Message from State Superintendent Randy J. Dunn

Good afternoon.

You will notice a change in our format, starting today. As so many of you do in revising handbooks, policy manuals, and other documents at the start of the school year—we too thought it was time to “freshen” the format of the Weekly Message as we step off into a new school year.

One thing we have tried to do to improve readability is to place particular news items under area headings. Sometimes these headings will be reflective of the ISBE Divisions themselves, while other times they may relate more to a common theme across the items (e.g., “Grant Opportunities”).

Another change we will make is to increase the practice of using links to access particularly long reports or items. (Today’s report on the decision about the tort immunity fund challenge in Stephenson County may be bending that rule a bit already—but I am well aware of the importance of this decision for many districts across the state.) In a related vein, we are working to make our regulatory and non-regulatory guidance documents more easily identifiable as well; so from now on, we will certainly reference new guidance in the Weekly as it’s issued, but then will provide you a link to the stand-alone document for your future use.

Finally, many superintendents will remember my promise at ISBE’s Annual Conference last fall to provide a “locator” system to help you in finding people and places across the Agency for whatever program or area you may have questions about. It has taken longer than expected to get the (as-close-to-) complete inventory of our programs and services put together, but we did. It was no small task as you will note when you see the document. A paper copy of the ISBE Programs and Services Locator will be available at the Superintendent’s Conference next week—and of course, the document will be available on our website next week.

While these may appear to be minor changes, I hope they symbolize the fact that we constantly strive to improve our level of service and increase user-friendliness. I want to very much thank our Public Information Office on their work in redoing the Weekly format and Carol Groves in my office who led the project to create the Locator.

We are sending the Weekly Message as an Adobe Acrobat document in the hope that this does not create difficulty for those readers who do not have broadband service, but if you have trouble receiving this, please contact our Public Information Office at 217-782-4648.

Have a great week.

Randy Dunn
Data Analysis

Schoolhouse and data correction window now closed

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) thanks districts and schools for completing corrections and updating and approving student demographic information and enrollment data on the NCS SchoolHouse website for the spring 2005 testing cycle.

If you have any questions regarding the NCS SchoolHouse approval process, please contact Pearson Educational Measurement's Customer Support Center at 800-627-7990, state code 814, or ISBE's Student Assessment Division at 217-782-4823.

Student Information System

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Student Information System (SIS) is now live. School District batch live data may be submitted for SID assignment. The web-based student locator system is also available for online assignment of SIDs. Updates to existing student data is be accepted.

Also, District batch test data may be submitted to validate export process and test ISBE SIS validations.

Teacher service record reporting

Beginning with the 2005-06 reporting cycle, the Teacher Service Record will be reported to Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) through the IWAS system. The new IWAS-based reporting system will provide a number of advantages to users, which include:
1) eliminating the need to install special software to support electronic reporting,
2) eliminating the need to store and recover data records on diskette,
3) providing a “wizard” to guide users step-by-step through the reporting process,
4) providing embedded reporting aids, including on-screen menus, instructions, and data accuracy checks,
5) providing direct secure transmittal of data to ISBE without having to undertake a separate file transfer.

All educational entities that submit a Teacher Service Record to ISBE will be required to use the IWAS system. Electronic files from the Automated Reporting System and paper forms will no longer be accepted.

Although the exact deployment date has not been established, the reporting deadline will be adjusted to allow sufficient time for users to submit their data. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please call Steve Scaife at 217-782-3950.

Student Assessment

Graduation and the Prairie State Achievement Examination

The 2005-06 Guidance for Graduation and the Prairie State Achievement Examination will be posted at www.isbe.net/assessment this Wednesday, August 24, 2005. Note—there are changes, so please share this information with building principals and directors of guidance who are responsible for maintaining school student records and helping students register to take the ACT Assessment.

Accountability

Application for recognition of public schools

The Application for Recognition of Public Schools (ARS) System is a web-based application that replaces the previous paper application beginning with the 2005-2006 school year. ARS is now available in IWAS for school administrators, school district personnel, and Regional Office of Education personnel to submit their applications electronically and in a timely fashion.

Please note, for the 2005-2006 school year, Chicago Public Schools will continue to submit paper applications.

An ARS user guide is available on the Application for Recognition of Schools and will be on the webpage under Accountability.

To access the ARS system in IWAS, login to your account and click on System Listing (located in the menu on the left-hand side). ARS is located under the heading “Survey.”
If you have any questions regarding ARS, please call Lyne Robinson in the Accountability Division at 217-782-2948. If you need assistance accessing your IWAS account or have any technical questions, please call our Helpdesk at 217-558-3600.

**Professional Development**

**10th Annual Conference of the Illinois Center for Violence Prevention**

ISBE is pleased to once again co-sponsor the 10th Annual Conference of the Illinois Center for Violence Prevention, “Vision. Action. Change: Preventing Bullying and Relational Aggression.” The conference will be held September 28 and 29 in Arlington Heights at the Sheraton Northwest. To download a conference brochure and for more information, visit the Illinois Center for Violence Prevention at [http://www.preventingviolence.org](http://www.preventingviolence.org).

