Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

It was great to see so many of you last week at the Illinois Association of School Administrators annual conference in Springfield. Congratulations to Ed Rafferty of Schaumburg School District 54 who was named Superintendent of the Year.

Thank you to Rick Schmitt and Brent Clark and your staff for putting on such a wonderful event for our colleagues. It is an opportunity to receive professional development and forge those relationships that are so necessary to succeed in our profession.

I want to also thank the IASA for presenting me with the IASA Exemplary Service to Education Award. I am truly honored to receive and appreciate this recognition, but any accolades should go to all of you in the field for everything you do for our students.

This week, as we move forward with our Phase II application for “Race to the Top,” we will be making the Memorandum of Understanding available to you to review. I appreciate all of you who have provided us with feedback regarding “Race to the Top” over the past couple of weeks, both in person and via our survey. We’ve been listening and reworking the application to address concerns.

We will build off of the District Improvement Plans so that you will not have to submit a separate scope of work. We know that many of you had concerns about the STEM learning exchanges and we are reworking the budget to include funding for high schools that would undertake that work. We’ve adjusted the schedule to provide you with as much time as we possibly could, allowing you to take the MOU to your Board without the need for a special meeting.

I have heard some of you say that the funding that you would receive would not be worth the work required under “Race to the Top.” Many of the reforms proposed in the MOU and in our application, though, are paths ISBE and you have already been heading down. This additional funding will allow the state to put mechanisms in place so that we all can accelerate the work we’ve already begun.

Illinois is one of the states leading the Common Core State Standards Initiative and if we receive the full $400 million, it will allow the state to provide professional development for teachers to implement the new state standards. It will also allow us to improve student growth measures and better align standards and assessments from preschool through post-secondary education.

Funding from the “Race to the Top” will be used to build a statewide technology infrastructure that will give you real-time access to student performance data. It will allow us to provide teachers with professional development on using student growth data in their classrooms and customizing instruction. This infrastructure will help to drive down your
Information Technology costs through cloud computing. The Longitudinal Data System will reduce and simplify district reporting to the state.

Next Tuesday, we will host a Webinar to provide you with an overview and take your questions on “Race to the Top.” You can register for that at https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/415844265. On Tuesday, May 4, we will host a Webinar to go into more detail and provide a demonstration of the Learning Performance Management system, something that will be available to all schools as part of the statewide infrastructure we will build if we receive a “Race to the Top” grant.

Our reviewers noted that only 42 percent of our districts signed on during Phase I. Please take a second look at the MOU and consider joining us in Phase II.

Chris.

Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

- **Illinois Reading First program Webinar** – April 20
- **Gifted Advisory Council meeting** – (10 a.m. in the Board Conference Room) April 21
- **School Food Service Equipment Grant application deadline** – April 23
- **Bidders’ Conference for Illinois Learn and Serve America Grant RFP** – April 30
- **Title I Status Survey deadline** – May 3
- **Illinois School Wellness From A to Z Conference** – May 4
- **School Safety Conference in Schiller Park** – May 5 (Registration deadline May 1)
- **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
- **FY 2011 Regional Safe Schools Program application deadline** – May 24
- **2009-10 Eye Examination Data Collection deadline** – June 30
- **2010 Bilingual Education Program Delivery Report deadline** – July 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

Funding and Disbursement Services

**Filing for 2009-10 Final Public School Calendars Begins Soon**

The ability to file the 2009-10 Final Public School Calendar will be available May 1, 2010, via IWAS. Please complete and transmit the Final Calendar to the appropriate Regional Superintendent by the last day of school. **REMINDER:** The document type Final Calendar must be submitted even if the district has submitted a document type Amended Calendar previously. A Final Public School Calendar must be transmitted and approved prior to filing the 2009-10 claims for General State Aid, Pupil Transportation and 18-3 Regular Education Orphanage.

HELPFUL HINT: The unused proposed emergency days (XED) that are coded at the end of the school calendar 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, you can contact the office of your Regional Superintendent or Marj Beck of the Illinois State Board of Education at mbeck@isbe.net or 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: 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.
Curriculum and Instruction

Illinois Reading First Webinar Scheduled for April 20

The Illinois Reading First program will present a Webinar titled “Using Assessment to Inform Instruction in Reading First Schools” from 2-3:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 20, 2010. This Webinar is a free Professional Development workshop focusing on data analysis and utilization for Illinois Reading First K-3 teachers, coaches and administrators. (Non-RF schools’ K-3 staff may also register to participate, as space permits.)

To register for the Webinar, visit https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/805139505. For more information please contact Geri Marion, Reading First Supervisor, at gmarion@isbe.net or 217-557-7323.

Bidders’ Conference for Illinois Learn and Serve America Grant RFP Coming Up

The Bidders’ Conference for Illinois Learn and Serve America Grant RFP will be held at 9 a.m. CDT Friday, April 30, 2010. The bidders’ conference will review items that writers need to include in the proposal for FY11. Participants will need to have a copy of the RFP as well as a copy of the RFP attachments when participating in the conference.

Space is limited. Reserve your Webinar seat now at https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/480244217. After registering you will receive a confirmation e-mail containing information about joining the Webinar.

Career and Technical Education

Grants for Gateway to Technology and Pathway to Engineering Programs

The Kern Family Foundation has announced the opening of competition for grants to implement Project Lead the Way’s Pathway to Engineering and Gateway to Technology programs.

Detailed grant information, applications and instructions are available at http://www.kern-pltw-application.org. The deadline is Nov. 5.

Project Lead the Way (http://www.pltw.org) is a not-for-profit organization that promotes pre-engineering courses for middle and high school students to build career opportunities in a field.

Nutrition

School Food Service Equipment Grant Application Now Available

The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has awarded a one-time appropriation to Illinois of $902,953.00 for equipment assistance to eligible school food authorities (SFA).

Funds will be distributed via a competitive grant to SFAs who participate in the National School Lunch Program and did not receive an FY09 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Equipment Grant. An SFA is ineligible to apply if even one of its sites received ARRA equipment funding. Sites for which funds are sought must have at least 50 percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals. Applications are due April 23, 2010. Minimum awards of $500 will be made starting May 7, 2010, and funds must be expended by Aug. 31, 2010.

To apply, go to http://www.isbe.net/nutrition and under “What’s New,” click on “FY10 NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant Application.” For questions, contact the Nutrition Programs Division at 800-545-7892.

Illinois School Wellness From A to Z Conference Coming Up

The third annual Illinois School Wellness From A to Z Conference at the Decatur Conference Center is just
around the corner. Attend the conference on May 4 to learn about the latest school wellness strategies and resources.

Register by April 19 to take advantage of the early bird rate of $35 for adults and $25 for students. Go to http://www.actionforhealthykids.org, click on the “In Your State” tab and select Illinois to find more information about the conference.

The conference is geared for wellness team planners, administrators, educators, school food service staff, nurses and student advocates. The registration fee includes meals, conference materials, opportunity to visit the exhibits and expert presentations.

The conference is presented jointly by the Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois Action for Healthy Kids Team to fulfill Public Act 094-0190, House Bill 1541 School Health Recognition Program.

No Child Left Behind

Strengthening No Child Left Behind: Early Notification to Parents Regarding Public School Choice

ISBE is encouraging school districts with schools in Federal status to notify parents about public school choice before the districts receive their Adequate Yearly Progress determinations. 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) and supplemental educational services (SES). The supplemental regulations require the 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 reasonable in advance but no later than 14 days before the start of the school year; and

- Notify parents of eligible children of the availability of SES in a clear and concise communication that obviously distinguishes SES from other school-related information the parents receive.

School districts with Title I schools in school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that can not exit status this year can implement Early Notification. Doing so will insure that school districts meet the 14-day notification requirement.

The guidance document for Early Notification, with links to U. S. Department of Education documents, can be found at the following ISBE Web site: http://www.isbe.net/assessment/html/choice.htm.

Assessment

PSAE Testing Dates for Spring 2011

PSAE testing dates have been established and are posted at http://www.isbe.net/assessment/psae.htm. Please note that for 2011, testing will still occur on Wednesday and Thursday. The projected move to a Tuesday/Wednesday schedule will not occur until 2012.

2011 PSAE Dates

- Initial Standard-Time Testing: Wednesday, April 27 and Thursday, April 28, 2011
- Accommodations Testing Window: Wednesday, April 27 until Thursday, May 12, 2011

Innovation and Improvement

Applications for Regional Safe Schools Program Available; Deadline May 24

The Illinois State Board of Education has released the application for FY 2011 Regional Safe Schools Program (RSSP), which offers alternative education to expulsion eligible or multiple suspended students in grades 6-12.

Eligible applicants are identified in Article 13A of the School Code. They are Regional Offices of Education, Intermediate Service Centers and Chicago Public Schools. The application can be found at http://www.isbe.net/grants/html/regional_safe_schools.htm.

The deadline for submission to ISBE is May 24, 2010. For more information, contact Sally Veatch, Innovation and Improvement division at sveatch@isbe.net or 217-524-4832.

Gifted Advisory Council Meeting Slated

The Gifted Advisory Council will meet from 10 a.m. to noon April 21, 2010. The meeting will be held in the
Board Conference Room. The agenda for the meeting can be found at [http://www.isbe.net/grants/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/grants/default.htm) under statewide gifted activities.

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**Special Education Services**

**Upcoming FACTS Race and Ethnicity Reporting Changes: 2010-11 School Year**

The U.S. Department of Education has issued new guidance on the collection and reporting of race and ethnicity data for public school students and staff. The federal government developed the new standards in order to provide a more accurate picture of the nation’s racial and ethnic diversity. The new data collection process will require individuals to indicate whether they are Hispanic and also one or more race(s). The new data reporting process will require districts to include individuals in one of seven mutually exclusive reporting categories based on their responses. The Illinois State Board of Education will implement the new standards starting with data to be reported for the 2010-11 school year. The changes will affect all programs that collect and report race and ethnicity data.

ISBE is working with Harrisburg Project to implement the new race and ethnicity standards for the 2010-11 school year in FACTS. Clients will receive warnings if the new race/ethnicity reporting categories are not used in the October 2010 FACTS transmission. However these warnings will not prohibit transmission. FACTS records that do not use the new race/ethnicity reporting categories in the December 2010 transmission will result in errors, prohibiting successful data submission.

In order to provide additional time to transition to the new federal reporting requirements, Harrisburg Project is updating the current version of iePoint>2010 to allow clients to begin reporting the new race/ethnicity codes in Data2011 after Start New Year has been performed. This update will be available in mid-April.

Your attention to detail throughout this transition is critical since race/ethnicity data are used in many of the data analysis, reporting and progress monitoring requirements of IDEA 2004. To this end, individuals reporting race/ethnicity data to FACTS need to keep in mind the following principles:

- Race/ethnicity reporting in FACTS and SIS must be based upon responses to a required two-part question, as defined in the new federal guidance.
- Districts are required to collect race/ethnicity data using the two-part question, and parents must provide these responses for elementary and secondary school students.
- Districts must use the data collected from a student’s parent(s) to in turn report the student’s race/ethnicity to ISBE through SIS and FACTS in one of the seven mutually exclusive race/ethnicity reporting categories.
- Further information regarding each district’s responsibility regarding race/ethnicity data collection vs. reporting can be found in the resources available at [http://www.isbe.net/research/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/research/default.htm).
- Clients reporting race/ethnicity data in FACTS need to ensure consistency in reporting between the FACTS and SIS systems.
  - Districts and cooperatives should utilize the SIS “Student Demographics” report to ensure consistent reporting between systems.
  - To assist in the transition to the new race/ethnicity data standards, Harrisburg Project and ISBE will make an optional FACTS/SIS matching process available to clients, which will match FACTS student records to SIS student records and update the race/ethnicity data in iePoint>2011, as appropriate. This optional matching process will be available after the new race/ethnicity categories are reported in SIS for the 2010-11 school year (Oct. 15, 2010, is the deadline by which districts must enroll in SIS all students enrolled the district as of the last school day in September). Clients choosing to take advantage of this matching process will have an opportunity to review the matched records to ensure the validity and reliability of these matches prior to the December 2010 FACTS transmission.
  - While the match between the FACTS and SIS systems is not fully congruent at this time, ISBE continues to work on the full integration of these systems and
appreciates the effort made by districts and cooperatives to ensure consistent reporting.

Social Emotional Learning Survey
The Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership are seeking information from as many educators as possible to assist in guiding state and local efforts to support Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programming by conducting a survey.

Participation in this survey is voluntary. We ask that you provide the Survey Monkey link to your district teachers and staff so that those interested in completing the survey may do so. The survey will be available from April 12, 2010, through May 14, 2010, at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NW8BBRB.

If you have any questions regarding the content of the survey, please contact Michele Carmichael in the Special Education Services division at mcarmich@isbe.net or via phone at 217-782-5589.

Thank you in advance for participating in this survey.

Professional Development
Best Practices Day at Conference on Biotechnology Education Coming Up
The Biotechnology Institute’s annual Best Practices Day at the Conference on Biotechnology Education is set for May 2 at Roosevelt University in Chicago.

Educators at middle schools and high schools who are actively engaged in teaching students life science and biotechnology are eligible. Registration cost is $25.

The program highlights exemplary biotechnology education curriculum, labs and programs. It will include panels on leading issues in biotechnology presented by renowned scientists.

For more information and to register, visit http://www.biotechinstitute.org/programs/bestpractices.html or call Rowena Douglas at 703-248-8681 or e-mail rdouglas@biotechinstitute.org.

Employment Opportunities
Illinois Association of School Administrators Redesigns Job Bank

Job seekers can look for openings throughout the state, using multiple search options such as grade level, county and position types. The site allows users to maintain profiles and resumes online. For employers, some of the new features include templates for job postings and the ability to save favorite candidates.

To read more about the redesign and new features of the job bank, visit http://www.iasaedu.org.

For assistance with the job bank site, e-mail jobbank@iasaedu.org or call 217-753-2213.

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