Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

Illinois was not one of the two states - Delaware and Tennessee- chosen to receive a Race to the Top grant. Regardless of the outcome, our state education infrastructure is better off from going through this process. We will begin studying the feedback the reviewers have provided and we intend to submit a new application during the next round of submittals in June.

I want to thank you all for your efforts, comments and participation. The application we have developed is a roadmap for our students’ future and it is one that is unique to our state and reflects the priorities of our educational community. I am committed, as is the Board and many others, to continue down the path we know is the right one to prepare all Illinois students for college and careers.

It was a busy week in the General Assembly last week as members undertook a flurry of activity prior to the start of their two week spring break. I am sure that many of you have heard about legislation (SB 1946) making significant changes to the state’s pension systems, including the Teachers’ Retirement System. Lawmakers introduced and passed the legislation in a matter of hours and, if signed by the Governor, it will have long lasting impacts, not only to the state’s pension obligation but also to the finances of local school districts as teachers may now remain in the classroom some 45 years before retiring.

Essentially, the bill increases the age of retirement to 67, caps the salary at which benefits are calculated at approximately $107,000, discontinues the compounding of cost of living increases and bases benefits on the highest 8 (instead of the current 4) consecutive years of salary of the last 10 years worked.

I know this is a great concern to all of you and I would urge you to work with your statewide stakeholder associations to determine your next steps and further analyze the impacts to you and your districts.

Also, the School Choice Act (SB 2494) passed the Senate this week. This is a pilot program targeting the 49 lowest performing schools in the Chicago Public School system. This would provide vouchers to students to attend private schools within their area. It will impact a little more than 22,000 CPS students and must still pass the House before it could be signed into law.

Finally, at the state Board meeting last week, Board members approved the annual financial profile of school districts. Nearly 67 percent of all districts were in the highest category, financial recognition. The financial watch list, those districts in the lowest category, increased from 2.5 percent to 3.3 percent.

It is important to remember that this is a “point in time” snapshot and we know that the condition of many districts has changed since the end of the reporting period, which was June 30, 2009. ISBE used revised data that takes into account the state’s backlog of bills owed to districts.
I know these are trying times for all of us in education, but I truly believe we are at the beginning of a robust time of improvements for students, teachers and administrators and you should be proud of the work you do every day.

Have a great week!

Chris

Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

- Qualified Zone Academy Bond Program application deadline – April 2
- ARRA jobs and vendor data deadline – April 5
- 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
- Part 24 (Standards for All Illinois Teachers) and new Part 210 (Illinois Hope and Opportunity Pathways through Education Program) – Public comment period ends May 24
- 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
- 2009-10 Teacher Service Record spring data collection period deadline – Aug. 15

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

ARRA Jobs and Vendor Data Due April 5

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs and vendor data for the quarter reporting period ending March 31, 2010, is due at the Illinois State Board of Education on or before April 5, 2010. ARRA jobs and vendor data must be submitted by all local education agencies (LEAs) that have applied for and/or received ARRA funds.

March 31 ARRA data must be reported for the following ARRA programs if your LEA has been awarded or received funds:

- State Fiscal Stabilization Fund – Education (General State Aid) – Revenue Code 4850
- State Fiscal Stabilization Fund – Other Government Services (Early Childhood) – Revenue Code 4875
- Title I Low Income – Revenue Code 4851
- Title I Low Income Neglected – Revenue Code 4852
- Title I Low Income Delinquent – Revenue Code 4853
- IDEA Part B Preschool – Revenue Code – 4856
- IDEA Part B Flow Through – Revenue Code 4857
- Title II D Enhancing Education Through Technology – Revenue Code 4861
- McKinney Vento Homeless Education – Revenue Code 4862

If there are questions on ARRA jobs and vendor reporting, please contact the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services at 217-782-5256.

March 12 ARRA Reporting Webinar – Questions and Answers Available


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, Adobe and Power Point versions of the presentation, as well as answers to questions raised by Webinar participants, can be accessed at
http://www.isbe.net/arra/html/webinar.htm. For those who 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.

**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 cannot 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.

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

School Business Services

School Maintenance and School Energy Efficiency Project Grant Programs

The FY2010 Capital Bill provided $100 million for School Maintenance Project Grants. The Maintenance Grants are a dollar for dollar state matching grant program providing up to $50,000 for small repair and maintenance projects. All school districts, charter schools, cooperative high schools, vocational centers or public university laboratory schools are eligible. The grants are planned to be distributed over the next three fiscal years. The applications will be available at the ISBE Web site once the funds are released.

The FY2010 Capital Bill provided $50 million for School Energy Efficiency Project Grants. The Energy Efficiency Grants are a dollar for dollar state matching grant program providing up to $250,000 for energy efficiency projects in schools. All school districts, charter schools, cooperative high schools, vocational centers or public university laboratory schools are eligible. The grants are planned to be distributed over the next three fiscal years for insulation, windows, doors, energy controls, lighting, energy recovery, energy conservation, alternative energy systems and other projects designed to reduce energy consumption. The applications will be available at the ISBE Web site once the funds are released.

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.

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

Special Education Services

FAQs About Special Education Eligibility and Entitlement Procedures and Criteria Within a RtI Framework


The FAQ provides additional detail and examples connected to information in the ISBE Guidance Document. The questions contained in the FAQ were developed, in part, based on questions and issues raised by stakeholder groups and individuals during the review of the initial draft of the Guidance Document. The responses to the questions draw on current research and effective practices in implementing a three-tiered model of instruction, assessment and intervention, as well as the federal regulations and state rules for special education.
It is important to note that the FAQ is intended to provide technical assistance and should not be a substitute for appropriate professional and/or legal advice on specific matters.

As shared previously, a series of training events will be conducted to support implementation of the process outlined in the Guidance Document. The training materials are under development, and we anticipate that training will begin in May. Further details, including dates and locations, will be forthcoming. Questions about the FAQ or the Guidance Document can be directed to Special Education Services at 217-782-5589.

Data Analysis and Progress Reporting

**2009-10 Teacher Service Record – Spring Data Collection Period**

The 2009-10 Teacher Service Record will open Thursday, April 1, for districts and other reporting entities to provide data on all full- and part-time employees who worked at any time during the 2009-10 school year in a position that requires a teaching, administrative or school service personnel certificate issued by the Illinois State Board of Education. This includes any retiree who worked in a position requiring certification, performing duties other than as a substitute.

This spring data collection period is for educator updates (additions and changes since the fall data collection period) and for 2009-10 salary submissions. The deadline for submitting these data is Aug. 15, 2010.

Questions about completing the Teacher Service Record can be directed to the ISBE Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division at tsr@isbe.net or 217-782-3950.

**2010 Bilingual Education Program Delivery Report Available on IWAS**

The 2010 Bilingual Education Program Delivery Report (PDR) is available on IWAS. Each school district or other local education agency operating a school or program that had students with limited English proficiency (LEP) enrolled during the 2009-10 school year is required to submit this report to ISBE, per 23 Illinois Administrative Code 228.40(c)(2). The deadline for submitting the report is July 30, 2010. The user guide for electronic submission of the report on IWAS is available at ftp://help.isbe.net/webapps/BilEdPgmDelRpt/pdf/PDR User Guide.pdf.

Questions about using the Bilingual Education PDR system on IWAS should be referred to the ISBE Help Desk at 217-558-3600. Questions about completing the Bilingual Education PDR should be referred to Lilibeth Q. Gumia in the Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division at 217-782-3950 or lgumia@isbe.net.

Rules and Waivers

**Invitation to Comment on Rules**

Two rulemakings recently reviewed by the Illinois State Board of Education are available for public comment. The proposals have been posted on the agency’s Web site at http://www.isbe.net/rules; choose “Proposed Rules and Amendments.” Please submit any comments or suggestions to rules@isbe.net.

**Part 24 (Standards for All Illinois Teachers)**

Updates general standards for teachers and incorporates separate standards for language arts and technology into the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards to take effect July 1, 2012.

*Deadline for Public Comment: May 24*

**New Part 210 (Illinois Hope and Opportunity Pathways through Education Program)**

As required by P.A. 96-106, effective July 30, 2009, establishes criteria for approval of these programs intended to re-enroll dropouts in programs that will lead to the students’ receipt of a high school diploma from their school district of residence; sets forth the application process for seeking competitive funding under the incentive grants initiative.

*Deadline for Public Comment: May 24*

Innovation and Improvement

**Center Offers Webinars for Districts**

The Center on Innovation and Improvement has created several Webinars that aim to help districts learn more about the Intervention models for School Improvement 1003(g) and Race to the Top.

The Webinars are available at http://www.centerii.org/webinars/. For more information, contact Marilyn Murphy at mmurphy@centerii.org or Sam Redding at sredding@centerii.org.
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 Kapsala 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.

Nutrition

Culinary Courses Help Schools Meet School Meal Recommendations

The National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) developed 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 series will help school foodservice staff initiate food production and culinary techniques that incorporate principles of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans into the preparation of school meals.

Illinois school food service staff that complete the Culinary Techniques series are eligible to receive a stipend of $75 and a set of Dietary Guidelines posters for their cafeteria through June 30, 2010. The stipends were made available by a USDA Team Nutrition Training grant. If you don’t have computer access, log onto the course at your local library.

The launch of the NFSMI culinary courses is particularly timely as the Institute of Medicine (IOM) recently released recommendations for healthy school meals. The IOM’s School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children report provides recommendations for revising the standards and requirements for the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. USDA will use the recommendations to draft proposed rules for revising these programs.

Go to [http://KidsEatWell.org](http://KidsEatWell.org) for details about the Culinary Techniques courses, the reimbursement stipend and posters.

### 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
  - 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.

### Professional Development Program on Teaching Chinese Language

The Cultural Division of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Chicago announced a new program for teachers interested in training to teach the Chinese language.

The two-week program will be held this summer in Taiwan, where participating teachers will receive methodological and theoretical advanced instruction for K-12 level Mandarin Chinese pedagogy. Professional development includes curriculum and oral training, Chinese teaching pedagogy, classroom visits, cultural introductions and a conference promoting Chinese language learning.

Tuition, accommodations, textbooks and food and transportation is Taiwan is covered by the Ministry of Education. But teachers are responsible for their own airfare.

For more information, including how to receive an application, e-mail [info@edutw.org](mailto:info@edutw.org) or call 312-616-0805. The deadline to apply is April 10.
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