**High schools: Expanding the promise of No Child Left Behind**

The United States Department of Education will air a broadcast on the topic of high schools and No Child Left Behind on Thursday, September 20. For information about the broadcast, or to subscribe to the Education News listserv, please visit: [http://www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv/index.html)

**Legal**

**“Chubby Bunny” not a game for the classroom**

A recent court ruling concerning the game “chubby bunny” reminds us all to make sure games and student activities pose no threat to children and are properly supervised. A very dangerous game, “chubby bunny” is played by stuffing a player’s mouth with as many marshmallows as possible while the player repeats “chubby bunny, chubby bunny,” without expelling any marshmallows. This activity poses a serious hazard to children and has resulted in a choking death in an Illinois school.

**Use of tort immunity fund**

In a recent Illinois circuit court ruling, a school district was found to have made improper expenditures from its tort fund. In Re: Objections to Tax Levies of Freeport School District No. 145, Freeport Park District, Pearl City School District No. 200, and Highland Community College District 519 for the Year 2000, Case No. 01-TX-29 (15th Cir. Ill., Aug. 15, 2005). Citizen tax objectors challenged the use of tort immunity levies of four area taxing bodies for tax year 2000. The Circuit Court for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit in Stephenson County found that: Freeport School District No. 145 made improper payments from its tort immunity fund. The court held that the district had no authority to pay portions of employee salaries and benefits under the Local Governmental and Governmental Employees Tort Immunity Act (745 ILCS 10/1-101 et seq.). The school district failed to show that it had a “risk management program” in place under section 9-107(b)(iv) of the Act. It further failed to show that the Superintendent, the Business Manager, the Director of Building and Grounds, principals, and assistant principals engaged in risk management activities beyond their usual job duties.

Also, support for the school district’s Equity Program was not properly charged to its tort levy. A ministers’ association claimed racial discrimination of students and requested money damages, and there existed an additional threat of litigation by the U.S. Department of Justice. However, the court stated that a claim alone does not create authority to use the tort levy. Likewise, injunctive relief may not be funded from tort. Only the remedy should there be a judgment or settlement for compensatory damages may be funded.

Freeport Park District also made improper payments from its tort immunity fund to help pay salaries of supervisory employees, maintenance workers, swimming pool lifeguards and managers, and security officers, among others. While the park district had a Safety Policy Manual and a committee that reviewed liability and safety each month, the district did not have a process in place that based the use of the levy upon compliance with the committee’s recommendations. Instead, like Freeport School District, the park district determined the percentage of time it thought employees performed activities to maintain a generally safe environment.

Pearl City School District No. 200 had a risk management plan, and the process used to analyze
percentages of salaries to be paid from tort met the criteria for risk management as that term is used in the Tort Immunity Act. It was not necessary for the school district to document time spent by employees on the risk management activities. While the court found in favor of the school district, it suggested that had the tax objectors challenged individual charges to the tort levy, some charges may have been found impermissible for certain employees. However, the tax objectors focused only on whether a valid risk management process existed.

Highland Community College District 519, like Freeport School District and Freeport Park District, did not engage in the risk management process required by the Tort Immunity Act. The college looked at time spent by employees rather than first identifying specific exposures under the Act and then selecting techniques to reduce or eliminate those exposures.

The court further held that several other college expenses were impermissibly paid from tort – a lift truck to replace outdoor lighting, road salt, maintenance of fire extinguishers, elevators, snow plows, first aid equipment, radios, and door openers. These items were not part of any formal risk management process, and cannot be characterized as “educational, inspectional, or supervisory services directly relating to loss prevention and loss reduction” under the Act. However, the court stated that OSHA training, software for campus safety, and ergonomics training were authorized uses.

In addition, the court defined “risk management directly attributable to loss prevention and loss reduction” as used in the Tort Immunity Act section 9-107(b)(i) as a formal process designed to identify, specifically address, and then reduce or eliminate exposures under the Tort Immunity Act, which process has the following characteristics:

- the prior identification and analysis of loss exposures;
- the selection of techniques to be used to handle each exposure;
- the implementing of the chosen techniques; and
- the periodic monitoring of the implementation of the techniques, including the making of adjustments as appropriate.

Nothing in the Act requires a written plan; however, the court noted that such a writing would certainly aid in the determination that such a plan did in fact exist.

School districts should consult with their attorneys and auditors to determine how to address expenditures from the tort immunity fund in light of this ruling.

### Funding and Disbursements

**FY 06 ADA Safety and Education Block Grant Calculations**

The FY 2006 ADA Safety and Education Block Grant payments have been calculated for each school district and can be accessed at [http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/ada_block_grant.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/ada_block_grant.pdf)

Payments will be vouchered by October 30 and April 30 per statute. If you have questions about these calculations please contact Jim Mathes
jmathes@isbe.net, Division of Funding and Disbursement Services at 217-782-5256.

**Reorganization feasibility studies**

Funding is now available for FY 2006 School District Reorganization Feasibility Studies. Feasibility studies are a tool for school districts wanting to investigate the advantages and/or disadvantages of reorganization options. Interested school districts should submit a proposed agreement with an independent contractor(s) to their Regional Office of Education (ROE). The ROE will submit the agreement to the State Board of Education (ISBE) for approval.

Each study will be funded on a base tier according to the number of school districts involved in the study. Studies will be funded an additional tier based on the combined enrollment of the districts involved in the study. Studies are funded between $4,000 and $7,500 based on the procedure listed above. Funds are available on a “first come – first served” basis. In order to receive reorganization feasibility study funds in FY 2006, agreements must be approved by both ROE and ISBE, and studies must be completed and approved for payment no later than June 30, 2006.

Procedures, funding allotment, and sample forms are available at [www.isbe.net/sfms/html/feasibility.htm](http://www.isbe.net/sfms/html/feasibility.htm). If you have any questions, please contact Michelle Heninger at 217-785-8779 or mheninge@isbe.net.
Driver education reimbursement changes

P.A. 94-0440 (SB 1734), enacted on August 4, 2005, eliminates the need for school districts to transmit a Driver Education Cost Claim to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) in order to receive Driver Education reimbursement. Prior to this legislation, school districts were required to transmit a cost claim on or before October 1 each year. In addition, the new law requires the ISBE to distribute Driver Education reimbursement to school districts “as soon as may be after each quarter of the year, if moneys are available in the Driver Education Fund in the State treasury”.

To calculate FY 06 payments accurately it is critical for all school districts to ensure that all students who completed classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005 have been submitted via the Driver Ed – Student Coursework Completion System (Blue Slips) in IWAS in order to be included in the FY 06 district reimbursement for Driver Education.

If you have further questions about these changes please contact Lisa Willhoit lwillhoi@isbe.net Division of Funding and Disbursement Services at 217-782-5256.

Advanced placement news

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Advanced Placement Incentive Program (APIP) The APIP program is funded through Title I Section G of the No Child Left Behind Act.

ISBE recently held APIP Vertical Team Training sessions for the funded programs in Illinois. Sessions covered AP and pre-AP material for both high school and middle school teachers and administrators, including forming vertical teams and developing curriculum. Workshops were held for Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science and led by consultants hired by the College Board. Follow-up sessions will be held during the school year to strengthen teams formed this summer.

Illinois recently received two more APIP grants to local districts; one to City of Chicago District #299 and the other Madison District #12. These districts were two of thirteen awarded this year out of over a hundred applicants that applied for this national program. These programs are set up for districts planning to expand opportunities for low income students in Advanced Placement and pre-AP programs. Congratulations to these districts and the students and teachers these funds will serve.

An Advanced Placement Advisory Committee will be formed in the fall of 2005 to bring together programs to discuss program needs and state wide collaboration. A date will be announced in the near future for an organizational meeting. Anyone interested in participating that has expertise and interest in Advanced Placement issues, please contact Lou Berkman in the Curriculum and Instruction Division of ISBE at lberkman@isbe.net or 312-814-3853.

ROE News

ROE affidavits of School Treasurer Bonds due September 1

Section 3-8 and Section 8-2 of the School Code (105 ILCS 5/3-8 and 105 ILCS 5/8-2) require Regional Superintendents of Schools to yearly file an affidavit with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) showing which treasurers of school districts in their region are properly bonded. Copies of the actual school treasurer bond do not have to be filed with ISBE.

This affidavit must be filed by Thursday, September 1, 2005. If you have not already filed this affidavit, please do so by the deadline.

Electronic version of the Affidavit, and other information, can be found on the ISBE website at: www.isbe.net\sfms\html\t_bonds.htm

Please contact Michelle Heninger at 217-785-8779 or e-mail her at mheninge@isbe.net with any follow-up questions.

Grant Opportunities

Learn and Serve Continuation Grant application

The Fiscal Year 2006 Learn and Serve Continuation Grant Application is now available at www.isbe.net under Hot Topics and Resources. The final due date for submission of the completed application to ISBE is October 12, 2005. However, we encourage you to return the application as soon as possible. Applications will be processed as they are received.
and funding for projects will be available as soon as processing is completed.

Please submit your completed application to Kristy Harvell, Curriculum and Instruction Division, Illinois State Board of Education, 100 North First Street (C-215), Springfield, IL 62777-0001

**Illinois Mathematics and Science Partnerships RFP**

ISBE has released the request for proposals (RFP) for professional development opportunities for teachers of K-12 mathematics and science. The Illinois Mathematics and Science Partnerships program is authorized through Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Title II, Part B. Approximately $1.5 million will be awarded to new Illinois partnerships this cycle. The partnerships must be composed of post-secondary mathematics, science and engineering departments or colleges and high need local education agencies (defined in the RFP) and may include other partners. The RFP and an explanatory webcast are available at http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/math_science/rfp.htm

**In the news**

**Weekly news clips**

Last week’s education news clips are posted at http://www.isbe.net/news/2005/newsclips/050819.htm