Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

Last week I went with a team to Washington to defend Illinois’ Race to the Top application. The team worked very hard to prepare and I am proud of our performance. The panelists probed our statutes on teacher dismissal and why they do not make it easier to dismiss ineffective tenured teachers, as well as the current absence of a growth model. The panelists repeatedly hit us with questions on capacity and sustainability in regard to the staffing and resources at both this agency and local districts. These are valid concerns.

The agency is among the leanest in the nation, at a ratio of 1 agency staffer for every 4,268 students. That compares to other states as follows:

- Wyoming: 1 employee to every 572 students
- Maine: 1 employee to every 1,265 students
- Wisconsin: 1 employee to every 1,382 students
- Massachusetts: 1 employee to every 1,772 students
- Kentucky: 1 employee to every 1,786 students
- New Jersey: 1 employee to every 2,118 students
- Virginia: 1 employee to 3,917 students

ISBE has seen a 40 percent reduction in its headcount since 2000 and an increase of 38 percent in the amount of funding it must administer. These questions about capacity and sustainability are legitimate, grounded in reality. I am confident that if we receive RT3 funding we will be able to carry out the reform activities that we have proposed, but I also know that these types of questions linger in the minds of federal officials.

At the same time, we recognize the critical reductions that are taking place in local districts all over the state. Please know that we are doing everything we can to communicate the impact of this loss. I have continually told members of the General Assembly that we can’t undergo such cuts without seeing classroom sizes grow, services to students shrink and district reserves dwindle. I know that many of you are communicating a similar message as you meet with your local legislators and I urge you to continue those efforts.

Last week President Obama submitted to Congress his blueprint for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The reauthorization has been delayed for far too long and it is time to restart the dialogue on making improvements to No Child Left Behind.

2014 is coming very soon.

I am encouraged by some aspects of the draft; increased flexibility for states while still maintaining stringent accountability measures, improving federal and local partnerships and a commitment to accurately measuring student progress by using growth models and developing new and better assessments. You can access the Obama proposal at http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/index.html and see for yourself what they envision for the future of ESEA.
I think a thorough review and robust discussion of the proposal is overdue. I do not believe that this will be anywhere near what the final reauthorization legislation looks like; there is definitely room for improvement. However, it is a starting point for us to begin the legislative process to negotiate what will hopefully be something that will improve the lives of all students.

The 2010 Census questionnaires have started arriving in mailboxes. It is very important that we work with our local communities to understand the importance of the census. These completed 10-question surveys can have a great impact on the amount of federal funding for schools, roads and social services in our state.

If you haven’t already done so, I urge you to get the word out and encourage local residents to fill out their questionnaires. An accurate Census count will help Illinois receive more federal dollars for teachers, tutoring, after-school programs, professional development and much more. The five minutes we take for this task today could mean billions of dollars down the road for our schools and students.

Have a great week!

Chris

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**Upcoming Dates and Deadlines**

- Demographic corrections for ISAT (grades 3-8) and IAA (grades 3-8 and 11) – Open now
- Qualified Zone Academy Bond Program application deadline – April 2
- Truants’ Alternative and Optional Education Program (TAOEP) RFP deadline – April 14
- Illinois School Wellness … From A to Z Conference – May 4
- Investing in Innovation Fund grant deadline – May 11
- Illinois Young Authors’ Conference in Bloomington-Normal – May 15
- 2009-10 Eye Examination Data Collection deadline – June 30
- Postmark deadline for waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in Fall 2010 – Aug. 13

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**Assessment**

**ISAT Grades 3-8 and IAA Grades 3-8 and 11 Data Corrections**

The Assessment Correction (AC) file for ISAT and IAA is available. As we wait for the assessments to be scored and reported, please be sure to verify now that the AC file accurately reflects all of your students and their demographic information. We recommend you carefully review all data fields, especially the IEP, LEP, low income and “enrolled on or before May 1” fields.

