Message from State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

Last week, I spent some time with administrators in Randolph and Monroe counties. I viewed a “SMART Table” purchased with federal technology funds at Chester Elementary and toured the new Waterloo High School which will open in the fall. I also spoke with local board members and administrators from surrounding districts at Red Bud Elementary School. It is always a pleasure to visit local communities to see what is working and hear their concerns. While Southwestern Illinois districts have unique challenges, no matter where I go, I hear educators discuss many of the same issues.

One of the most universal concerns is the struggle to pay for special education services. Everyone agrees these services are critical and necessary, but their costs continue to rise.

Currently, our Agency is working with members of the General Assembly and others on a task force created by House Joint Resolution 24 to study special education funding needs and make recommendations on how to increase funding from the state and reduce the burden on districts to provide special education services.

The HJR 24 Special Education Funding Task Force is being facilitated by Dr. Thomas Parrish who, among other duties, serves as the Director of the Center for Special Education Finance, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education (USED), Office of Special Education Programs.

The Task Force began meeting monthly in January and is expected to produce its report in late summer. Some of the major issues discussed thus far include:

- All current state special education funding programs, statutory formulas and reimbursements;
- The General State Aid entitlement program;
- Impact of the Chicago District 299 block grant on the state special education programs and appropriations each year;
- Special education funding and finance systems nationwide;
- How to distribute special education funding in the most efficient and equitable manner while maintaining a balance with proper accountability;
- Special education goals beyond funding such as promoting comparable services for students with comparable needs across the state, fostering high levels of measurable student outcomes for students in special education programs and serving students in the least restrictive environment.

Task Force information and updates can be found at http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/hjr.htm.

At the State Board of Education’s April meeting, the board will review the second report on the annual special education expenditures and receipts for each school district, as mandated by the School Code and prepared by Agency
staff. Since the first report was submitted last spring, we have expanded it to encompass additional work and reviews. We have included additional accounting functions, operations and maintenance of buildings and special education pupil transportation in the calculations this year.

I would like to thank all of the groups that helped out by reviewing and providing input on the report: Belleville, Lockport and West Central Illinois Special Education Cooperatives; North Suburban Special Education District; Ed-Red; Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education; Illinois Association of School Business Officials; Large Unit District Association; SCOPE/LEND and the HJR Special Education Task Force.

Finally, we had a conference call with the federal Governmental Accounting Office (GAO) late last week. The GAO will be responsible for performing reviews of 16 states and the District of Columbia’s use of stimulus funds. The GAO has been in contact with agencies that have statewide responsibility for distribution of the funds and the review will eventually move to the local district level.

Like us, the GAO has many more questions than answers at this time as they are also awaiting what type of guidance the U.S. Dept. of Education may provide in order to determine appropriate processes and reporting mechanisms.

It is my hope that in the near future we will be able to get you additional guidance from U.S. Dept. of Education for use of stimulus funds, as well as estimates for IDEA dollars that districts may receive.

Have a great week!

Chris

Upcoming Dates & Deadlines

● Even Start Family Literacy RFP – April 2
● Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grant – April 15
● 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
● Applications for ISBE’s Student Advisory Council – April 30
● Title I Status Survey due on IWAS – May 6
● Application for Regional Safe Schools Program – May 15
● Invitation to comment on proposed Amendments to Part 575 (School Technology Program) – May 18
● Prevention Initiative Birth to Age 3 Years RFP – May 19
● 2009 Bilingual Education Program Delivery Report due – June 30
● Percent Exception Application due – June 1

Data Analysis & Progress Reporting

Title I Status Survey on IWAS

The Title I Status Survey is now available on IWAS. The purpose of this survey is to identify Title I schools for 2008-09 AYP computations and school report cards. The deadline to complete this survey is May 6, 2009. If you have any questions, please call the Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division at 217/782-3950.

New U.S. Department of Education Race and Ethnicity Data Standards

The U.S. Department of Education has issued new guidance on the collection and reporting of race and ethnicity data for public school students and staff. The federal government developed the new standards in order
to provide a more accurate picture of the nation’s racial and ethnic diversity. The new process will require students/staff to indicate their ethnicity and also one or more race(s). In the past, individuals were allowed to choose only one racial/ethnic category.

The State Board will implement the new standards starting with data to be reported for the 2010-11 school year. The changes will affect all programs that collect and report race and ethnicity data. Introductory information is provided online at http://www.isbe.net/research/default.htm. Please share this information with staff and vendors.

It is anticipated that ISBE will conduct internal training later this spring, to be followed by trainings for school district personnel and vendors this summer/fall. More information will be provided as it becomes available. Questions may be directed to the Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division at 217-782-3950.

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**Grants & Programs**

**Regional Safe Schools Programs**

The Regional Safe Schools Program (RSSP) FY 2010 Continuation Application has been released. This application is offered only to Regional Safe Schools Programs identified by Article 13A of the School Code.

The purpose of Regional Safe Schools Program is to provide for alternative programs for disruptive youth in grades six through twelve. Disruptive youth are defined in Article 13A as students with suspensions or expulsion eligible.

The application is due **Friday, May 15, 2009** and is available online at

- [http://www.isbe.net/grants/pdf/10_RSSP_application.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/grants/pdf/10_RSSP_application.pdf)
- [http://www.isbe.net/grants/pdf/10_RSSP_forms.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/grants/pdf/10_RSSP_forms.pdf)

Questions about the RSSP application process may be directed to Sally Veach, Grants and Programs Division, 217-524-4832 or sveach@isbe.net.

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**Curriculum & Instruction**

**Illinois Math Science Partnership**

The state board has released an RFP for a partnership comprised of an IHE and a high-need LEA designed to improve the performance of Illinois students in the areas of math and science by offering an intensive, specialized graduate degree program in teaching math and/or science. The program will allow teachers in the program an opportunity to increase their content knowledge as they explore challenging pedagogy and technology integration in the areas of math and science. The RFP is available at the following site: [http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/](http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/).

For more information, contact Gil Downey, Curriculum and Instruction Division at gdowney@isbe.net or 217/557-7323.

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**Rules & Waivers**

**Invitation to Comment on Rules**

One set of proposed rules recently reviewed by the State Board of Education is now available for public comment. This item has 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.

These proposed amendments to Part 575 (School Technology Programs) include two technical updates. The changes involve:

- replacing a reference to the now-repealed Program Accounting Manual with a reference to the new rules covering the same topics (Part 100; Requirements for Accounting, Budgeting, Financial Reporting, and Auditing); and
- replacing a reference to the Fall Enrollment and Housing Report with a reference the date on which enrollment is determined.

Deadline for Public Comment: **May 18, 2009**

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**Special Education**

**New Process to Request ISBE Training, Technical Assistance or Conference Presentations**

The Special Education Services Division in Springfield has increased its efforts to ensure effective and efficient customer service by establishing a process for external entities to request training, technical assistance and/or conference presentations to be provided by division staff. Such requests must be submitted in writing using the

Please refer to the form’s instructions for information on the submission process. Upon receipt of the request form, Special Education Services Division staff will submit it to division management for review and will subsequently inform the requester of the outcome. We believe this process will help us organize the requests we receive, match such requests with the appropriate resources and respond to the requests in a timely manner. We also hope you find this process helpful and easy to use.

Questions may be directed to any consultant in the Special Education Services – Springfield Division by calling 217-782-5589.

**Nutrition**

**Storage of Commodities Over Summer Break**

The Illinois State Board of Education does not allow over summer storage of prior year commodities at the Lanter warehouse. For example, we are currently in school year (SY) 2009. At the end of the SY2009, we will not allow SY2008 commodities to be held in the warehouse. This policy is an attempt to reduce/eliminate out-of-date commodity shipments in the subsequent school year. You can view the SY2008 commodities allocated to you by looking at your most recent monthly commodity bulletin on the Illinois Commodity System (ICS).

All SY2008 commodities will be delivered to schools with the last SY2009 delivery (April 2009) unless you have taken delivery prior to then. Contact Food Distribution Program staff at 800-545-7892 if you have questions.

**Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Grant Opportunity for 2009-2010**

The State Board of Education is happy to announce it will be accepting applications for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) Grant for the 2009-2010 school year. The purpose of the FFVP Grant is to provide fresh fruits and vegetables during the school day at times other than during the meal periods in elementary schools, with priority given to schools with 50 percent or greater free and reduced-price eligibility.

For additional information about the FFVP Grant, program requirements, and to access the FFVP Grant application, go to: [http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/ffv_program.htm](http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/ffv_program.htm).

Applications must be submitted to ISBE no later than **Wednesday, April 15**, to be considered for this program for the 2009-2010 school year.

For questions, contact Lindsay Blough [lblough@isbe.net](mailto:lblough@isbe.net), Stephanie Custer [scuster@isbe.net](mailto:scuster@isbe.net), or Roxanne Ramage [rramage@isbe.net](mailto:rramage@isbe.net) at 800-545-7892 or 217-782-2491.

We look forward to another successful year of working with schools to increase children’s fresh fruit and vegetable consumption and to influence lifelong healthful eating habits.

**Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, Unused Funds**

For the current school year, the Department of Defense (DoD) allowed participation in the program to all schools that requested to participate subject to a $500 allocation floor. The State Board allocated the money it could spend with DoD among all schools that selected “yes” under *Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Participation* on the *Annual Order Forms* menu option on the Illinois Commodity System (ICS). Schools can see how much money was allocated to them by selecting *Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Participation* on the *Annual Order Forms* menu option on the ICS.

Recent reports from DoD indicate many schools that have money allocated to the have yet to place any orders for fresh fruits or vegetables. Unused funds are now available for use by other schools participating in the program. Funds will be available until the entire state’s funds are spent. Order what you can use, but please use what you order.

Those schools that have not spent any of the money allocated to them are advised to contact Pam Hamlett with the DoD at 215-737-3676 to begin placing orders or risk their allocation being spent by other schools. If you have any questions regarding the DoD Fresh Fruit
and Vegetable Program, please contact the Food Distribution Program staff at 217-782-2491.

**Illinois School Wellness Conference**

The State Board, in cooperation with the Illinois Action for Healthy Kids, is sponsoring the 2009 Illinois School Wellness, From A to Z Conference on **Tuesday, May 5**, in Decatur.

The one-day conference will highlight successful implementation of school wellness programs involving nutrition education, physical activity and physical education. In addition, to meet Public Act 094-0190’s School Healthy Recognition Program, the conference will recognize and celebrate schools having success with their wellness efforts.

**Connie Evers**, an award-winning author and nutrition consultant will deliver the morning keynote, followed by a choice of breakout sessions. An exhibit room will offer free resources and networking.

Register by **Monday, April 20**, for the early bird rate at www.actionforhealthykids.org, click on the state of IL.

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**Professional Development**

**Summer Opportunities for Staff Development on GPS with a Historical & Geographic Focus**

Experience the ultimate introductory level GPS hands-on workshop for educators. This class is for all 3-16 grade formal and non-formal educators who wish to learn what GPS is and how to use it as a tool with their students in the classroom. Teachers will learn what GPS is, how to work with a GPS unit, initialize it, program it, collect, enter and clear data. The class will cover how GPS is used in the real world and why it is important in education.

The unique twist to this class will be the use of ecocache sites that let you experience history, social studies and geography in action – its landscapes, its formations, its development or the visible features that all have a story to tell. An ecocache is a special place that people can visit to learn about a unique feature or aspect of the area. Each ecocaches will include a set of educational notes and the details about where to find the location (latitude and longitude).

No prior GPS experience is necessary. Teachers will also have the chance to try out different types of GPS units. The class will also provide the teachers fieldwork experiences performing the basic operations of using a GPS unit. Garmin GPS 60 units will be provided for use.

**Location: Lincoln's New Salem State Park, Petersburg, IL.**


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**IT Faculty Development**

Registration for the 2009 Working Connections IT Faculty Development Institute is scheduled for **May 18-22** and is open to all high school teachers and technical staff. The cost of the Institute is $700 per person for double occupancy room or $800 for a single occupancy room. The cost includes hotel, training, daily breakfast and lunch and one dinner. For those not needing hotel accommodations, the registration fee is $500.

Go to [www.workingconnectionsillinois.org](http://www.workingconnectionsillinois.org) and click on the registration button to sign-up for one of the classes listed. Highlights include Adobe CS4, cyber security, emerging educational technologies, game programming, screen casting, video production and more.

The University of Illinois – Springfield (UIS) is again offering Graduate Credit for all tracks. Click on the UIS Graduate Credit button for more information.

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**Student Opportunities**

**Student Advisory Council (SAC) Application Time**

The Illinois State Board of Education is currently seeking applications for the Student Advisory Council (SAC) to the Illinois State Board of Education for the 2009-10 school year.

The students who comprise the Student Advisory Council are diverse, representing different geographic locations, ethnic backgrounds, and types of schools. However, they possess similar qualities, which include a strong work ethic, ability to think “outside-the-box,” and collaborate with others and the willingness to set aside time from their busy schedules for SAC work.
Members are invited to attend Board meetings and sessions of the General Assembly. As SAC members, students also may review and critique ISBE’s existing or proposed programs, policies and regulations, as well as inform Illinois students of SAC activities.

Eligibility to apply for the 2009-2010 SAC is limited to public school students. Given the need to hear from students on some of the more complicated issues faced by our state, special consideration will be given to applicants from low-performing schools or districts.

An application is now available online at: [http://isbe.net/sac](http://isbe.net/sac). It must be returned to the State Board of Education by 5 p.m., Thursday, April 30. The mailing address is:
Illinois State Board of Education
Student Advisory Council
S-202
100 N. First St.
Springfield, IL
62777

Activities of the Student Advisory Council in 2009-2010 are contingent upon final State budget allocation. For more information, contact Andrea Wingo at 217-782-6434 or awingo@isbe.net.

**Tap Into Tap Water**

Could your science club and advisor use $1000? Midwest Technical Assistance Center needs your help in promoting the value of tap water.

A committee of water professionals has put together a video contest for any interested high school science club or science department. The idea is to develop a 30-60 second video that can be used as a public service announcement with a positive message about the value of tap water, the importance of maintaining a safe drinking water supply, and a view of the world without tap water.

The winning videos will be put on YouTube, various water-related Web sites, and played on TV stations across the state of Illinois. The initial phase of the contest is the development of creative ideas, and your ideas are due Wednesday, April 15. The second phase of the contest is to produce the video and those entries will be due Friday, October 30. For more information, and complete rules, go to:
[http://mtac.isws.illinois.edu/cyber/videocontest.asp](http://mtac.isws.illinois.edu/cyber/videocontest.asp)

**Illinois Department of Public Health**

**Hand Washing Posters**

The State Board learned some schools have been receiving letters from a company regarding hand washing posters that they were soliciting schools to purchase. These letters could be considered misleading.

Therefore, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) would like to clarify that, in Illinois, hand washing signs are not required to be posted at food service establishments. Food service establishments may use their own hand washing signs or obtain them for free from their local health department or the IDPH, Division of Food, Drugs and Dairies.

If you have any questions regarding the hand washing poster requirements, contact Jayne Nosari at IDPH at 217-785-2439.

**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](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: