June 22, 2009

Message from State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

The Board met last week in Springfield for its regularly scheduled June meetings. As expected, the fiscal year 2010 budget dominated the discussion. The Board received an update from staff, but took no action with regards to possible cuts. Members remain optimistic a more positive solution will be worked out when members of the General Assembly return this week.

Despite the Board’s cautious optimism, members set June 30th as the tentative date for a special meeting should they need to take action on the budget. Staff of the Governor’s office and legislators continue to request information and possible scenarios on our budget and we have responded with the best information on hand.

On behalf of the Board and agency staff, I want to thank all of you who came to Springfield and provided compelling testimony about your programs. We had dozens of individuals testify in the Finance and Audit Committee and again in the Plenary Session.

While considering budget cuts is an extremely difficult topic for us all, it was heartening to hear the passion in your voices as you described the children served and the important work going on across the state. I especially would like to thank the district administrators who provided their insights on funding priorities.

The choices for FY 2010 are difficult. At the same time, we will soon be closing the books on FY 2009. Last week, our agency vouchered the 4th quarter Mandated Categorical (MCATS) payments. The 3rd quarter MCAT payment, which our agency vouchered to the Comptroller’s Office in late March, has not yet reached school districts. Currently the Comptroller has $2.9 billion in unpaid bills dating back to February 2. We recognize the frustration and difficulty this creates and will let you know if we learn of ways in which these payments may be accelerated.

On Friday, I met with US Education Secretary Arne Duncan in Chicago. Secretary Duncan was very impressed with the steps we have taken to improve education in just the past few months. Specifically, he noted his support of the Common Core of State Standards Initiative, in which Illinois is a leader, and our work on a longitudinal data system.

While at Friday’s meeting, I was able to bring to Secretary Duncan’s attention several issues. I asked him to consider additional flexibility for local districts in the Local Determination for IDEA Compliance Indicators process, allowing the 50% maintenance of effort reduction provision to be utilized by those districts that received a “Needs Assistance” designation. I also asked for additional flexibility on the A-133 audits for districts that would be pushed over the $500,000 threshold simply because GSA is being paid for with stimulus funds. Finally, I repeated a written request I had made to the U.S. Department of Education in 2008 for additional flexibility with respect to the assessment of our English Language Learners. It’s my hope that, as a former local district administrator, Secretary Duncan will look favorably upon these requests.

Chris
Upcoming Deadlines

- ISAT and IAA Corrections: June 22
- E-report Card Form: June 26
- 2009 Bilingual Education Program Delivery Report: June 30
- Nonpublic Registration, Enrollment, and Staff Report: June 30
- Student Health Data – Vision and Dental: June 30
- Early Childhood Block Grant Program Applications: June 30
- Applications for the Qualified Zone Academy Bond Program: June 30
- FY10 Consolidated Application to Serve English Language Learners: Postmarked by June 30
- Migrant Education Application for the 2009-2010 School Year: July 15
- TSR Salary Data: July 15
- Request for Proposals (RFP) for Reading Recovery ® training and professional development: July 20
- PSAE corrections: July 21
- Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision), Part 25 (Certification) and New Part 425 (Voluntary Registration and Recognition of Nonpublic Schools) Public comment period ends: July 27
- Differentiated Accountability Flexibility Applications due: July 31
- FY 2009 State and Federal grant projects ending Aug. 31 submit amendments and project extension requests: Aug. 1
- Modified End of Year Report on IWAS: Aug. 1
- Deadline for entering data in IWAS on the 2008-2009 High School Students Taking Community College Courses: Aug. 1
- Statewide Youth Summit: Aug. 10
- Deadline for waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in Fall 2009: Aug. 14
- Annual Superintendents’ Conference in Springfield: Oct. 27-28

ARRA

Accounting Webinar July 10

Staff from the Illinois State Board of Education will provide a webinar on School District Auditing and Reporting. The webinar will focus on several accounting and auditing issues schools will need to consider, especially as they are being newly impacted by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Staff will discuss among other topics, changes to the Illinois Program Accounting Manual and A-133 Single Audits.

The webinar will be an abbreviated version of the seminar produced by ISBE for the Illinois Association of School Business Officials CPA Seminars. However, the webinar will not be eligible for meeting professional development requirements

Title:ARRA Accounting Webinar
Date: Friday, July 10
Time: 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. CDT

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the Webinar.

System requirements for PC-based attendees:

System requirements for Macintosh®-based attendees:
- Mac OS® X 10.4 (Tiger®) or newer

Reserve your Webinar seat now at:
https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/875977496

Student Assessment

Assessment Corrections Due

It is that critical time of year when assessment results are being processed. ISAT and IAA score data have been posted for a couple of weeks. If you have not done so already, please check and verify your data. All ISAT and IAA, including grade 11, corrections must be completed by June 22. Data at that time will be considered final.
Failure to make corrections during this window will not be grounds for a later appeal.

PSAE score data will be released earlier than in previous years. We expect to post them July 8th. Although scores won’t be posted before July 8, you currently have access to the assessment correction file and should be verifying the accuracy of the demographic information regarding your PSAE students and also resolving any error codes that may exist. AYP data have been posted for those elementary schools and districts that have completed their E-report card data. Please remember that the deadline for completing the E-Report card data is June 26.

Special Education Rights Guide Update

The 2009 special education rights guide, Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois, is now available. This document is a major rewrite of the 2001 A Parents’ Guide: The Educational Rights of Students with Disabilities. The guide was collaboratively developed and reviewed by the Parent Task Force on Accessible Special Education Materials, parent leaders, special education administrators, parent and advocacy organizations, and the Illinois State Board of Education.

The 2009 edition has been designed to serve as a useful resource to both parents and school personnel. The guide includes a comprehensive narrative outlining the principle rights and procedures for special education. To maximize user-friendliness, the guide allows the reader to obtain a detailed overview of special education as a whole, or to research a specific topic.

The online version of the Guide may be found at http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/parent_guide_english.pdf. Questions may be directed to Special Education Services staff at 217-782-5589 or via the agency toll-free number at 866-262-6663.

LEA Determinations

ISBE, like many of you, was concerned about how a “Needs Assistance” local determination for IDEA Compliance Indicators impacted the ability to utilize IDEA funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

ISBE staff continued to pursue flexibility for school districts in relation to the LEA Determinations after the April 29 issuance of the Determinations. Therefore, as mentioned in Dr. Koch’s June 9 Weekly Superintendent’s Message, ISBE staff have had several conversations with our counterparts at the United States Department of Education (USDE) over the past few weeks. During these conversations, ISBE staff advocated for maximum flexibility in regard to LEA Determinations as they relate to the utilization of ARRA funds.

As a result of such conversations, ISBE received new information from the USDE Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) on June 5 regarding additional flexibility. On that date, ISBE was informed that, in addition to the ability to acknowledge substantial compliance for districts that meet an Indicator at 95% versus 100%, we are now able to utilize a cell size in relation to the LEA Determinations process.

Upon receipt of this new information, ISBE staff reconvened the LEA Determinations stakeholder group on June 9 to discuss the possibility of applying this latest flexibility for Illinois districts. At that time, the stakeholder group chose to implement a cell size of 45 students for IDEA Compliance Indicators 11, 12 and 13. For example, regarding Indicator 13, if a district has fewer than 45 sixteen-year-old students with IEPs, the district’s data would be considered “not applicable” for LEA Determination purposes only, and therefore, would not be considered in the district’s overall determination. However, this does not exempt the district from meeting the outlined State Performance Plan (SPP) target of 100% compliance for this Indicator. Instances in which a district does not meet the target of 100% compliance will still result in findings of noncompliance. The cell size of 45 students was selected to align with the cell size used to calculate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

The decision to incorporate the cell size flexibility option reduces the number of school districts designated as “Needs Assistance” from 321 districts to 159 districts. ISBE staff contacted the districts whose designation was positively impacted by the new cell size flexibility, including districts that had previously appealed their LEA Determination and were denied. These districts will receive a corrected LEA determination letter to document the change.

Special Education Focused Monitoring

The 2009-2010 focused monitoring cycle is approaching. We would like all districts to be aware as they verify and finalize their data for submission in FACTS, the
Department of Special Education will again be using the percentage of students with disabilities in the general education setting 80% or more day as the criteria for determining districts to be selected for an onsite review. With that in mind, we strongly suggest that districts review and verify the accuracy of their FACTS data as they relates to the Educational Environment (EE) codes prior to final submission.

Data Analysis and Progress Reporting

2009 Bilingual Education Program Delivery Report (PDR)

Districts that received 2009 state bilingual funds (TBE/TPI funds) should submit their Bilingual Education Program Delivery Report (PDR) on IWAS as soon as possible. Submission prior to the established June 30, 2009, deadline is requested since the information these districts will provide must be included in a report that ISBE is required to submit to United States Department of Education (USDE) by the end of June. Your cooperation is appreciated. If you have questions about reporting the PDR, please contact the Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division at 217/782-3950 or e-mail Lilibeth Q. Gumia at lgumia@isbe.net.

No Child Left Behind

Strengthening No Child Left Behind: Supplemental Regulations for Public School Choice

The final regulations and additional guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education in October 2008 emphasized the importance of timely and clear notification to parents of the availability of public school choice (PSC) The supplemental regulations require the school districts to implement the following requirements.

- Notify parents of eligible children of the option to transfer their children to another public school making adequate yearly progress in advance but no later than 14 days before the start of the school year.

Additional information regarding these and other regulations can be found in the Public School Choice Non-Regulatory Guidance at the following Web site: www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/schoolchoiceguid.pdf

School districts should note that a public school choice letter must be sent to each school in Federal school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. ISBE must approve all public school choice letters prior to their release to the schools. Current information will be posted soon on ISBE's Public School Choice Web site: www.isbe.net/grants/html/choice.htm.

Rules & Waivers

Notice of Completed Rulemaking

Please be advised that three sets of amendments recently adopted by the State Board are now in effect. These rules have been posted on the agency’s Web site at www.isbe.net/rules;

Choose “Rules Currently in Effect” and scroll to the relevant Part number. If you print the affected Sections, please be sure to include the table of contents for the Part, since that changes every time the rules are amended.

- Part 145 (Temporary Relocation Expenses)
  Technical updating only.
  Affected Section: 145.50
  Effective Date: June 1, 2009

- Part 151 (School Construction Program)
  Technical updating only.
  Affected Sections: 151.20, 151.50, and 151.140
  Effective Date: June 1, 2009

- Part 675 (Temporary Relocation Expenses)
  Code of Ethics; basis for evaluating providers; miscellaneous.
Invitation to Comment on Rules

Three proposed rulemakings recently reviewed by the State Board of Education are now 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 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision)
Numerous revisions in a large number of Sections throughout this Part.
Deadline for Public Comment: July 27, 2009

Part 25 (Certification)
Numerous revisions in a large number of Sections throughout this Part.
Deadline for Public Comment: July 27, 2009

New Part 425 (Voluntary Registration and Recognition of Nonpublic Schools)
New rules setting forth the registration timelines and process; the initial recognition requirements and process; requirements for renewal of recognition; and requirements for receipt of funding under the school safety and educational improvement block grant.
Deadline for Public Comment: July 27, 2009

Funding and Disbursements

FY 2010 NCLB Consolidated application Available Soon

The FY 2010 regular NCLB Consolidated application should be available to all districts in the very near future via the electronic Grants Management System. Districts will receive an email notice through IWAS when it is available. We appreciate your patience. We have been working on an important enhancement to link the targeted schools served between the regular and ARRA Title I applications.

We are aware some districts may need a firm July 1 start date in order to properly charge obligations to the FY 2010 grant. Due to the short window of time to transmit the initial application, for those districts that must have a July 1 start date, we are extending the initial application deadline to July 15. In addition, you must complete and return the following form by July 31:
Once the form is received by ISBE, a written approval for the July 1 start date will be provided to your district for auditing purposes.

If your district does not need a firm July 1 start date, then the start date will be dependent upon the date that you transmit your initial application. If you have questions regarding this issue, please contact Kim Lewis or Sally Cray at 217-782-5256 in the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services.

Estimated FY 10 Funding for Children Requiring Special Education Services Distribution

Estimated FY 10 district allocations have been calculated for the Funding For Children Requiring Special Education Services program authorized under Section 14-7.02b of the School Code, and can be accessed at http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/estimated_funding.pdf.

