Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

We have been told by the Comptroller’s Office they expect the backlog of bills from FY 2010 to be paid prior to the end of the calendar year. The State of Illinois sold bonds last week that will be paid off by future tobacco settlement funds. The state will receive $1.5 billion from the sale of the bonds and will use those funds to pay down the more than $1 billion it still owes from FY 2010.

Currently, schools are owed $368 million from FY 2010 and $655 million in FY 2011. Illinois is one of several states that have chosen to use their annual tobacco settlement payments to pay current expenses by selling bonds. This news means that districts will not have to go to the court of claims to receive FY 2010 funds the state owes them.

This week I also want to discuss changes to the Illinois Certification Test of Basic Skills recently approved by the State Board of Education for all students who want to enter higher education teacher preparation programs. It only makes sense that as we move to new, more rigorous standards for students and update our teacher and principal preparation programs that we would also be raising the bar for those wanting to enter our profession.

We know many students graduating from high school today require substantial remediation once they enter college. We want to ensure that the prospective candidates entering teacher prep programs have the necessary skills to succeed. The Basic Skills test provides students with a benchmark they can use to measure their progress and preparedness, which in some cases will allow them to save time and money by not beginning a course of study for which they haven’t been properly prepared.

The State Teacher Certification Board recommended, and the State Board approved, raising the score needed to pass the basic skills test. In addition, the Certification Board recommended breaking it into smaller subject areas to better inform candidates and their schools about their strengths and weaknesses. A candidate who passes one subject area but fails another will only be required to test again in the subject area they have failed. Breaking these tests into smaller subject areas and allowing a candidate to “bank” those that they have passed allows them the opportunity to improve their skills in the areas in which they have a weakness.

Last week, members of the General Assembly held a subject matter hearing to examine the changes to the basic skills test. There are some who are advocating that we roll back the increased rigor of this test or eliminate basic skills requirements altogether. This is an unquestionably bad idea. Lowering our standards at anytime is a bad idea, but to do so in this climate of change is unfathomable.

We have seen a drop in the number of candidates passing the test, but that is to be expected anytime there is change and the expectations are raised. We did see some improvements during the second administration of the test and I do believe that our higher education partners will work with their students to improve those passing rates as they become more accustomed to the new standards.
Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

- **Part 25 (Certification)** – Public comment period ends Dec. 6
- **Last day for filing the Annual Statement of Affairs (ISBE form 50-37) to ISBE** – Dec. 15
- **2010-11 Teacher Service Record data deadline** – Dec. 15
- **National School Lunch and National School Breakfast verification summary report submission deadline** – Dec. 15
- **Part 228 (Transitional Bilingual Education), Part 235 (Early Childhood Block Grant), and Part 575 (School Technology Program)** – Public comment period ends Dec. 27
- **2010-2011 Nonpublic Registration, Enrollment, and Staff Report deadline** – Dec. 31
- **Local policy based on the Guidelines for Managing Life-Threatening Food Allergies implementation deadline** – Jan. 1
- **Emancipation Proclamation Week** – Jan. 3-9
- **Postmark deadline for waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in Spring 2011** – Jan. 7
- **HealthierUS School Challenge (HUSSC) mini-grant application deadline (www.kidseatwell.org)** – Jan. 14
- **2010-11 Teacher Salary Study Form deadline** – Feb. 1
- **2010-11 Noncertified Staff Salary Study deadline** – Feb. 1
- **Illinois New Teacher Collaborative’s Induction and Mentoring Conference in Springfield** – March 1-2
- **Illinois Young Authors’ Conference** – May 21
- **2010-11 Eye Examination Data Collection deadline** – June 30

Funding and Disbursement Services

**Dec. 31, 2010 ARRA Jobs and Vendor Data Due Jan. 5, 2011**

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs and vendor data for the reporting quarter ending Dec. 31, 2010, is due at the Illinois State Board of Education on or before Wednesday Jan. 5, 2011, for all local education agencies (LEAs) that are operating a project in FY 2011 with ARRA funds. ARRA data reporting includes two primary elements: the number of jobs funded in the reporting quarter with ARRA dollars and a single payment made to a vendor, using ARRA dollars, in the amount of $25,000 or more. All ARRA data must be reported via the ARRA Reporting System in IWAS. Please refer to the ARRA Reporting Instructions at [http://www.isbe.net/arra/pdf/arra_reporting_inst.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/arra/pdf/arra_reporting_inst.pdf) for detailed reporting procedures.

