time has come for an Internet-based payment system, as explained by a busy Mother:

“As a mother, wife, and of course tax payer, I am always looking to simplify the long list of tasks at hand. I, as all of us, face a stack of papers to file and bills to pay. This daunting bit of life would be so much more manageable if I could sit at my desk, with my favorite cup of coffee and pay the kids lunch balance, book and uniform rentals, my quarterly property tax bill and my city utilities, all online. Can you imagine? RevTrak did, and thank goodness. Please review the RevTrak business plan for your schools and community for me, for all of us. It's safe, convenient and intelligent.”

Managing Your Fringe Benefits

Educational Services Company consultant Doug Cassman provides services for school corporations in the area of benefits evaluation and consultation. He enjoys establishing relationships with schools to help them manage benefits over time, making subtle changes periodically that result in savings that enable schools to provide for other General Fund needs.

Here is what some of Doug's clients think of his services:

“Doug Cassman, in my opinion, saved the Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation's Health Trust. Several years ago, our self-insured health plan was spending far more than it was taking in and was on the brink of insolvency. The health plan, along with the corporation's dental plan, is negotiated with the teachers association, and negotiations, to say the least, were not going well. In fact, we had two tentative agreements voted down by the teachers. Doug convinced all parties that major changes were needed, both to the plan design and to the percentage of employee contributions. By the grace of God, the reserves went from \$200K to nearly one million dollars. I hope you can sense the deep appreciation I have for Doug and the wonderful work he did for BCSC.”

Vaughn Sylva
Assistant Superintendent
Bartholomew Consolidated SC

“Doug provides future thinking about where the industry is going for the next 2-5 years. He facilitates quarterly meetings to explain trends and is very thorough in reviewing plan benefits, deductibles, co-pays, etc. He has the ability/credibility with teachers to establish a team approach to review and maintain our health plan. By allowing us to stay ahead of health insurance cost spirals, we are able to direct dollars to our salary schedule.”

David Holt
Business Manager
MSD of Warren Township

Equipment and Furniture Acquisition

Whenever I talk to a Superintendent or Business Manager about ESC providing equipment and furniture acquisition services, I always begin my comments with this statement. **“We are only interested in serving our school client; we have no other motive.”** We do not want to sell equipment or furniture to you; our goal is to provide services that will result in our school client receiving the best possible products at the best possible price. Usually the need to provide large quantities of new equipment and furniture is part of new school construction or major renovation. As you know, a major construction project consumes a great deal of Superintendent and/or Business Manager time and effort, leaving precious little time for the process of providing necessary equipment and furniture.

Our consultants provide expertise, are impartial, provide a time-saving service, and bring integrity and professionalism to the process. Here is what some of your peers' think of our equipment and furniture acquisition services:

“Bob Menzie was responsible for ordering, creating the purchase orders, making sure items were delivered and received in order, and returning all items that were incorrectly sent. He was crucial in talking with staff members and was very cordial while working with them. He took responsibility for getting information from our staff members. **The total equipment acquisition went far beyond what I had hoped, and it was as seamless as one could expect.**”

Jim Conner, *Superintendent*
Middlebury Community Schools

“Pete Apple knew the right questions to ask to keep our transition to a new elementary school on course and complete. He is an excellent communicator and was an integral part of the move. **Without Pete, we would have lost valuable time and information.** Pete was meticulously organized and very helpful throughout the project.”

Jeff Bragg, *Director of Operations*
Noblesville Schools

“The Danville Community Middle School project was a new construction project for which most equipment and furniture was new. Since we planned to occupy the building in January, 2009, it was imperative to have all new equipment and furniture on site and in the proper areas over the Christmas vacation. Tim Jackson provided this service in a highly successful manner and brought the project in on time. From the outset of the project, Tim was able to meet with administrators, teachers, and staff to establish

the type, style and quantity of furniture needed. Tim's approach was very professional, and he made great suggestions and provided guidance along the way. He provided specifications, tallied the results, and provided me with a list of equipment and furniture from which purchase orders could be prepared. I could not be any happier with the service provided by Tim Jackson on behalf of ESC. **I feel we saved well in excess of the fee by having Tim provide his expertise, to say nothing of the time saved by our business office. I highly recommend this service to all schools.**”

Denny Leathers, *Business Manager*
Danville Community School Corporation

“The Plainfield High School construction project included in excess of 500,000 square feet of new construction for which most equipment and furniture was new. With a project of this size, it was very important to us to develop sound specifications in order to properly bid the necessary equipment and furniture for staff and students. Bob Menzie was very important in accomplishing this goal. Bob was very helpful in communicating with me, our high school principal, department chairs, and all stakeholders to determine what was needed, and in developing bid packages that allowed for savings in the bid process and in packaging the delivery of goods to also provide savings. He also worked closely with me to properly sequence deliveries as certain parts of the new building became available at different times. Bob worked closely with the principal and teachers to establish the specified brand and model for each item and also to identify suitable alternates. All in all, he did a great job on the up-front preparation by being organized, efficient, understanding of the needs and wants of the staff, and packaging the bids in a chronological fashion.

Tim Jackson provided order and completeness to the project by being present on delivery days to provide direction to deliverymen, to direct installation and to follow up to insure all equipment and furniture was put in the proper location.

I felt the job was a fine team effort from Bob Menzie's providing specifications to Tim Jackson's insuring the proper delivery and installation of each item. They both were great owner's representatives. **Suppliers will prepare specifications for free, but it was important to us that specifications were provided by an independent, neutral party.**

If I had to do this portion of the project over again, I would not change a thing.”

Jud Wolfe, *Assistant Superintendent*
Plainfield Community School Corporation

Return Service Requested

Across the Board

Tim Armstrong is working on Financial Health Analyses for Charles A. Beard and Seymour as well as serving as a faculty member for the “Building a School Corporation Budget” series of seminars sponsored by IASBO. Tim has also worked with Central Nine Career Center in the area of financial analysis. **Debbie Babcock** and **Tim Jackson** have provided a food service study for Center Grove. **Jackie Beery** is providing collective bargaining as well as consultant to the superintendent services for Knox. She has also facilitated strategic planning for Manchester. **Tony Broadwell** provides Centerville-Abington, Greensburg, Northeastern Wayne, and Union County/College Corner budget assistance, financial planning, and cash flow projections. **Bill Brown** is working with Fort Wayne Community Schools to conduct an evaluation of the index schedule portion of the Master Agreement with Teachers. **Deb Wolfe** is providing a medical insurance review for Oakland City University, and **Doug Cassman** is providing the same service for Bloomfield as well as working with several schools in the areas of LTD program review and various requests for proposals; a review of the teacher retirement/severance buyout for Portage; and VEBA issues for Merrillville. **Denny Deeter** has completed forfeiture allocations for Brownsburg, Crown Point, East Chicago, Highland, Lakeland, Portage, and South Bend; Circuit Breaker calculations and property tax modeling for Clark-Pleasant; a liability study update for Lake Central; non-certified calculations for Noblesville and Clarksville; and a review of 401(a) retiree accumulations for Hammond. **Dick Cook** continues to provide Corporation Manager services for New Durham Township. **Don Dyck** is teamed with **Jerry Moore** to provide a school consolidation/shared services study for Clinton Central and Clinton Prairie. **Don** also has facilitated a second round of Board Workshops for Porter Township. **Bill Gall** is serving as the interim superintendent in East Chicago as well as providing budget assistance and financial planning to Boone Township and Porter Township. **Tom Grabill** is providing Circuit Breaker strategy to Franklin Township; a Circuit Breaker study to Clark-Pleasant that includes a parcel-by-parcel review; and financial advisor services to Central Nine, Clark-Pleasant, Evansville, and South Henry. **Ron Hasler** is completing Financial Health Analyses for Barr Reeve and Greater Clark. **Tim Jackson** is providing equipment and furniture acquisition services to South Gibson and Franklin Township as well as continuing to work with Cloverdale in the areas of budget assistance, financial planning, and cash flow projections. **Bill McKinney** is providing special education studies at Greenfield-Central, Franklin Community and JESSE. **Jim McLochlin** has recently completed a personnel study for Kokomo. **Bob Menzie** is providing equipment and furniture acquisition for the new Concord Middle School. **Alan Middleton** is serving as the interim superintendent at Prairie Heights. **Jerry Moore** recently completed a Financial Health Analysis for Northwestern Consolidated and is providing budget assistance, financial planning, and cash flow projections for Brown County and Switzerland County. **Ray Pavy** is conducting a transportation study for Batesville, and budget assistance, financial planning, and cash flow projections for Nettle Creek. **Niles Pfafman** recently provided a General Fund review for Hanover Community School Corporation.