April 20, 2009

Message from State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

The federal stimulus package is a complicated piece of legislation that has had, and will continue to have, many unintended consequences as we all work through it.

I think the complexity of the stimulus package was evident last week when questions arose over the use of State Fiscal Stabilization Funds (SFSF) for General State Aid (GSA). Just a short time after we sent out the applications and assurances to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), we began to receive questions about whether or not GSA paid with these stimulus dollars would be subject to higher employer contribution rates than those to which GSA is normally subject.

We worked with staff at the Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS) to determine that TRS members paid with SFSF funds will be subject only to the regular TRS contribution rate and not the federal contribution rate. This determination was made because the stimulus funds are being appropriated by the General Assembly from the General Revenue Fund and distributed to employers via state vouchers.

I should note that salaries paid with Title I, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and other federal grant funds related to the stimulus package will be subject to the increased federal contribution rate. This is because these funds are coming through their normal channels for the same intended purpose; the stimulus merely increases the amount of funds available through these program areas.

We are now taking applications for stimulus funding to improve school cafeterias throughout the state. The agency will award $3.6 million via a competitive grant process to entities, both public and non-public, participating in the National School Lunch Program, with priority being given to those programs in which at least 50 percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

The grants may be used to purchase new equipment, or renovate or replace equipment. You must identify in your application at least one of the following mandated priorities:

Equipment that lends itself to improving the quality of school nutrition meals that meet the dietary guidelines, such as purchasing an equipment alternative to a deep fryer.

Equipment that improves the safety of food served in the school meal programs, such as cold/hot holding equipment, dishwashing equipment, refrigeration, milk coolers, freezers and blast chillers.

Equipment that improves the overall energy efficiency of the school nutrition operations, such as the purchase of an energy-efficient walk-in freezer replacing an outdated, energy-demanding freezer.
Equipment that allows schools to support expanded participation in a school meal program, equipment for serving meals in a non-traditional setting or to better utilize cafeteria space.

More information about the grants may be accessed at http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/nslp_grant.htm. Applications must be submitted to ISBE by Friday, May 15.

Finally, I want to make you aware of a stimulus webinar that agency staff will host at 1:30 p.m., Friday, May 1. State Board staff will provide an overview of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and its impact on Illinois schools. Our federal liaison and staff from our divisions of Funding and Disbursement, School Business Services, Grants and Program and Special Education, will be presenting and available to take questions. You can register for the event at https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/779178617. We are limited to 1,000 participants so I ask that each district register only once and have staff assemble in one area to view the webinar. We will also record the webinar and post it to our website for replay at a later time.

Have a great week!

Chris

Upcoming Dates & Deadlines

- Preschool for All Children Ages 3 to 5 RFP – April 21
- Applications for ISBE’s Student Advisory Council – April 30
- Charter School Workshop – April 30
- IWAS availability for filing 2008-2009 Final Public School Calendar – May 1
- Letter of Intent for FY2010 School Improvement Grant – May 4
- Title I Status Survey due on IWAS – May 6
- Application for Regional Safe Schools Program - May 15
- Part 575 (School Technology Program): Public comment period ends - May 18
- Those Who Excel Nominations due-May 18
- Prevention Initiative Birth to Age 3 Years RFP – May 19
- Proposals for FY2010 School Improvement Grant – May 28
- Deadline for entries in the Art on a Rain Barrel contest – June 10
- 2009 Bilingual Education Program Delivery Report due – June 30
- Percent Exception Application due – June 1
- TSR Salary Data – July 15

Grants & Programs

Grant Programs Not Recommended for FY10 Funding

As you know, the State Board of Education had to make many difficult decisions when establishing its FY10 budget recommendation. As a result, certain grant programs were not recommended for funding. These programs are Gifted Education, the Class Size Reduction Grant, the Parental Participation Grant, and the State Homeless Education Grant.

It is not clear whether the General Assembly will restore funding for any of these programs in its final budget. The State Board of Education will not be issuing Requests for Proposals (RFPs) or Continuation Applications for these programs this coming Spring. This decision was made so that school districts and other eligible entities do not use their limited staff resources to write proposals or complete applications for programs which may not receive funding.

If, however, the General Assembly ultimately does decide to fund such programs, we have made plans to promptly issue the RFPs and/or applications. Since this news may occur after the end of the school year, districts
should continue to check the Superintendent’s Weekly Message for funding updates and opportunities.

**FY 2010 School Improvement Grant – Section 1003(g)**

The Division of Grants and Programs is pleased to announce the FY 2010 competitive grant, the **School Improvement Grant – Section 1003(g)**, that will provide funding to assist eligible schools with their school improvement efforts. (see [http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/sip_1003.htm](http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/sip_1003.htm))

This grant is being provided through the Title I, Part A, Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB) to schools that have been identified as being in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. A list of Illinois’ qualifying schools is available at [http://www.isbe.net/sos/pdf/fed_school_status.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/sos/pdf/fed_school_status.pdf).

Individual grant awards will range from not less than $50,000 to no more than $500,000 per school, with grants averaging between $50,000 and $250,000. The total amount of funding that will be available is $16 million.

Based on appropriations and demonstrated progress, the schools may also receive level funding for two additional one-year periods. These grants will be awarded regionally by the ten system of support regions. A map of the state’s ten regions is available at [http://www.isbe.net/sos/pdf/respro_map.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/sos/pdf/respro_map.pdf).

An audio teleconference will be held 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on Monday, April 27 to review the proposal requirements. To participate, please dial 1-800-288-9626.

To be considered, school districts must submit a letter of intent to apply on behalf of their eligible school(s) by 5 p.m. on Monday, May 4.

Separate proposals for each eligible school are due by 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 28.

To be considered, the eligible school must demonstrate through its proposal that it has the greatest need and strongest commitment to implement research based strategies and practices that will improve student achievement and move the school out of improvement status. Each funded school must make every effort to achieve the following goals:

- Increase the number and percentage of students scoring as proficient on the state assessments,
- Make adequate yearly progress and move out of improvement status, and
- Make decisions regarding the use of the funds based on data and will create systems of continuous feedback and improvement.

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Martha (Marti) A. Woelfle in the Division of Grants and Programs by email at mwoelfle@isbe.net or call 217-524-4832.

**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 April 28-30. 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 readers.

**Educator Preparation & Certification**

**Best Practices for “Interim” District Superintendents**

The Illinois School Code requires all school districts “to employ a superintendent who shall have charge of the administration of the schools under the direction of the board of education.” 105 ILCS 5/10-21.4. The School Code does not, however, further define the ways in which school districts are permitted to employ superintendent—for example, the School Code does not require, on its face, that a school district superintendent be hired “full-time”, nor does the School Code, on its face, prohibit a school district from retaining a retired district
superintendent to work in that school district for less than 120 days in a school year.

The Illinois State Board of Education (the “Agency”) has done its best, despite the lack of clarity in the law, to determine what is and what is not an acceptable employment practice—and has historically taken action pursuant to Section 1.20 of its administrative rules (23 Ill. Admin. Code 1.20) to reduce the recognition status of school districts that have not shown a commitment to employing a full-time district superintendent. Furthermore, despite little statutory guidance, Regional Superintendents have done an excellent job to best ensure compliance consistently across the state.

The Agency, though, believes that before further action is taken by the Agency to negatively impact a school district’s recognition status due to this issue, more clarity is necessary. Therefore, for the remainder of this current school year (2008-09) and for the coming school year (2009-10) only, the Agency has decided that no school district’s recognition status will be negatively affected due to its employment of an “interim” superintendent. This moratorium by the Agency should not be interpreted as an endorsement of school districts employing an “interim” superintendent. The Agency intends to work with stakeholders over the course of the next six months to establish clear standards for the employment of district superintendents, and hopes to incorporate the resulting standards into either Illinois law or rule. The standards will be then applied for purposes of determining a school district’s recognition status for the 2010-11 school year.

If your school district has any questions regarding this message, please contact Patrick Murphy, Division Administrator for Educator and School Development, at pmurphy@isbe.net

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**Student Assessment**

**Important Notice: Return of PSAE Testing Materials**

All PSAE initial, makeup, and accommodations testing materials must be returned on time to the correct company following procedures outlined in the applicable Supervisor's Manual to facilitate AYP reporting and avoid compromising test security. Accordingly, materials not returned on time will be in violation of PSAE procedures and will not produce reportable results. Pre-scheduled pick-up dates have been arranged with Fed-Ex, according to the schedule below.

**PSAE Initial Standard-Time Testing:**
April 22 – 23, 2009
Day 1 (April 22) Initial PSAE Materials (to ACT): Pre-scheduled pickup is Friday, April 24, 2009
Day 2 (April 23) Initial PSAE Materials (to Pearson): Pre-scheduled pickup is Friday, April 24, 2009
Reminder: Day 1 Materials should be packaged separately from Day 2 Materials.

**PSAE Makeup Standard-Time Testing:**
May 6 – 7, 2009
Day 1 (May 6) Makeup PSAE Materials (to ACT): Pre-scheduled pickup is Friday, May 8, 2009
Day 2 (May 7) Makeup PSAE Materials (to Pearson): Pre-scheduled pickup is Friday, May 8, 2009
Reminder: Day 1 Materials should be packaged separately from Day 2 Materials.

**PSAE Accommodations Testing:**
Day 1: (as early as) April 22 – (as late as) May 6, 2009
Day 2: (as early as) April 23 – (as late as) May 7, 2009
Day 1 Accommodations PSAE Materials (to ACT): Pre-scheduled pickup is Friday, May 8, 2009
(Accommodations materials may be returned as early as Friday, April 24 if all students testing with Day 1 accommodations have completed all five Day 1 tests. Call ACT if ALL Day 1 accommodations testing is completed prior to May 6 to schedule an earlier pickup.)

Day 2 Accommodations PSAE Materials (to Pearson): Pre-scheduled pickup is Friday, May 8
(Accommodations materials may be returned as early as Friday, April 24 if all students testing with Day 2 accommodations have completed all three Day 2 tests. Call Pearson if all Day 2 accommodations testing is completed prior to May 7 to schedule an earlier pickup.)

Reminder: Day 1 Materials should be packaged separately from Day 2 Materials, and Day 1 ACT-Approved Materials should be packaged separately from Day 1 State-Allowed Materials.

Detailed instructions for returning Day 1 standard-time materials can be found on pages 39-42 of the Spring 2009 Supervisor's Manual ACT Plus Writing State Testing. Specific instructions for packaging and pickup of ACT-Approved accommodations testing materials are found on pages 78-79 of the Spring 2009 Supervisor's
Manual ACT Plus Writing State Special Testing and those for Day 1 State-Allowed materials are found in the Administration Guidelines for State-Allowed Accommodations included in the shipment of secure State-Allowed materials.

Detailed instructions for returning Day 2 testing materials can be found on pages 50-52 of the Day 2 – Spring 2009 Supervisor’s Manual of Instructions, including a diagram on page 52.

If you experience any problems with the pick-up for Day 1 or Day 2 materials, do not contact Fed-Ex directly. If you experience any Day 1 materials pick-up problems, contact ACT at 1-800-553-6244 x2800. If you experience any Day 2 materials pick-up problems, contact Pearson at 1-800-627-7990 x814.

Teacher Service Record

A number of school districts/administrative entities did not submit 2007-2008 Teacher Service Record (TSR) salary data by the July 15th due date last year. Again this year, the deadline for submission is July 15—and it is critical for all data to be submitted on time, by the deadline. In order to finalize the 2008-2009 TSR file so the data can be used for required purposes, including the production of school and district report cards, we must receive your data by July 15. Any questions can be directed to the Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division at (217) 782-3950.

Funding and Disbursement Services

2008-2009 Final Public School Calendars

The ability to file the 2008-2009 Final Public School Calendar will be available May 1 via IWAS. Please complete and transmit to the appropriate Regional Superintendent by the last day of school. A final public school calendar must be transmitted and approved prior to filing the 2008-2009 claims for General State Aid, Pupil Transportation and Section 18-3 Regular Education Orphanage.

HELPFUL HINT: The unused proposed emergency days (XED) that are coded at the end of the school year may be removed by correcting the Regular School End Date to the last day of actual school activity. Once the Regular School End Date has been corrected, the calendar codes after that date will be omitted.

If you have questions that are not addressed in the Public School Calendar Guidelines which can be accessed at http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/ps_guidelines.pdf, you may contact the office of your Regional Superintendent or Marj Beck at the Illinois State Board of Education, mbeck@isbe.net or telephone 217/782-5256.

If you encounter technical issues with the Public School Calendar in IWAS please contact the ISBE Call Center at 217/558-3600 during business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Bilingual Education

Fourth Annual Statewide Summit for Bilingual Parents

The Fourth Annual Statewide Summit for Bilingual Parents will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, May 2 at the Doubletree Hotel, 1909 Spring Road in Oak Brook. School districts with bilingual/ESL programs are encouraged to register a delegation of bilingual parents who are members of Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) and staff who work with the PACs. While this summit is aimed at members of PACs, other bilingual parents are also encouraged to attend. Keynote presenters include Dr. Pauline Clardy from Illinois State University in Normal and Dr. Linda Espinosa from the University of Missouri, Columbia.

The Illinois State Board of Education will reimburse school districts for registration costs ($200 for each person) for up to ten persons (eight parents and two school representatives). In addition, if the delegation travels more than 50 miles, the district will be reimbursed for travel expenses.

For more information, please contact the Illinois Resource Center at 224-366-8555.

Computers & Technology

Microsoft Select Licensing Program

ISBE offers Illinois K-12 Public Schools and organizations of all sizes the ability to purchase Microsoft software at greatly discounted prices through the Microsoft Select Licensing program. The current agreement with Microsoft expires on 2/28/2010.
The Select program is a perpetual license program allowing schools the ability to purchase even a single license at discounted prices. Media can be ordered only when needed. All of the Microsoft Applications such as Office are offered along with the complete set of Microsoft server products and Operating System Upgrade licenses. Subscription based products such as Forefront for Exchange (used at ISBE) that allow you to license software for the remaining 11 months of the current contract are also available.

Illinois schools place their orders directly through Microsoft LARS chosen by ISBE to service this program. Current pricing and program information can be found online at [http://www.isbe.net/msselect/contract.html](http://www.isbe.net/msselect/contract.html). A brief price list of the most popular Microsoft products and a complete list of all products are current and are updated monthly.

### Professional Development

**Charter School Informational Workshop Schedule for South Cook County Area**

Staff from the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Network of Charter Schools will conduct a charter school informational workshop beginning at 1 p.m. on April 30 at the Holiday Inn & Convention Center in Tinley Park. The informational workshop will provide information on charter school grants, charter school law, and charter development. This charter school outreach is a requirement of the Federal Charter School Start Up Grant which ISBE received for a three year period from FY08 thru FY10.

All interested parties are encouraged to attend including members of the general public, school district staff, and charter school developers or staff. Brief presentations will be made but the main purpose of the workshop is to answer individual questions. The workshop is free and pre registration is not required. It is helpful if participants notify us of their plans to attend. Please contact Richard Loman, Division of Educator and School Development, if you have questions or want to pre register, email [rloman@isbe.net](mailto:rloman@isbe.net) or phone, 217-782-2948.

**Save the Date: January 20-22, 2010 for Annual Early Literacy & Illinois Reading Recovery® Conference in Chicago**

The annual conference will feature an extensive line-up of presenters including Felicia Hobbs, an award-winning principal of Gibbs Magnet School of International Studies & Foreign Languages, Little Rock, Arkansas, Nancy Anderson, a professor and Reading Recovery Trainer, Texas Woman’s University and many more. Graduate Credit and Continuing Education credit will be available. For more information, contact Ellen Swengel, conference coordinator at [eswengel@comcast.net](mailto:eswengel@comcast.net) or 217-359-7434, or visit [www.illinoisreadingrecovery.org](http://www.illinoisreadingrecovery.org) and click on “conference.” The conference will be at the Chicago Marriott Downtown.

### Nutrition

**National School Lunch Program Equipment Assistance Grant Available**

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) announces it will be accepting applications for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Equipment Assistance Grant. Each school food authority (SFA) participating in the federally funded NSLP is eligible to submit an application to receive an NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant. Priority is given to SFAs seeking equipment assistance for schools with 50 percent or more of their students eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

Visit [http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/nslp_grant.htm](http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/nslp_grant.htm) for additional information about the grant, program requirements, and to access the grant application. You must complete and submit the NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant to ISBE no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, May 15. Applications received after that time will not be considered.

If you have any questions about the NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant, please contact Stephanie Custer (scuster@isbe.net) or Roxanne Ramage (rramage@isbe.net) at 217.782.2491 or 800.545.7892.

For purposes of compliance with Section 511 of P.L. 101-166 (the “Stevens Amendment”), applicants are advised that 100 percent of the funds for the program are derived from federal sources. The total amount of federal funding involved is $3,657,300.
Order the Free Fuel-Up to Play School Wellness Activation Kit

The National Dairy Council® has huddled up with the National Football League to help America’s students eat right and stay active with Fuel-Up to Play! This free program focuses on empowering kids in grades 4-10 to make smart choices about their nutrition and physical activity.

- Schools enrolled in Fuel-Up to Play receive the easy-to-implement School Wellness Activation Kit, online marketing tools and bonus goodies.
- The kit includes a menu of activities and colorful display materials – customized with local NFL team insignia - that inspire students to “get up and play” for 60 minutes a day and to “fuel-up” with the food groups kids don’t get enough of – low-fat and fat-free dairy products, fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Fuel-Up to Play can be used to complement an existing school wellness program, or to help a school get started.

Enrollment for the 2009-2010 school year is now open; however, supplies are limited. To receive your school’s free kit or for more information about Fuel-Up to Play, simply go to www.SchoolWellnessKit.org.

Student Opportunities

Art on a Rain Barrel Contest

Governor Pat Quinn and the Chicago Botanic Garden are pleased to announce the "Art on a Rain Barrel" contest.

Who can participate? Teams of 3-5 Illinois youth, ages 8 to 18.

What do you submit? 2-D designs (11 x 17”) for rain barrel artwork that communicates the importance of fresh water in Illinois

When is the entry deadline? June 10.

What can you win? The top 50 teams will be invited to Navy Pier to celebrate the Governor's "It's Our River Day" on September 19. At this event, each team will receive a free rain barrel on which to create their artwork. Top designs will be put on display for thousands to see!

How do you participate? Visit the "Art on a Rain Barrel" Web site for complete contest rules and to download an entry form at www.chicagobotanic.org/calendar/rainbarrel

Questions? Contact artonarainbarrel1@gmail.com.

Rain barrels for this event are generously provided by Upcycle Products: www.upcycle-products.com.

Student Advisory Council (SAC) Application Time

The Illinois State Board of Education is 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. But they possess similar qualities, which include a strong work ethic, ability to think “outside-the-box,” and collaborate with others as well as the willingness to set aside time 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://www.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.

Essay Contest: Why is Abraham Lincoln Still Important Today?

U.S. Senator Roland W. Burris invites students in grades K-12 to participate in an essay writing contest that responds to the question: “Why is Abraham Lincoln Still Important Today?”

Students who send in the best submissions to Senator Burris’ Lincoln Essay Contest will be rewarded by having their essay included in a Lincoln time capsule for 50 years and entered into the Official Congressional Record. They will also receive a note of congratulations from Senator Burris and the school with the highest level of participation will receive an American flag flown over the United States Capitol Building during the 200th year since Abraham Lincoln’s birth.

All Illinois students enrolled in grades K-8 in public, private and home schools are invited to submit an essay. The essay should fit on a single sheet of paper and must include name, mailing address, the name and address of school, student’s current grade level and the name of the teacher who assigned the essay. One essay per student.

Send all entries to the address below no later than April 27th:

Senator Burris’ Lincoln Essay Contest
Office of Senator Roland W. Burris
230 South Dearborn, Suite 3900
Chicago, Illinois 60604

The winning essay will be announced May 11.

First Amendment Freedoms Art & Essay Contest

The Anti-Defamation League’s First Amendment Freedoms Art & Essay Contest deadline is May 8th. First prizes are $1000. A contest entry form and information about the teacher’s free program can be downloaded at www.nie.chicagotribune.com/freedoms. The awards dinner honoring First Amendment champions, Abner Mikva and Newton Minow, will be September 16. Winning students and their families will be invited to attend as guests.