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

- **Title I Low Income – Revenue Code 4851**
- **Title I Low Income Neglected – Revenue Code 4852**
- **Title I Low Income Delinquent – Revenue Code 4853**
- **Title I School Improvement – Revenue Code 4854**
- **Title I School Improvement (1003g) – Revenue Code 4855**
- **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**
- **Education Jobs Fund Program – Revenue Code 4880 (If compensation and/or benefits have been or will be requested for employees from October through December)**

If you have any questions regarding this information please contact Funding and Disbursement Services at 217-782-5256.

EDUCATION JOBS ARRA REPORTING REMINDER; PLEASE READ CAREFULLY: If the
LEA has submitted or plans to submit an expenditure report requesting reimbursement of qualifying expenditures (i.e. compensation and benefit costs) between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, the full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs and vendor data must be reported for the period ending Dec. 31 even if an expenditure report for reimbursement has yet to be filed for that reporting quarter. For example, if the LEA is going to submit in mid-January an Ed Jobs expenditure report requesting reimbursement of compensation and benefits expended during the reporting quarter ending Dec. 31, the LEA is required to report FTE jobs and vendor data to ISBE on or before the required ARRA reporting deadline of Jan. 5 even though the expenditure report has not yet been submitted by the LEA. This is true for any subsequent quarter.

Further, once the LEA begins to request Ed Jobs expenditure reimbursement they are obligated to report ARRA FTE jobs and vendor data via the ARRA Reporting System every subsequent quarter until all Ed Jobs Funds have been requested and reported, even if no expenditure reports for reimbursement have been submitted in the current ARRA reporting quarter. For example, if the LEA requested reimbursement and reported ARRA data through Sept. 30 but has no Ed Jobs expenditures between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, they must still submit ARRA FTE jobs and vendor data for the Dec. 31 ARRA reporting quarter that reflects that 0 FTE jobs or vendor payments were funded with Ed Jobs dollars during the reporting quarter. Again, the LEA must continue to submit ARRA data reports for each reporting quarter, beginning with the quarter in which the compensation funding start date occurs until all Ed Jobs funds have been requested and reported.

If you have further questions or concerns with the Ed Jobs program please contact Jim Mathes at jmathes@isbe.net or Marj Beck at mbeck@isbe.net. Both can be reached by telephone at 217-782-5256.

**Assessment**

**Illinois Alternative Assessment Teacher and Coordinator Webinar Training Set**

The Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA) Teacher and Coordinator Webinar Training schedule is as follows: 2-3:30 p.m. Dec. 16 and 8:30-10 a.m. Dec. 17. If you are unable to attend one of the December webinars, another session will be scheduled in January. Registration will begin Dec. 8 and will be posted at http://www.isbe.net/assessment/iaa.htm.

The IAA Teacher and Coordinator Webinar Training will provide necessary information to begin preparing for the 2011 IAA. Veteran teachers and coordinators who are familiar with the assessment from last year will get up-to-date information on a few changes that have been made since 2010. New teachers and coordinators who did not administer the IAA last year will receive training on all aspects of the IAA. This session will review Calendar of Events, Test Preparation, Task Administration, Online Scoring and Materials Management.

For more information, contact Jessica Dare at jdare@isbe.net or 217-782-4823.

**Confirmations Sent for Requested Changes to ISAT, ACCESS Test Windows**

The application deadline to request changes in the test windows for ISAT and ACCESS was Dec. 1, 2010, and Oct. 29, 2010, respectively. ISBE provided signed confirmations to districts via fax. Please contact Daniel Brown, Assessment Division Supervisor, at 217-782-4823 if you have questions regarding your request(s).

**Curriculum and Instruction**

**Grant Funding for Arts and Foreign Language Programs Approved for FY11**

The Illinois State Board of Education is pleased to announce that grant funding for Arts and Foreign Language Programs has been approved for FY 2011.

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**Emancipation Proclamation Week is to be observed throughout the state of Illinois as a week for holding appropriate educational and celebratory events and observances in the public schools and elsewhere. Read the full text of the public act at http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/96/pdf/096-1238.pdf.**
This competitive grant program provides funding for planning or implementation of arts or foreign language curricula and programs in public school districts throughout the state.

Districts may apply for either fine and performing arts funding or foreign language funding.

The Planning Grant provides one year of funding for initiating a strategic planning process in the district to develop, improve, or expand arts or foreign language programs.

The Implementation Grant provides up to three years of renewable funding for salaries, professional development, curricular materials, classroom technology and supplies, and related student field trips.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) for both projects has been released. Applications are due on or before Jan. 7, 2011. Full guidelines and materials can be found at [http://isbe.net/curriculum/html/arts_fl.htm](http://isbe.net/curriculum/html/arts_fl.htm). Interactive webinars providing application information will be conducted on Dec. 7 (Planning Grant) and Dec. 8 (Implementation Grant). Both webinars will be held at 1 p.m., and registration information can be found at the website listed above. The information presented during these webinars will continue to be posted at the website until the RFP due date.

For more information, contact Christina Steelman at csteelma@isbe.net or 217-557-7323.

**Children’s Low-cost Laptop Program Request for Proposal Available Online**

The Curriculum and Instruction Division has published a request for proposal (RFP) entitled “Children’s Low-cost Laptop Program” located on the Curriculum and Instruction webpage at [http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/default.htm).

The Children’s Low-cost Laptop Act [105 ILCS 65/5] authorizes a two-year pilot program designed to provide a low-cost laptop computer to each student, teacher and relevant administrator. Proposed programs must focus on the pedagogical shift for teachers and students in their daily teaching and learning practices. The RFP outlines specific eligibility criteria.

For additional information, please contact Kathleen Barnhart at kbarnhar@isbe.net.

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**Department of Public Health**

**REALITY Illinois Encourages Teens to Take a Stand Against Tobacco**

The Illinois Department of Public Health is providing funding to create, maintain and sustain REALITY Illinois Chapters that include a teen advisory panel, consisting of high school students, to plan and to implement tobacco prevention and control projects, events and initiatives in the county/jurisdiction.

Each chapter is to strengthen youth community-based efforts consistent with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs. REALITY Illinois encourages teens to take a stand against tobacco use by educating their peers and others about the adverse health consequences of tobacco use and to communicate with decision-makers on youth-focused tobacco prevention and control.

This grant is open to any organization, such as a local health department, school or community-based organization. The deadline for submitting applications is 5 p.m. Dec. 17, 2010. For more information, go to [http://www.idph.state.il.us/fundop.htm](http://www.idph.state.il.us/fundop.htm).

**Classroom Opportunities**

**Risk Watch Workshops Take Aim on Helping Prevent Injuries to Youth**

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) and Illinois Risk Watch is offering three free Illinois Risk Watch New Community trainings in 2011 across the state. Risk Watch, a non-profit organization operated by the OSFM and the National Fire Protection Association, aims to fight simple preventable injuries for children pre-k through eighth grade.

The workshops will include curriculum and training on how to use Risk Watch in schools. The curriculum correlates with the Illinois Learning Standards, teaching children how to prevent injury and death while also teaching math, English and other subjects.

The first workshop is scheduled for 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 25, in Mount Vernon. To register, go to [http://www.sfm.illinois.gov/documents/MtVernon11.pdf](http://www.sfm.illinois.gov/documents/MtVernon11.pdf). The second workshop is set for 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, Feb. 18, in Champaign. For more information, visit [http://www.sfm.illinois.gov/documents/Champaign11.pdf](http://www.sfm.illinois.gov/documents/Champaign11.pdf).
Risk Watch training in Chicago Ridge will be held 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 23. Go to http://www.sfm.illinois.gov/documents/Chicagoridge11.pdf.

Space is limited, and is first come, first serve. More information on Risk Watch is available at http://www.sfm.illinois.gov/public/riskwatch.aspx.

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**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 and Panasonic, 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. Winners will receive $5,000 including Panasonic products 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 7 for nominations. For more information and applications, visit [http://npli.org/nsca](http://npli.org/nsca).

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**In the News**

**Weekly News Clips**


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**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](http://www.isbe.net/hr/Default.htm).