Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

- FY 2010 NCLB Monitoring Instrument submission deadline -- Nov. 30
- ISAT Science and Math Item Presentation Pilot – Dec. 7-11
- FY 2011 Budget Hearing in Mundelein – Dec. 9
- National School Lunch Program Verification Summary Report deadline – Dec. 15
- Part 151 (School Construction Program) – Public comment period ends Dec. 28
- Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision) and Part 252 (Driver Education) – Public comment period ends Jan. 4.
- IAAE Service Recognition Awards nomination deadline – Jan. 4
- Postmark deadline for waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in Spring 2010 – Jan. 8
- Immigrant Education Program Student Report deadline – Jan. 15
- Part 228 (Transitional Bilingual Education) and Part 235 (Early Childhood Block Grant) – Public comment period ends Feb. 15
- Illinois Young Authors’ Conference in Bloomington-Normal – May 15
- 2009-10 Eye Examination Data Collection deadline – June 30

Superintendent Koch’s column will return next week. We hope you had a wonderful holiday weekend.

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Funding and Disbursement Services

PA 96-0640 – Changes for Coding the Public School Calendar

As previously announced in the Aug. 31, 2009, Illinois State Board of Education’s Weekly Message, Public Act 96-0640 was enacted on Aug. 24, 2009. This Public Act added new language to Section 24-2 of the Illinois School Code to provide that a school board or other eligible entity is authorized to hold school or schedule teachers’ institute, parent/teacher conferences, or staff development activities including school improvement and in-service training on five legal school holidays provided the school board or other eligible entity follows through on two conditions:

1. Hold a public hearing about the proposal after notification of the time, date, location, as well as a description of the proposal has been provided to educators and parents. It must also be indicated that during the hearing, public testimony regarding the proposal will be taken.

2. Recognize the person(s) honored by the holiday through instructional activities conducted on that day or, if the day is not used for student attendance, on the first school day preceding or following that day.

The five holidays for which this process is available are:

- the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (third Monday in January)
- the birthday of President Abraham Lincoln (Feb. 12)
- the birthday of Casimir Pulaski (first Monday in March)
- Columbus Day (second Monday in October) and
• Veterans Day (Nov. 11)

Days utilized by Public Act 96-0640 on the Public School Calendar no longer require a special code. These days may be coded with the appropriate calendar code depending on the activity to be conducted on the holiday, (i.e. X – Pupil Attendance Day, TI – Teacher Institute, etc.) provided the education entity has fulfilled the previously mentioned conditions. An education entity that currently has an ISBE approved modification may continue to use the waiver calendar code (XH – Pupil Attendance Holiday Waiver, TIH – Teacher Institute Holiday Waiver, etc.) until which time the approved modification expires. Then, if the entity wishes to use the day as something other than a holiday, the previous conditions must be met and then the appropriate calendar code may be entered on the legal school holiday on the official public school calendar.

Public Act 96-0640 also updated Section 18-8.05 of the Illinois School Code to specify allowable parent/teacher conferences configurations. The allowable configurations are:

A minimum of five clock hours of parent/teacher conferences. The calendar code for the day which the conferences are held would be FPT – Full Day Parent/Teacher Conference. The conference times should be reported as the Activity Time.

Both a minimum of two clock hours of parent/teacher conferences held in the evening following a full day of pupil attendance and a minimum of three clock hours of parent/teacher conferences held on the day immediately following evening parent/teacher conferences. The calendar code for the attendance day that at least two hours of conferences are held in the evening after a full day of pupil attendance would be X – Pupil Attendance Day and the following day that conferences are conducted for a minimum of three hours, but no pupil attendance, would be FPT – Full Day Parent/Teacher Conference. The conferences times for the previous evening should be included in the Brief Explanation for verification purposes.

Multiple parent/teacher conferences held in evenings following full days of pupil attendance, in which the aggregate time used for parent/teacher conferences is equivalent to a minimum of five clock hours. The days for evening conferences that are conducted after a full day of pupil attendance are coded at X – Pupil Attendance Day. The ‘comp’ day which neither teachers nor students are present would be coded as FPT – Full Day Parent/Teacher Conference. The Activity Times should reflect the normal school day start and end time. The dates and times of the multiple evening conferences should be included in the Brief Explanation for verification purposes.

