Message from State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

On Friday, I had the opportunity to meet with the many of you in Olympia Fields where I spoke to the South Suburban School Business Officials, Illinois Association of School Administrators-South Cook Region and representatives from the South Cooperative Organization for Public Education at a forum to address how today's economy is impacting school districts.

One of the presenters was Rob Grossi, Treasurer of the Bloom Township Trustees of Schools. Rob provided solid insights into how to survive a prolonged recession and encouraged districts to look closely at expenditures. His seven recommendations are particularly timely, given the backlog of bills during the current fiscal year and uncertainty over what the next fiscal year may hold.

1. Districts need to develop a 5 year plan for their finances;
2. Focus on your core product - the education of children - and make your financial decisions based on the impact they will have on your students;
3. Invest safely and wisely, look to funds that have more stability and government backing;
4. Strengthen partnerships with your communities-open up your buildings at night and on the weekends if possible for your communities to use, so they feel the school is a neighbor and a resource;
5. Avoid public relations land mines-while we may not be flying in on private jets and asking for a bailout, take some time to think about how the public will perceive your actions;
6. Strengthen relationships and build trust with your unions;
7. Do not negotiate salary and benefit packages you can't afford long-term.

I want to thank Rob and all the presenters for providing such timely information.

I was in Washington, DC, during the first half of last week for the Council of Chief State School Officers legislative meeting. The stimulus package through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was the focus of many of the conversations, both formally and informally. We had a surprise visit Tuesday morning from President Obama who stopped by to discuss the priority that he places on the Act and the key role state and local agencies are going to play in its success.

Secretary Duncan has indicated that he believes the United States Department of Education will begin to distribute half of the additional Title I and IDEA funds within the next 30 to 45 days,
and the other half later next summer or fall. We will be working on a supplemental appropriation to accept these formula funds so that we can distribute them to you as soon as possible. Additionally, once we receive new estimates of what districts can expect to receive we will notify you and post this information to our Recover webpage http://www.isbe.net/arra/default.htm.

One of the questions I was asked recently was, "what should local districts be doing now in order to receive these funds?" I don't think you need to do anything formally at this time. Informally, I would suggest that you begin speaking with your board and staff about whether or not you will be able to use the funds this year, given how late we are currently in the fiscal year. If so, how would you use them and will you need to amend your budget? Let your board know they may need to take some quick action.

I know there are a lot of unanswered questions related to the future financial condition of your districts. The immediate questions involve the implementation and impact of the stimulus package and the current delay in State revenues to your schools. The longer-term questions relate to the magnitude of the economic crisis and how it will impact future revenues received by your districts. I know these questions bring with them a new level of anxiety. I appreciate your patience as we move towards implementation of the stimulus package and can assure you that we will work diligently to provide any relevant information that comes available to us regarding these critical financial matters.

Chris

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**Upcoming Dates & Deadlines**

- **Professional Development Modules to Support Improved Student Performance RFSP** – March 26
- **Illinois Young Author’s program entries** – March 27
- **Part 145 (Temporary Relocation Expenses); Part 151 (School Construction Program); and Part 675 (Providers of Supplemental Education Services)**: Public comment ends – March 30
- **Even Start Family Literacy RFP** – April 2
- **Preschool for All Children Ages 3 to 5 Years RFP** – April 21
- **Part 140 (Calculation of Excess Cost Under Section 18-3 of the School Code); Part 240 (Alternative Learning Opportunities Program); New Part 405 (Payments to Certain Facilities Under Section 14-7.05 of the School Code)**: Public comments ends – April 30
- **Prevention Initiative Birth to Age 3 Years RFP** – May 19
- **One Percent Exception Application due** – June 1
- **2009 Bilingual Education Program Delivery Report due** – June 30

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**Curriculum & Instruction**

**Professional Development Modules to Support Improved Student Performance RFSP Released**

The Professional Development Modules to Support Improved Student Performance FY 2009 Request for Sealed Proposals (RFSP) has been released. Institutions of higher education, professional organizations, private organizations, Regional Offices of Education, special education joint agreements, or local education agencies with experience in developing professional development in online environments and in developing direct training modules to support professional development for educators are eligible to apply.

The purpose of this RFSP is to contract with one or more eligible entities to oversee, coordinate and provide professional development resources and related materials, including online instructional resources and tools, through various venues to assist districts in their local actions toward improving student performance. There are 13 professional development module products outlined in the RFSP.
Proposals for the RFSP are due to ISBE no later than Thursday, March 26, at 4 p.m. Information regarding the RFSP is available on the Illinois Procurement Bulletin [www.purchase.state.il.us](http://www.purchase.state.il.us).

Information specific to Illinois and Response to Intervention is available at the Response to Intervention website at [http://www.isbe.net/RtI_plan/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/RtI_plan/default.htm).

Questions regarding the RFSP should be sent to Tricia Leezer at tleezer@isbe.net.

Data Analysis & Progress Reporting

2009 Bilingual Education Program Delivery Report Available on IWAS

The 2009 Bilingual Education Program Delivery Report (PDR) is now available on IWAS. Every school district or educational agency that has limited English proficient (LEP) students enrolled this school year (2008-2009) is required to submit this report to ISBE, per 23 Illinois Administrative Code 228.40(c)(2).

The deadline for submitting the completed report is Tuesday, June 30.


For questions about using the PDR IWAS application, contact the ISBE Help Desk at 217-558-3600. For questions about completing the PDR, contact Lilibeth Q. Gumia at 217-782-3950 or lgumia@isbe.net.

English Language Learning

New Screener Required for ELL Pre-K-Kindergarten Students

Beginning Wednesday, July 1, all Illinois school districts are required to use a new Pre-K/Kindergarten screener for English Language Learning (ELL) students. The new screener, which was developed by WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment), will help determine language proficiency in students and identify those who are eligible to receive ELL services.

Teachers administering the WIDA Model must be re-certified prior to giving the test. Online certification information is available at [http://wida.wceruw.org](http://wida.wceruw.org).

Complete information on the new WIDA screener is posted on the State Board of Education website at [http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/pdfs/wida_model.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/pdfs/wida_model.pdf).

Student Assessment

2009 Applications for 1% Cap Exceptions

One percent exception application reminder: If more than 1 percent of students in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11 are identified as significantly cognitively disabled, districts should prepare a request for an exception to the 1 percent cap.

If the conditions for the exception are approved, then all proficient and advanced scores earned by students taking the Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA) in reading and math will be counted as passing scores in making determinations for school, district and state AYP.

K-8 districts may apply after ISAT testing is completed in those districts.

High school and K-12 districts should apply after the PSAE makeup test dates May 6-7.

Applications are due Monday, June 1. The form may be mailed to ISBE, Division of Student Assessment, 100 North First Street, Springfield, IL 62777 attention Pearl Schneider or faxed to 217-782-6097 to Pearl’s attention.


For additional information, contact Pearl Schneider at 217-782-4823 or by e-mail at pschneid@isbe.net.

Special Education

State Board Seeks Public Comment on FFY 2009 IDEA Part B Application

The State Board’s Division of Special Education and Support Services has completed the grant application under Part B of IDEA as amended in 2004. Upon receipt and approval of the required assurances, certifications
and information in the application, the state is eligible to receive Part B funds.

The General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) requires that states must publish their Part B Application for at least 60 days and accept public comment for at least 30 days. The State Board plan may be reviewed at the Department of Education’s website through Friday, May 1, at http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/Default.htm.

The plan includes a checklist of assurances that Illinois has policies and procedures in effect to comply with the requirements of the December 2004 amendments to IDEA. Where Illinois is not in compliance with the IDEA amendments of 2004, a date is given by which Illinois assures that policies and procedures will be in effect. The plan for expenditure of state-level IDEA funds by category is also a component of the state plan.

Written comments will only be accepted April 1 to May 1. To submit a written comment, go to: http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/IDEA_PartB_app09_comment.pdf.

In addition, public comments may be e-mailed to PartBapplication@isbe.net or mailed to:

David Andel, Division Administrator
Division of Special Education and Support Services
100 North First Street – N-243
Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001

Interested persons may review a copy of the plan and comment form at the State Board of Education, 100 North First Street, Springfield, Illinois 62777 in the Information Center 1 South.

2007-2008 District Special Education Profiles now available for District Administrative Review

In a continuing effort to disseminate data to local education agencies and to the public, the State Board will again post District Special Education Profiles on its website. The Profiles allow the reader to access all special education performance information in one location. The reader has the ability to view a district's progress toward improving results on critical performance indicators in the areas of student performance, educational environment and school completion.

For the next two weeks school district superintendents may preview their Profile using their ISBE Web Application Security (IWAS) District Admin user login name at https://sec1.isbe.net/iwas/.

The District Special Education Profiles system can be found under the category of Reporting on the IWAS "System Listing" page. The 2007-2008 Profiles will be open to the public after the initial district superintendent review period and will be found via the ISBE Special Education Profiles site after March 18 at (http://webprod1.isbe.net/LEAProfile/Searchcriteria1.asp).

Questions regarding the District Special Education Profiles may be directed to Scott Beever or Gwen Williams at 217-782-5589.

Rules & Waivers

Invitation to Comment on Rules

Three more proposed rulemakings recently reviewed by the State Board of Education are currently available for public comment. These items have been posted on the agency’s web site at www.isbe.net/rules; choose “Proposed Rules and Amendments.” Please submit any comments or suggestions you may have to rules@isbe.net.

Part 140 (Calculation of Excess Cost Under Section 18-3 of the School Code)
Changes in response to P.A. 95-793 (deadline for claims, removal of summer school); more explicit information on calculations.
Deadline for Public Comment: April 30, 2009

Part 240 (Alternative Learning Opportunities Program)
Technical updating only. Eliminates reference to Part 110 (Program Accounting Manual) in favor of Part 100.
Deadline for Public Comment: April 30, 2009

New Part 405 (Payments to Certain Facilities Under Section 14-7.05 of the School Code)
These new rules respond to Public Act 95-938, which established some conditions on the obligation of a school district to pay the provider of a program that is not approved under Part 401 of ISBE’s rules (Special Education Facilities Under Section 14-7.02 of the School Code). These rules will apply to the cost of educating a student with a disability who is placed into a residential facility by a court or a state agency. The new provisions
require that the provider of the program furnish three elements of proof to ISBE, as well as enrollment and attendance information. Unless this information is provided to ISBE’s satisfaction, the student’s district of residence will not be under any obligation to pay the provider.

New Part 405 indicates what will be considered satisfactory proof or information in each of the areas specified in the law; sets forth procedures that will ensure communication among the provider, ISBE staff, and the district of residence; and requires the setting of a rate for the educational program by the Illinois Purchased Care Review Board.

**Deadline for Public Comment: April 30, 2009**

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**Nutrition**

**School Food Service Equipment Grant Application**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) was signed into law by President Obama on **February 17**. The ARRA provides a one-time appropriation of approximately $3.6 million for school food service equipment in Illinois.

Information provided from the U.S. Department of Agriculture requires the funds be distributed to sponsors participating in the National School Lunch Program via a competitive grant process. Priority is to be given to equipment sponsors for schools in which at least 50 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals. Such funds are expected to be spent as soon as possible; therefore, schools can begin to gather information about equipment needs within their districts.

Grant applications and deadlines will be announced as soon as they are available from ISBE. Watch our website [http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/default.htm) for information.

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**Grants & Programs**

**21st Century Grant Readers Sought**

Grant readers are sought to review the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) after school programming grant proposals. Proposal reviews will take place at the Springfield ISBE offices at 100 North First Street on **March 31, April 1 and 2**. Training on the scoring rubric will be provided for all readers.

Mileage and per diem will be available for all readers that qualify, with hotel expenses paid for those who reside more than 50 miles from Springfield. There is no honorarium.

Current grantees or those who are affiliated with school districts or organizations applying for 21st CCLC grant funding in FY10 need not respond to this call for grant readers.

Please contact **Gail Meisner**, Grants and Programs Division, at 217-524-4832 or [gmeisner@isbe.net](mailto:gmeisner@isbe.net) for more information and a grant reader application.

**New Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Program Resources**

The Illinois Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) Program is pleased to announce the 2009 Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities website at: [http://www.safeschoolsil.net/index.asp](http://www.safeschoolsil.net/index.asp).

The SDFSCA website allows Illinois school districts to gain all the information needed in one centralized location to ensure that all program components are appropriately addressed. SDFSCA funded strategies, practices, and frameworks will be coordinated with other available prevention efforts to maximize the impact of all the drug and violence prevention programs and resources available to local education agencies (LEAs) or the community.

For questions, contact **Dr. Albert J. Holmes, Jr.** at 312-814-3653 or [aholmes@isbe.net](mailto:aholmes@isbe.net)

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**Illinois Liquor Control Commission**

**Sticker Shock Day Announced**

To kickoff Alcohol Awareness Month in April, a variety of Illinois groups are partnering to hold “Sticker Shock Day” on **Thursday, April 2**. On this day, teenagers, parents, local law enforcement and elected officials, and business owners from throughout Illinois will be out placing warning stickers in liquor establishments listing the legal consequences of buying alcohol for minor consumption.
With prom season just around the corner, this message is timely. The Illinois Liquor Commission, which created the event materials through its Don’t Be Sorry campaign, views this as a collaborative statewide effort.

By participating in "Sticker Shock Day," schools are encouraged to connect with local media to share their alcohol education efforts. Last year, local pilot "Sticker Shock" campaigns were conducted around the state and they drew widespread media coverage.

For further details, go to: www.dontbesorry.org/DontStickerShock.htm. A comprehensive guide created by the Liquor Commission in conjunction with the Illinois Alcoholism & Drug Dependence Association's Operation Snowball is available at www.os-iti.org.

Illinois Department of Public Health

**Increased Eye Infections among Students**

Increased numbers of a rare but serious eye infection, Acanthamoeba keratitis, have been reported in Illinois among individuals who wear soft contact lenses. Because so many children and young adults wear soft contact lenses, the Illinois Department of Public Health is providing the following information to school personnel and students in health classes, school newsletters and in libraries/resource centers to help reduce risks of this infection.

Acanthamoeba keratitis is caused by a parasite commonly found in nature. It can cause a permanent loss of vision that can require corneal transplants. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified more than 500 cases of the disease nationwide from 2005 to 2008. The CDC has investigated a sample of these cases and found an association between this infection and use of Advanced Medical Optics (AMO) Complete® MoisturePlus Multi Purpose Solution.

AMO voluntarily recalled Complete® MoisturePlus Multi Purpose Solution in May 2007 and recommended that consumers stop using the product immediately. However, this product may still be in some homes where the solution was stored after purchase and prior to the recall, or it may be in stores where the product was purchased in mass quantities prior to the recall.

In addition to discontinuing the use of this product, there are simple but important steps persons who wear contact lenses can take to protect against this infection. Please read and follow the prevention advice in the CDC information sheet that can be accessed at this link http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/acanthamoeba/factsht_acanthamoebakeratitis.htm.

**Awards & Grants**

**Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching**

The National Science Foundation is accepting nominations for the 2009 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) program. The program is the highest recognition a grade K-12 math or science teacher may receive for outstanding teaching.

The program recognizes teachers for their contributions to teaching and learning and their ability to help students make progress in math and science.

PAEMST is open to math and science teachers nationwide and in Washington, D.C.; Puerto Rico; Department of Defense schools; and the U.S. territories. Awardees receive a citation from President of the United States, a paid trip for to Washington, D.C. to attend recognition events and professional development opportunities, and a $10,000 award from the National Science Foundation.

To apply, teachers must first be nominated. They may nominate themselves or another person may do so. Once nominated, teachers will be e-mailed an online application. The application deadline for teachers in grades 7–12 is Friday, May 1. Teachers in grades K–6 are eligible to apply in 2010.

Nomination forms are available at www.paemst.org. Nominations close Wednesday, April 1.

**Teacher Resources**

**Cyberbullying Prevention Materials Offered**

A free Cyberbullying package is available to schools nationwide. The package provides tools for schools to begin a dialogue on cyberbullying with students and build a sustained cyberbullying prevention campaign.
Materials can easily be woven into the regular curriculum that will help students and educators develop critical thinking and decision-making skills to build their own knowledge of and define issues surrounding cyberbullying.

The materials recognize that getting tough on bullies is not an effective intervention and that young people tend not to disclose online harassment to adults for fear that they might overreact and cut off online access. It also focuses on the critical role of the “bystander,” students who do not want to identify themselves as either bullies or targets.

This resource, provided by National School Board Association and CyberSmart, emphasizes the core character values of caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility and respect for self and others; and recognizes that issues surrounding cyberbullying are intertwined with Internet safety, security, free speech, tolerance and cyber citizenship.

To view the cyberbullying package go to: http://cybersmartcurriculum.org/cyberbullying/nsba/

**Afterschool Resources Website Available**

Afterschool.gov is a one-stop website connecting the public, and particularly afterschool providers, to federal resources that support children and youth during out-of-school time. A great range of resources are listed on the website, which includes issues that face America’s youth and information about starting and operating an afterschool program.

Afterschool.gov contains resources from a variety of federal agencies, including a searchable database of federal funding sources. While afterschool resources are spread across the federal government, the website provides a single location for the public to access this information at http://www.afterschool.gov/

The Afterschool Investments Project helps to maintain the content of Afterschool.gov. The website is governed by an Interagency Executive Oversight Committee, including representatives from several federal agencies. For questions or comments about the site, please refer to the "Contact Us" link on the homepage.

For profiles of national and state after-school programs, go to http://www.imls.gov/pdf/youthreport.pdf

**National Environmental Education Week**

National Environmental Education Week is April 13-19. The week is designed to promote understanding and protection of the natural world by engaging students in grades K-12 in environmental learning prior to Earth Day on April 22. This year’s theme is “Be Water Wise!” For more information go to www.eeweek.org

**Climate Ambassadors**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has launched a campaign to educate middle and high school students about climate change, its effects on health and actions teens can take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**The Roof is Growing**

The American Society of Landscape Architects has announced the availability of The Roof is Growing!, an educational resource for middle school students and teachers about green roofs and their educational benefits.

**Employment Opportunities**

**ISBE External Vacancy List**

An External Vacancy List for the Illinois State Board of Education is available at: http://www.isbe.net/hr/Default.htm

**In the News**

**Weekly News Clips**

ISBE has posted highlights from last week’s education news clips at: http://www.isbe.net/news/2009/newsclips/090313.htm