



Illinois State Board of Education

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www.isbe.net

Jesse H. Ruiz
Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

April 23, 2010

Dear Illinois Congressional Delegation:

It has been an exciting year for the students in Illinois and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). As you know, representatives from Illinois were in Washington, DC briefly on St. Patrick's Day discussing our Race to the Top (RTTT) application as one of the 16 states selected for first round interviews. We have since learned that we were not one of the two states awarded a RTTT grant in Phase I. While this was disappointing news, we are nonetheless moving forward on numerous reforms outlined in our application and also mobilizing to apply in Phase II.

We apologize that we were unable to meet while in DC, but we are working with the Governor's office to schedule a meeting with Congressional staff to discuss education issues in the state. The plan we have developed for the Race to the Top lays out the evolution of education in Illinois for the next decade and is available at <http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/default.htm>.

In addition to the RTTT related initiatives, and despite facing what could be our greatest financial challenge in the State of Illinois, education in Illinois continues to progress. A few of our achievements include:

- Nearly 1,000 schools made the Illinois Honor Roll in recognition of their continued academic progress and students show gains on all state tests.
- Illinois is a national leader in teachers receiving National Board Certification, ranking fifth in the nation for the total number of NBCTs.
- Illinois was selected for a federal grant to develop a Longitudinal Data System and we were honored by the Data Quality Campaign for our work toward ensuring the state builds a pre-k through college data system to better prepare students for success after graduation. This honor acknowledged our critical leadership role in supporting comprehensive legislation requiring the development of a statewide longitudinal data system.
- ACT recognized our state as a national leader in preparing students for college and career readiness with its first Systems of Excellence Award. The ACT Systems of Excellence Award honors states that have increased the likelihood of success for students, their families, and educators through the implementation of coherent policies and initiatives that raise the expectations for and performance of all students.

The Honorable Timothy V. Johnson

April 23, 2010

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As the co-chair of Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Task Force, I am pleased to announce that CCSSO recently released our ESEA Reauthorization Principles and Recommendations policy statement calling for a new state-federal partnership. This policy statement aligns in many places with the "Blueprint" for reauthorization recently released by the administration and you may access it at

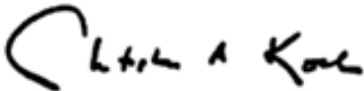
<http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/ESEA%20Task%20Force%20Policy%20Statement%2000310.pdf> .

State School Chiefs across the country believe that we must continue to lead the way with bold, thoughtful education reforms, like the common core state standards initiative, to ensure all students graduate college and career ready. In return, we need a federal law that invests in state efforts and encourages true innovation so that states can develop policies that work best in their own state context. We support efforts to reauthorize ESEA this year and welcome the opportunity to discuss our recommendations in more detail.

We recognize there are many other issues on the congressional agenda; however, ongoing budgetary challenges are threatening school districts' abilities to maintain adequate staffing levels and promote important education reforms. Federal support is needed for preserving and increasing teaching and other education positions, along with additional investments to support critically needed school modernization, rehabilitation, and repair. We were optimistic by the December passage of the Jobs for Main Street Act (JMSA) in the House and hope the Senate will quickly approve similar legislation. Illinois needs help to keep teachers in the classroom until the economic recovery takes hold and state and local budgets stabilize.

If there is anything we can do to assist you, please contact Melina Wright, Federal Liaison, at 312-814-2804 or at mewright@isbe.net.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher A. Koch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education