Do not wait until scores are posted to review this critical demographic information. Keep in mind that the correction window for this year has been shortened by Rule. We are aiming to post ISAT grades 3-8 and IAA grades 3-8 and 11 scores by June 3. You will then have until June 16 to review your (score) data and make rescore requests as needed.

**Illinois Arts Education Week**

**Educators, Schools Receive Awards**

The Illinois Alliance for Arts Education recognized educators from across the state at its 27th annual Service Recognition Awards Ceremony on March 18 at the Executive Mansion in Springfield.

The alliance, a member of the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network, identified two Illinois schools for providing exemplary arts education programs. Receiving the IAAE Kennedy Center Schools of Distinction in Arts Education Award were Andrew Cooke Magnet School in Waukegan (District 60) and Adlai E. Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire (District 125).

Recognized in the Arts Educator category were Dr. Debra June Nelson of Chicago for dance; Harvey Green of Geneseo for drama; Joy Schertz of Princeton for
music; and Judith Kapalsa of Waukegan, Daniel Niwa of Joliet and Lisa Shirly of Mundelein, all for visual arts.

For the School Administration category, Violet Tantillo of Thomas Jefferson Elementary (District 98) in Berwyn and the Adlai E. Stevenson High School Board of Education were honored.

The ISSE Organization Award went to Becky Slettun at CUSD 3030 in St. Charles. For a complete list of winners and more information on them, visit http://www.isbe.state.il.us/curriculum/pdf/arts_brochure10.pdf.

Illinois Arts Education Week poster contest winners were also announced during the ceremony. (Details in the next story.)

**Poster Contest Winners Recognized**

Winners in a statewide arts education poster contest were honored last week at the Governor’s Mansion as part of the 28th annual Illinois Arts Education Week.

Illinois Arts Education Week 2010 is sponsored by the Illinois State Board of Education in conjunction with the Illinois Alliance for Arts Education and the Governor’s Office.

This year’s poster winner is sixth-grader Victoria Tu of Wood Oaks Junior High School in District 27. She is the daughter of Susan Chang and Raymond Tu of Northbrook. Her art instructor is John Grebe. She captured this year’s theme of “Dream Big through the Arts” with a watercolor painting of an iPod.

Second place went to Shaylen Bell of Dixon, a sixth-grader at Reagan Middle School in District 170. Third place went to Gavin Johnson of Libertyville, a fourth-grader at Copeland Manor School in District 70. Visit http://www.isbe.state.il.us/news/2010/mar18.htm for more information, including a list of honorable mentions.

St. John the Evangelist Catholic School in Streamwood was recognized as the Featured School award, which recognizes an art instructor and students for a strong group of poster entries.

Posters can be requested by contacting the Illinois State Board of Education’s Curriculum and Instruction division at (217) 557-7323; arts@isbe.net; or via mail at 100 N. First St., Springfield, IL 62777-0001. The back of the poster contains references to the Illinois Learning Goals and Standards for the Fine Arts, upcoming art events for 2010, Internet resources and more.

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**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act**

**U.S. Department of Education Releases Information on i3 Grants**

The U.S. Department of Education recently announced final priorities and the grant application for the $650 million Investing in Innovation Fund, also known as i3. To read the press release, go to http://www2.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2010/03/03082010.html.

Individual school districts or groups of districts can apply for the i3 grants, which are part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Entrepreneurial nonprofits can work with school districts or a consortium of schools to submit applications. The published closing date for applicants is May 11, 2010.

For more information, including the application, please visit the U.S. Department of Education’s website at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/index.html or contact Melina Wright at mewright@isbe.net.

**Qualified Zone Academy Bond Program Extended Through 2011**

The Qualified Zone Academy Bond Program (QZAB), created in 1997, has been extended through 2011 by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The QZAB program provides federal tax credits in lieu of interest on bonds designated as QZAB’s by the issuing school district. QZAB proceeds may be used for rehabilitating or repairing public school facilities, investing in new equipment and technology, developing challenging course materials or training teachers. They can’t be used for new school construction.

In order to designate bonds as QZAB’s, a school district must receive an allocation of the state’s volume cap through application to the Illinois State Board of Education. To qualify for an allocation, the school or program designated as a qualified zone academy by the school district must be located in an empowerment zone or an enterprise community; or there is a reasonable expectation that at least 35 percent of their students are eligible for free or reduced-cost lunches under the National School Lunch Act. Additionally, private business contributions that total at least 10 percent of the
face value of bonds to be designated as QZAB’s must be secured by the issuing district on behalf of the zone academy.

A qualified zone academy is a school or program that provides education and training below the postsecondary level if: (1) the public school or program is/was designed in cooperation with business to enhance the academic curriculum, increase graduation and employment rates, and better prepare students for the rigors of college and the increasingly complex work force, (2) students in the public school or program will be subject to the same academic standards and assessments as other students educated by the eligible local education agency, and (3) the comprehensive educational plan of the public school or program is approved by the eligible local education agency.

The federal legislation provided for national allocations of $1.4 billion in each of calendar years 2009 and 2010. The Internal Revenue Service notice (IRS Notice 2010 – 22) provides that Illinois’ share of these allocations is $52,218 million (for calendar year 2010). In addition, $13,923,899 from the calendar year 2009 volume cap remains to be allocated for a total of $66,141,899. Changes to the program made by the Tax Extenders and Alternative Minimum Tax Relief Act of 2008 are discussed in the Notice which is available at http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/n-09-30.pdf.

Allocations will be based on the relative degree of poverty as reflected by the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, with preference given to those school districts that have not previously been awarded an allocation.

The Illinois State Board of Education will be accepting applications and supporting materials for the calendar year 2009 and 2010 allocations from March 15 to 4 p.m. April 2, 2010. Applications and additional information are available on the ISBE Web site at http://www.isbe.net/construction/html/qzab.htm.

For further questions or inquiries, please call Lou Ferratier, School Support Services at 217-785-8779.

March 12, 2010, ARRA Reporting Webinar Available

On March 12, 2010, the Illinois State Board of Education conducted a Webinar to review and explain revised job reporting requirements for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) issued by the Federal Office of Management and Budget on Dec. 18, 2009, which can be accessed at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/assets/memoranda_2010/m10-08.pdf.

This guidance has also been incorporated into ISBE’s ARRA reporting procedures which can be accessed at http://www.isbe.net/arra/pdf/arra_reporting_inst.pdf.

The Webinar as well as the Adobe and Power Point versions of the presentation can be accessed at http://www.isbe.net/arra/html/webinar.htm. Answers to the questions raised at the Webinar will be posted in the near future. For those that participated in the Webinar, please note that Slide 11 has been revised from the original presentation to provide more detail on the calculation steps to arrive at the correct full-time equivalent jobs value. Specifically, employees that have different work schedules such as a teacher or administrator must have their hours in a full-time schedule for the quarter adjusted by the hours worked by that particular employee.

As a reminder, all ARRA jobs and vendor data for the quarterly reporting period ending March 31, 2010, must be submitted to ISBE by Monday April 5, 2010, without exception. Please submit your information early to avoid missing the posted deadline.

If you have questions regarding ARRA reporting please contact the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services at 217-782-5256.

School Business Services

Reminder on Accounting for Restricted Monies – Municipal Retirement (IMRF) and Other Designated Levies

Although recordkeeping requirements have not changed, please remember there are certain property tax levies that are restricted by Statute and can not be commingled within the school district’s accounting records or used interchangeably. Separate sets of accounts need to be established for each designated purpose. For example, IMRF monies should be clearly segregated from Social Security or Medicare Only. This is necessary even though these monies are compiled into the “Municipal Retirement/Social Security Fund 50” for state reporting purposes.

When completing ISBE’s standardized budgeting and reporting forms (e.g.: Budgets; Financial Reports; &
Statements of Affairs), the format has consistently maintained nine funds to stay within the limit that school districts have been accustomed to using. This treatment does not eliminate the additional documentation required by the school district. The following are examples of restricted levies that need separate sets of accounts for each purpose and identify applicable interest earnings, project status, or bond issue:

- Tort Immunity (Tort Immunity Fund 80)
- Special Education (Fund may vary)
- Summer School (Educational Fund 10)
- Life Safety (Fire Prevention & Safety Fund 90)
- Bond & Interest (Debt Services Fund 30)
- Capital Improvement (Capital Projects Fund 60)
- IMRF/Social Security/Medicare Only (Municipal Retirement/Social Security Fund 50)

To review the Accounting Rules, go to the following link: [http://www.isbe.net/rules/archive/pdfs/100ARK.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/rules/archive/pdfs/100ARK.pdf).

If you have additional questions, please contact the School Business Services Division at 217-785-8779.

### New Lead Law Going Into Effect

The Illinois Department of Public Health Illinois Lead Program is holding meetings around the state to inform the public about the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s new Renovation, Repair and Painting lead law that goes into effect April 22, 2010.

The new law requires contractors, property managers and other paid to replace windows or renovate residential houses, apartment and child-occupied facilities built before 1978 to be certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This new law is intended to protect children from leaded dust that may result from disturbing lead-based paint.

Common activities like sanding, cutting and demolition can create lead hazards that can be harmful to children and adults. In 2008, more than 5,000 Illinois children had elevated blood lead levels. This new federal law has the potential to significantly decrease childhood lead poisoning.

For more information about the meetings, contact the Illinois Lead Program at 217-782-3517.

### Nutrition

**Changes Announced for Criteria for HealthierUS School Challenge**

Now is the time to take the HealthierUS School Challenge! Why? Because the U.S. Department of Agriculture has modified the criteria and is offering financial incentives!

The newly announced financial incentives are $2,000 for the Gold of Distinction level; $1,500 for the Gold level; $1,000 for the Silver level; and $500 for Bronze recipients. The HealthierUS School Challenge’s Web site ([http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/all_chart.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/all_chart.pdf)) includes a chart that compares the criteria for each of the four levels as well as separate charts for elementary and secondary schools.

A few highlights of the changes include:

- Schools will be certified for four years instead of two years.
- Removed the average daily participation (ADP) requirements for the Bronze level
- Removed the requirement for production records for the Bronze level
- Expanded the program to middle and high schools (since October 2009)
- Eased the ADP requirements for Silver: 60 percent for middle and elementary schools, and 45 percent for high schools
- Eased paperwork requirements for multiple schools in ONE district that implement the SAME menus, competitive foods, school policies, and practices
  - Submit one set of menus, menu worksheets and recipes (substitutions should still be noted)
  - Submit one Competitive Foods worksheet
  - Submit one School Policies and Practices Checklist

### Remaining Meetings:

**Aurora**

9 a.m. to noon (8:30 a.m. continental breakfast)
Aurora Holiday Inn
2424 W. Sullivan Road

**Peoria**

6-9 p.m., Tuesday, March 23, 2010
Holiday Inn Salon A Room
500 Hamilton Blvd.
Remainder of application should be completed by each school, including signature panel.

Presently, Illinois has two Silver level HealthierUS School Challenge recipients, Ridgeview Elementary School from Ridgeview Community Unit School District 19, and Bushnell-Prairie City Elementary School from Bushnell-Prairie City Community Unit School District 170.

### Innovation and Improvement

#### Office of Safe and Drug-Free School Program Offers Listserv


### Educator Certification

#### NASDTEC Annual Conference to be Held in June in Indianapolis

This year’s National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education & Certification conference will be held June 13-16 in Indianapolis.

Featured speakers at the 82nd annual NASDTEC conference include Tom Carroll of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, Julie Ewart from the U.S. Department of Education, Dennis van Roekel of the National Education Association and many more.

Visit http://nasdtec.com for the conference agenda and hotel and registration information. Call 508-380-1202 or e-mail rje@nasdtec.com for additional questions.

### 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