The Public School Calendar system via IWAS has been updated to include these calendar code changes. If you have further questions please see the User Guide available as a menu item in the Public School Calendar system or contact Marj Beck at mbeck@isbe.net or 217-782-5256.

Innovation and Improvement

**Improvement and Restructuring Plans**

This is a general reminder about improvement and restructuring plans for 2009. The plan review process has begun for district and school plans.

**District Improvement Plans:** The deadline has passed for submitting district improvement plans for districts either “new” to academic status or those in status with expired improvement plans. If you have not already done so, please submit your district improvement plan with local board approval.


**School Improvement Plans:** Also, remember that schools in academic status are also required to have a current, local approved improvement plan submitted via the Interactive Illinois Report Card.

Restructuring plans for schools in restructuring planning or academic watch 2 status are due six months following the initial notification of status. The 2009 Restructuring Webinar is available at [http://www.isbe.net/sos/restructuring_webinar.ppt](http://www.isbe.net/sos/restructuring_webinar.ppt).


**Final Note:** Your initial notification of status at IWAS started the clock ticking for the submission of plans. The
superintendent’s weekly newsletter in June reminded you to check for planning requirements. Failure to submit these plans will result in frozen Title I funds and/or recommendation for pending recognition.

Curriculum and Instruction

Applications Available for 2010 National Youth Science Camp

Applications to attend the 2010 National Youth Science Camp are available online at http://www.nysc.org/2010/. Two graduating high school students will be selected to represent Illinois at the all-expenses paid honors program, which will be held from June 29 through July 23.

To apply, download the application packet from and follow the enclosed instructions. For more information about the camp, visit the Web site or contact Gil Downey at 217-557-7323 or gdowney@isbe.net. The National Youth Science Camp is hosted and operated by the National Youth Science Foundation (http://www.nysf.com).

Applications must be received by Jan. 22. Mail the completed application to Attn: Gil Downey, Principal Consultant, National Youth Science Camp, Illinois State Board of Education, 100 North First Street, C-215, Springfield, IL 62777.

NextSteps Evolves Into the Illinois Data Portal

The Illinois Data Portal provides tools to help districts reach their technology integration and strategic planning goals. This portal has evolved from the 2001 NextSteps instruments that determined a student’s technology proficiency and the impact of technology on learning.

Most importantly, fifth grade and eighth grade technology proficiency tests were developed using released items (by permission) available from the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) test and district items from the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, and Tools for Real-Time Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (TRAILS). The eighth grade technology proficiency test, available at no charge to districts, allows Illinois schools to easily meet the Title II-D requirements of assessing the technology literacy level of all eighth-grade students. All tools in the portal are aligned with the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS).

In addition, the Portal offers several School Reform Tools that are based on Washington State's School Improvement Process (with permission) built on the Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools.

Reports are available for all tests and surveys as raw data in pdf, .rtf, .doc, and .csv formats, in a user-selected custom report or preformatted templates aligned with Illinois Technology Integration Plan requirements. There are currently five pre-formatted reports.

1. Implementation Effectiveness/Teaching and Learning
2. Student Technology Proficiency
3. Policy and Resource Infrastructure
4. Educator Qualifications
5. Parent and Community Involvement

Data from tests and surveys are available within 30 minutes of the completion of the data collection. Items are aggregated across instruments and graphically displayed with labels that indicated strength/weaknesses based on the Grappling with Accountability rubric rating scale: Not in Place, Developing, Emerging, and Optimal.

For additional information, please contact your district Learning Technology Center (http://www.ltcillinois.net/index.htm).

Assessment

ISAT Science and Math Item Presentation Pilot Coming Up

In December, there will be a special pilot looking at the impact of different presentation accommodations on ISAT science and math item performance. Schools selected for participation will be receiving notification within the next week.

Students in grades 3 and 5 will be taking one (approximately 55 minute) math session. Students in grade 8 will be taking both a math and science session. Materials should arrive during the week of Nov. 30. In the notification letters, the groups of students who should be assessed will be identified. Participation of students with disabilities and students identified as limited English proficient, as specified in the letters, is critical.

The window for the administration is Dec. 7 through Dec. 11. Additional information regarding administration will be provided in the notification letters and with the assessment materials.
Your full cooperation and support of this effort is appreciated and will allow us to continue and to expand the accommodations made available with ISAT. If you have questions regarding the pilot, please contact Student Assessment at 217-782.4823.

Nutrition

School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies recently released the report titled “School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children” as commissioned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to develop recommendations on improvements to the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs to align them with the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

The USDA is reviewing this report and will “develop a proposed rule to determine the best ways to improve the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program based on IOM's final report. Stakeholders and the public will have ample opportunity to comment on the USDA's proposed rule.”


School Breakfast Program Mandate

The Childhood Hunger Relief Act (Public Act 096-0158) mandates that a school must provide a breakfast meal if it had 40 percent or more students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches in the preceding school year. For additional information on this mandate, including how to determine which schools are mandated and how to request an exemption from this mandate, go to http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/hb_756.htm.

Culinary Courses Help Schools Meet School Meal Recommendations

The National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) is developing a series of six free online courses designed to help child nutrition teams prepare healthier school meals that appeal to students’ tastes. The Culinary Techniques for Healthy School Meals courses help school food service staff initiate food production and culinary techniques that incorporate principles of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans into the planning and preparation of school meals.

Illinois school food service staff members that complete all six courses are eligible to receive a stipend reimbursement of $75 and a set of dietary guidelines posters for their cafeteria while funding lasts. The stipends were made available by a USDA Team Nutrition Training grant.

The launch of the NFSMI culinary courses is particularly timely as the Institute of Medicine just released a report on school meals commissioned by the USDA. The IOM’s School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children (http://vovici.com/WSB.dll/s/17fb9g417fb) report provides recommendations for revising the standards and requirements for the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. The USDA will use the report to draft proposed rules for revising these programs.

Go to http://www.KidsEatWell.org for details about the NFSMI courses, the reimbursement stipend and posters.

National School Lunch Program Verification Summary Report Deadline

Verification is the confirmation of eligibility for free and reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Annually, each local educational agency (LEA) participating in the NSLP and/or SBP must select and verify a sample of household applications approved for benefits. The LEA must submit a Verification Summary Report (VSR) summarizing the results of verification efforts. The VSR must be submitted electronically through IWAS, to the Illinois State Board of Education by Dec. 15.

Instructions on accessing and completing the VSR are available at http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/vsr.htm. Basic information regarding the verification process is at http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/pdf/verification_process.pdf.

For questions regarding the verification process and the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, contact ISBE at cnp@isbe.net or 800-545-7892.
School Opportunities

Nominations Sought for Annual National School Change Awards

Applications are available for the National Principals Leadership Institute’s National School Change Awards. The annual awards, co-sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators, go to six schools across the country that have “significantly changed.”

Schools are asked to measure themselves against criteria and consider the degree to which they have improved and grown. Schools may nominate themselves. Winners will receive a $5,000 grant and will be honored with a ceremony at their individual schools. An awards presentation by the U.S. Department of Education in July will also recognize the winners.

The deadline is March 4 for nominations. For more information and applications, visit http://npli.org/nsca.

Professional Development

Teaching the Science and History of Global Warming Workshop Set

A workshop on teaching the science and history of global warming is scheduled for Feb. 20 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The workshop is organized by the school’s Department of History and the Center for Global Studies, and is designed for K-12 science and social sciences educators.

Presentations by U of I professors include “Confronting Human-Driven Global Climate Change” by Donald Wuebbles and “Is It Getting Hot in Here? The History of Global Warming” by Lillian Hoddeson.

The registration form is available at https://illinois.edu/fb/sec/4418041. Participants are asked to arrive before 9 a.m. to register to receive CPDUs. The conference is set for 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the College of Education Building, Room 2, 1310 S. Sixth St., in Champaign.

For more information, contact Karen Hewitt of the Center for Global Studies at 217-244-0288 or khewitt@illinois.edu.

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