The estimate assumes the FY 10 ISBE requested appropriation, 2008-09 estimated average daily attendance and preliminary poverty counts from the Dept of Human Services. The final column compares the FY 07 allocation to the estimated allocation amount for FY 10.

HB 4148 was signed by the Governor on January 8, 2008 (P.A. 95-0705). The new law made changes to Section 14-7.02b stating that, for fiscal year 2008 and each fiscal year thereafter, individual school districts must not receive payments under that Section totaling less than they received for fiscal year 2007 (commonly referred to as a “hold harmless” provision). However, the language further states that any “hold harmless” funding is to be “computed last and shall be separate calculation from any other calculation set forth in [Section 14-7.02b].”

The “other calculation” referenced in the new language is the existing split of the entire appropriation--85% based on each district’s average daily attendance and 15% on poverty which were used in General State Aid. Thus, under the new statutory scheme, the Agency in FY 10 will complete the 85-15 calculation for each district and, if the amount calculated for any district is less than what the district received in FY 2007, the district is eligible for
hold harmless. A separate supplemental appropriation is required to bring such districts back to their FY 2007 level. But none has been proposed for FY 10.

The estimated hold harmless amount for FY 10 is approximately $17.1 million.

2009-2010 Proposed Public School Calendars

If you have not already done so, please enter and submit for Regional Superintendent approval the 2009-2010 Proposed Public School Calendar for the upcoming school year.

2008-09 General State Aid Claim Deadlines

Please be advised that per Section 18-12 of the School Code, the 2008-09 General State Aid Claim must be transmitted via IWAS to each respective Regional Office of Education by June 21 for districts with an official school calendar end date before June 15 or within two weeks following the official school calendar end date for districts with a school year end date of June 15 or later.

The regional superintendent shall certify and file with the State Superintendent of Education district State aid claims by July 1 for districts with an official school calendar end date before June 15 or no later than July 15 for districts with an official school calendar end date of June 15 or later. Failure to file by these deadlines constitutes a forfeiture of the right to receive payment by the State until such claim is filed and vouchered for payment.

A final school calendar must be transmitted and approved before the General State Aid claim can be transmitted. If you need technical assistance with completing the final school calendar, you may contact your Regional Office of Education or Marj Beck, Funding & Disbursements, at mbeck@isbe.net. Questions related to completing the General State Aid Claim can be directed to Jim Mathes, Funding & Disbursements, at jmathes@isbe.net. Marj and Jim can also be reached in the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services at 217-782-5256.

Attention Principals: The Illinois Nutrition Education and Training (NET) Program is offering one free nutrition education curriculum per Illinois school on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Visit www.kidseatwell.org to complete the simple one-page application, select the curriculum from eight choices representing K–12th grade, and complete the ten-question pre-survey today.

Illinois NET requires that you implement the curriculum during school year 2010, and complete a short post-survey by May 15, 2010.

Professional Development

Helen-Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week

Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week is June 21-27 this year.

During this week, schools that are in session are encouraged to provide activities that will help students to recognize the abilities and talent that people with vision and hearing disabilities can bring to our communities. Deaf-Blind Awareness Week is celebrated annually during the week that includes Helen Keller’s June 27th birthday.

Resources and more information about Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week are available online at: http://hknc.org/indehtmlx.

For the past 29 years, ISBE has operated the Philip J. Rock Center and School (PRC). PRC was established to provide technical assistance in the area of deaf-blindness to all Illinois early intervention programs, school programs and families. Deaf-Blind Specialists provide outreach services free of charge. Children who have significant losses in both vision and hearing are eligible for services.

The Center is located in Glen Ellyn and for further information on Illinois Deaf-Blind Services, contact Tina Lechnick, Chief Administrator at the Philip J. Rock Center and School at 630-790-2474 or via e-mail at PRC@aol.com. The Web site address is: www.project-reach-illinois.org.

Additionally, ISBE provides support to the Illinois Advisory Board for Services for Persons who are Deaf-Blind. This board is committed to partnering with key stakeholders to impact positive change for all individuals...
who are deaf-blind and ensure they are provided equal access to resources and opportunities to lead fulfilling lives. For more information about deaf-blindness or what you can do to help, go to www.bemyvoice.com.

**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: