Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

I received an e-mail this week from a superintendent who wanted to thank me for the positions that we take with bills before the legislature. She felt that even though she engaged her local legislators, she was a small voice and that as state superintendent I may have a larger voice with members of the General Assembly. I believe the opposite is true. While I probably have a greater amount of access to legislators and can talk to them about overall budget concerns and high policy decisions, local superintendents, principals and teachers can tell them what is most important — what is actually happening in their legislative districts.

Politics is local and our state representatives and senators know that. They know that if they want to continue to serve our state in Springfield, they must listen to constituents back home. You are the folks that elect them and send them to Springfield. You are the ones they must answer to most directly. Regardless of the positions they may hold in the General Assembly, if they don’t reflect their constituency, they won’t be coming back to the legislature.

I have always felt that it’s important we be engaged in the democratic process, and now there is especially too much at stake to sit on the sidelines. That’s why I will be recommending to the Board that we support Senate Bill 3, the administration’s debt restructuring plan. The bill proposes to issue bonds to pay down the state’s debt and repay those bonds over a period of time with 0.5 percent of the income tax increase that was passed earlier this year. Under the plan, the state doesn’t take on new debt, but rather consolidates its current debt and pays off bills that are more than 60 days in arrears.

During the past couple of years the state of Illinois has consistently owed schools more than a billion dollars at any given time. Currently, the backlog is about $1.1 billion for schools and $5.1 billion for all vendors. I don’t think it will come as a surprise to anyone that there have been several times during the past couple of fiscal years when there was a very real possibility that General State Aid would not be paid in a timely manner. In addition, previous short-term borrowing payments that are coming due will now begin to take priority over GSA.

There are many moving parts to the budget process. I am concerned that unless the state is able to move forward with this debt consolidation education funding could be reduced even further than what is currently proposed. Despite the recent income tax increase, our state’s deficit is so large that our cash-flow position will not improve anytime soon. Please research the proposal for debt restructuring (SB 3). I am sure that most statewide education organizations have also taken a position. Once you’ve done this, please reach out to your local members of the General Assembly and let them know your position.

Have a great week.

Chris
Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

- **Part 226 (Special Education)** – Public comment period ends March 16
- **ARRA FTE jobs and vendor data for the reporting quarter ending March 31, 2011, deadline** – April 5
- **Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision) and Part 350 (Secular Textbook Loan)** – Public comment period ends April 18
- **Illinois Young Authors’ Conference** – May 21
- **2010-11 Eye Examination Data Collection deadline** – June 30
- **Prekindergarten At-Risk Program Record and the Preschool For All Program Record deadline** – June 30
- **2010-11 Early Childhood – Parent Evaluations/Demographics survey deadline** – July 15
- **Postmark deadline for waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in Fall 2011** – Aug. 12

**Funding and Disbursement Services**

**March 31, 2011, ARRA Jobs and Vendor Data Due April 5, 2011**

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs and vendor data for the reporting quarter ending March 31, 2011, is due at the Illinois State Board of Education on or before Tuesday April 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.

March 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, CFDA #84.394**, Final Obligation Date Sept. 30, 2011
- **Title I Low Income Neglected – Revenue Code 4852, CFDA #84.394**, Final Obligation Date Sept. 30, 2011
- **Title I Low Income Delinquent – Revenue Code 4853, CFDA #84.394**, Final Obligation Date Sept. 30, 2011
- **Title I School Improvement – Revenue Code 4854, CFDA #84.394**, Final Obligation Date Sept. 30, 2011
- **Title I School Improvement (1003g) – Revenue Code 4855, CFDA #84.388**, Final Obligation Date Sept. 30, 2013
- **IDEA Part B Preschool – Revenue Code 4856, CFDA #84.392**, Final Obligation Date Sept. 30, 2011
- **Title II D Enhancing Education Through Technology – Revenue Code 4861, CFDA #84.386**, Final Obligation Date Sept. 30, 2011
- **McKinney Vento Homeless Education – Revenue Code 4862, CFDA #84.387**, Final Obligation Date Sept. 30, 2011
- **Education Jobs Fund Program – Revenue Code 4880, CFDA #84.410** (If compensation and/or benefits have been or will be requested for employees from January through March), Final Obligation Date Sept. 30, 2012

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

**IMPORTANT:** Please note the obligation expiration dates indicated for each program above. Many ARRA programs are coming to the end for obligating funds this September. If you have not submitted an amendment to fully obligate the ARRA funds due to your LEA, please do so as soon as possible. As a reminder, final amendments for grants with a Project End Date of June 30, 2011, must be received by ISBE no later than May 31, 2011. For grant applications in the electronic Grants Management System (eGMS), the deadline is also referenced on the Program Overview page under “Amendment Due Date.”
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 Jan. 1 and March 31 the full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs and vendor data must be reported for the period ending March 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-April an Ed Jobs expenditure report requesting reimbursement of compensation and benefits expended during the reporting quarter ending March 31, the LEA is required to report FTE jobs and vendor data to ISBE on or before the required ARRA reporting deadline of April 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 Dec. 31 but has no Ed Jobs expenditures between Jan. 1 and March 31, they must still submit ARRA FTE jobs and vendor data for the March 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, contact Jim Mathes at jmathes@isbe.net or Marj Beck at mbeck@isbe.net. Both can be reached by telephone at (217) 782-5256.

Data Analysis and Reporting

2010-11 Prekindergarten Program Record on IWAS for Data Entry

The 2010-11 Pre-K Program Record is available for data entry in IWAS. The deadline for completing this report and submitting it to ISBE is June 30, 2011. All Prekindergarten At-Risk and Preschool for All projects are required by law to submit data for their programs by completing this report.

The instructions for completing the report are available at www.isbe.net/research/pdfs/86-36_iwas_inst.pdf.

If you have questions related to this report, please contact Kalpana Desai in the ISBE Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division at (217) 782-3950 or kkdesai@isbe.net.

Early Childhood – Parent Evaluations/Demographics Survey Now Available

The 2010-11 Early Childhood – Parent Evaluations/Demographics survey is available for data entry in IWAS. The deadline for completing this survey and submitting it to ISBE is July 15, 2011. All Prevention Initiative and Parental Training projects are required by law to complete the Parent Evaluation portion of the survey, and all Prevention Initiative projects are required to also complete the Parent Demographic portion.

The instructions for completing the survey are available at www.isbe.net/research/pdfs/86-56A_60_instructions.pdf. If you have questions related to this survey, contact Kalpana Desai in the ISBE Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division at (217) 782-3950 or kkdesai@isbe.net.

Common Core

Workshops on College and Career Readiness Standards Scheduled

Registration is open for the eight regional workshops on the Common Core College and Career Readiness Standards. All workshops are scheduled from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. For a list of the workshops and more info, visit http://www.isbe.net/common_core/pdf/wkshps_spring_1.pdf. Register at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/IllinoisWorkshopRegistration.

For questions regarding the workshops, contact Brian Durham at brian.durham@illinois.gov or Debbie Meisner-Bertauski at meisner-bertauski@ibhe.org.

Innovation and Improvement

Strengthening NCLB: Early Notification to Parents Regarding Public School Choice

The Illinois State Board of Education is encouraging school districts with Title I schools in school
improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that can not exit status this year to notify parents about public school choice before the districts receive their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations. School districts can implement Early Notification until the AYP Reports are released this summer, possibly in early June. Once AYP status is known, the LEA is required to send an official Public School Choice letter 14 days prior to the start of school. The Early Notification letter and the required parent notification for Public School Choice must be reviewed and approved by ISBE prior to sending. 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/grants/html/choice.htm.

If you need further assistance, contact Evelyn Deimel, Innovation & Improvement Division, at (217) 524-4832 or edeimel@isbe.net.

Preparing for a Parent Survey

The Center for Research in Educational Policy (CREP) at the University of Memphis conducts an annual evaluation on behalf of ISBE of Supplemental Educational Services (SES). As many of you are aware, SES is a component of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act, which provides extra academic assistance for students from low-income families attending designated Title I schools (those in their second year of school improvement, in corrective action, or in restructuring status).

The evaluation conducted by CREP assists ISBE in monitoring the effectiveness of providers approved to offer SES in the state of Illinois. The primary components of the evaluation are: SES student achievement outcomes, SES student attendance and the perceptions of parents with children attending SES. Parental feedback plays a critical role in the evaluation of SES providers. Increasing the level of input from parents, through increasing the survey response rate, will ensure the evaluation contains accurate, reliable information.

In April, schools that are designated SES-eligible will begin receiving boxes containing parent surveys in English and in Spanish and instructions for returning surveys. Please be aware that the SES parent surveys will be arriving in April at SES-eligible schools. Please share this information with your schools and emphasize the importance of the survey distribution and return in an effort to increase the rate of survey submissions.

For questions or additional information regarding the parent survey, contact Beth Murphy, Research Assistant, Center for Research in Educational Policy, The University of Memphis at kmurphy3@memphis.edu or (866) 670-6147. For general SES questions, contact Gary Greene at (312) 814-3989 or ggreene@isbe.net.

Information on the Truants’ Alternative and Optional Education Program RFP

Bidders’ conferences for the Truants’ Alternative and Optional Education Program (TAOEP) Request for Proposal (RFP) will be Friday, March 11, 2011, at the DoubleTree Hotel and Conference Center, Brickyard Rooms V and VI, 10 Brickyard, Bloomington from 9:15 to 11:30 a.m. and through a webinar on Friday, March 18 from 1 to 3 p.m.

To register for the webinar go to https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/799636049. The deadline for submitting the TAOEP RFP is Monday, May 2, 2011. The FY 2012 TAOEP RFP may be found at http://www.isbe.net/grants/html/taoep.htm.

For additional information, contact Sally Veach (sveach@isbe.net) in the Innovation and Improvement Division, 217-524-4832.

Nutrition

Workshops on National School Lunch Programs Coming Up

Developing a School Food Safety Plan: Beginning with the 2005-06 school year, all schools were required to have a food safety plan in place. The Developing a School Food Safety Plan workshop will help schools satisfy this requirement by assisting schools in the revision of a current food safety plan, or in the development of a new food safety plan. Participants will be introduced to the Process Approach, which allows for a more simplified application of food safety procedures. Participants will also receive information on the overall format of a school food safety plan, writing or revising Standard Operating Procedures, and will work with hands-on activities that can be taken back to schools and immediately used in the training of additional food service staff. Workshop check-in will begin at 8:30 a.m., and the workshop will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The following dates and locations are available:

- April 12, Carterville, IEA Building
• April 14, Charleston, Charleston School District Board Office
• April 20, Schaumburg, Courtyard Marriott
• April 21, Crestwood, Eisenhower Cooperative

Space is limited to 40 participants at each site. Register at [http://webprod1.isbe.net/cnscalendar/asp/EventList.asp](http://webprod1.isbe.net/cnscalendar/asp/EventList.asp).

Certification and Verification: Gain a solid understanding of the process for certifying and verifying Household Eligibility Applications for school meal programs. This workshop will include information on use of the Direct Certification option available through the IWAS/ACES website, to directly certify and directly verify Household Eligibility Applications. Workshop check-in will begin at 8:30 a.m., and the workshop will run from 9 a.m. to noon.

The following dates and locations are available:
• July 26, Marion, Williamson County Pavilion
• July 27, Bloomington, Doubletree
• Aug. 10, Schaumburg, Courtyard Marriott
• Aug. 11, Kankakee, Hilton Garden Inn

Space is limited, so please register now at [http://webprod1.isbe.net/cnscalendar/asp/EventList.asp](http://webprod1.isbe.net/cnscalendar/asp/EventList.asp).

Professional Development Opportunities Support School Wellness

Illinois Nutrition Education and Training Program has a number of free webinars available for school staff involved in wellness activities. The webinars can be completed at your leisure and all handouts can be downloaded from the [www.KidsEatWell.org](http://www.KidsEatWell.org) website. Participants can e-mail ilnet@kidsroe.org to obtain continuing education credit. Please include your title and school in the email. These webinars are only available for a short time, so take advantage now.

Go for the Gold: Join the HealthierUS School Challenge – Learn how your school can earn national and state recognition as well as financial incentives in this USDA program. Intended Audience: All school staff involved in implementation of school wellness policies (teachers, school foodservice, administrators, school nurses)

Refuel Afterschool Food and Fitness – Learn how you can incorporate fun, hands-on nutrition and fitness activities in afterschool programs. Intended Audience: Afterschool coordinators and staff

Whole Grains for Healthier School Meals – Learn cost-saving ways to add student-pleasing whole grains to school menus in preparation. The information in this webinar will also help you prepare to meet new nutrition standards for school meals that are on the horizon. Intended Audience: School foodservice directors and staff

Special Education

Office of Special Education Programs Response to Intervention Memorandum

The recent memo from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) that reinforces the fact that local education agencies may not delay or deny a special education evaluation on the basis of a student not having participated in a response to intervention (RtI) process can be located at [http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/OSEP_Rtl_memo11-07_012111.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/OSEP_Rtl_memo11-07_012111.pdf).

The memo’s message is consistent with 23 Illinois Administrative Code 226.130(b), which states “…When a district implements the use of a process of this type [RtI], the district shall not use any child’s participation in the process as the basis for denying a parent’s request for an evaluation.”


Request for Proposals for Illinois IHE Partnership Issued

In October 2010, ISBE received a five-year grant award under the federal State Personnel Development Grant program to implement professional development, technical assistance and coaching activities to support statewide implementation of a multi-tiered system of instruction, intervention and assessment, including response to intervention (RtI). One of the components of this federal grant project is the Illinois Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) Partnership. In order to establish and carry out this component, ISBE has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) titled “State Personnel Development Grant: Illinois IHE Partnership.” As detailed in the RFP (see link below), the Illinois IHE Partnership will work
directly with teams at Illinois IHEs to incorporate critical RtI elements (e.g., differentiated instruction; a multi-tiered system of scientific, research-based instruction, intervention, and assessment) into educator preservice and graduate program curricula and to develop and implement a replicable process for identifying and placing undergraduate and graduate students in field experiences where RtI practices are in place. The IHE Partnership will also have responsibility for the provision of professional development opportunities for IHE faculty.

The RFP, application forms, and other pertinent materials are posted at [http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/grant_info.htm](http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/grant_info.htm). Applications must be received by ISBE no later than April 25, 2011. Questions about the RFP may be submitted to the Online Bidders’ Forum at iherfp@isbe.net (preferred) or by contacting Kathryn Cox at (217) 782-5589.

**State Board Seeks Public Comment on FFY 2011 Draft IDEA Part B Application**

The State Board’s Division of Special Education Services has completed the grant application under Part B of IDEA as amended in 2004. Upon receipt and approval of the required assurances, certifications and information in the application, the state is eligible to receive Part B funds.


The plan includes a checklist of assurances that Illinois has policies and procedures in effect to comply with the requirements of the December 2004 amendments to IDEA. Where Illinois is not in compliance with the IDEA amendments of 2004, a date is given by which Illinois assures that policies and procedures will be in effect. The plan for expenditure of state-level IDEA funds by category is also a component of the state plan.

Written comments will only be accepted March 30 to April 29. To submit a written comment, go to [http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/IDEA_PartB_app11_comment.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/IDEA_PartB_app11_comment.pdf).

In addition, public comments may be e-mailed to partbapplication@isbe.net or mailed to David Andel, Division Administrator, Illinois State Board of Education, Division of Special Education Services, 100 N. First St. – N-253, Springfield, IL 62777-0001.

Interested persons can review a copy of the plan and comment form at the Illinois State Board of Education office at 100 N. First St., Springfield, IL, in the Information Center located on the first floor in 1 South.

**2009-10 District Special Education Profiles Available for Review**

In a continuing effort to disseminate data to local education agencies and to the public, the Illinois State Board of Education will again post District Special Education Profiles on its website. District Special Education Profiles allow the reader to access all special education performance information in one location. The reader has the ability to view a district's progress toward improving results on critical performance indicators in the areas of student performance, educational environment and school completion.

School district superintendents may preview their Profile using their ISBE Web Application Security (IWAS) District Admin user login name at [https://sec1.isbe.net/iwas/](https://sec1.isbe.net/iwas/). The District Special Education Profiles system can be found under the category of Reporting on the IWAS “System Listing” page. The 2009-10 Profiles will be open to the public after the initial district superintendent review period and will be found via the ISBE Special Education Profiles site ([http://webprod1.isbe.net/LEAProfile/Searchcriteria1.asp](http://webprod1.isbe.net/LEAProfile/Searchcriteria1.asp)) after March 14, 2011.

Questions regarding the District Special Education Profiles can be directed to Scott Beever or Gwen Williams at (217) 782-5589.

**Rules and Waivers**

**Notice of Completed Rulemaking**

Please be advised that four sets of amendments recently adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education are now in effect. These rules have been posted on the agency’s website at [http://www.isbe.net/rules](http://www.isbe.net/rules). Please choose “Rules Currently in Effect” and scroll to affected Part.

**Part 25 (Certification):** Makes numerous changes to conform the rules to recently enacted legislation; streamlines the process for institution and educational unit recognition and preparation program approval; and
defines “dispositions” for the purposes of clinical experiences and candidates’ assessments.


**Effective Date:** Feb. 23, 2011

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**Part 228 (Transitional Bilingual Education):** Defines “instructional costs” for the purposes of bilingual education funding under Article 14C of the School Code (see P.A. 96-1170, effective January 1, 2011).

**Affected Section:** 228.50

**Effective Date:** Feb. 17, 2011

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**Part 235 (Early Childhood Block Grant):** Repeals references in the rules to the Prekindergarten Program for Children at Risk of Academic Failure, as per P.A. 96-944 and P.A. 96-948; eliminates funding for separate parental training programs; and increases from 51 percent to 80 percent the proportion of at-risk or low-income students proposed to be served in a Preschool for All program in order for the applicant to receive priority consideration in the proposal review process.

**Affected Sections:** 235.10, 235.20, 235.30, 235.55, 35.60, 235.70, 235.100, 235.110, 235.120, 235.130, 235.140, 235.200, and 235.210

**Effective Date:** Feb. 17, 2011

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**Part 575 (School Technology Program):** Pursuant to P.A. 96-783, effective August 28, 2009, establishes procedures for nonpublic schools recognized under Part 425 of State Board of Education rules to participate in the Technology Revolving Loan program, including the process to be used to recover any loan principal and interest due when a nonpublic school closes or otherwise defaults on a loan agreement.

**Affected Sections:** 575.100, 575.300, 575.500, 575.600, and 575.700

**Effective Date:** Feb. 17, 2011

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### Illinois Student Assistance Commission

#### Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid

Completing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as early as possible is the first step for students and families to obtain postsecondary education financial assistance. The Illinois Student Assistance Commission has set a goal of 800,000 applications for 2011-12, with more than 273,000 already filed.

Go to [http://www.collegeillinois.org/](http://www.collegeillinois.org/) for more information and to fill out the FAFSA. The site includes additional resources, including a list of local financial aid workshops.

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### School Business Services

#### Qualified Zone Academy Bond Program

The Qualified Zone Academy Bond Program (QZAB), created in 1997, has been extended for another year by the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010. 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; but 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 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 workforce, (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 a national allocation of $400 million for calendar year 2011. The Internal Revenue Service notice (IRS: Revenue Procedure 2011-
19) provides that Illinois’ share of these allocations is $14,932 million. 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 State Board of Education will be accepting applications and supporting materials for the calendar year 2011 allocations beginning March 14, 2011, through 4 p.m., April 22, 2011. 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, call Lou Ferratier, School Support Services, at (217) 785-8779.

Assessment

Online Survey Seeks Opinions on ISAT From Principals and Teachers

The Illinois Assessment Consequences Evaluation (IACE) is conducting an online survey to learn about the consequences of ISAT testing from principals’ and teachers’ perspectives. Information gathered from this study may contribute to the development of a long-range strategic plan for the Illinois Assessment and Accountability Program. A randomly selected sample of principals and teachers (grades 3-8) will be receiving an e-mail with the survey link and are strongly encouraged to participate.

All survey results are confidential. For more details, please contact Katherine Ryan, Principal Investigator, at 217-333-7177 or e-mail iace@illinois.edu.

IDFPR

Buying Cosmetic Contact Lenses From Unlicensed Merchants Poses Big Risks

The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation issued a reminder about the dangers of buying colored contact lenses from unlicensed merchants. These cosmetic contact lenses, which are popular among teenagers and young adults, are often purchased at malls and flea markets without proper examinations and proper fittings, leaving consumers at risk for infections and potential blindness. All contact lenses should be purchased from licensed eye-care professionals.

IDFPR has partnered with the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois State Board of Education to get the message out about the risks.

“Some students may see these as harmless, part of a costume or a fashion accessory, but that’s clearly not the case,” said State Superintendent of Education Christopher Koch in IDFPR’s recent news release. “We’ll be working with Public Health and Professional Regulation to get information to school districts so that they can make sure their students understand the risk of serious infection that these can pose.”

To read IDFPR’s entire press release, go to http://www.idfpr.com/NEWSRLS/2011/03072011ContactLens.asp. Illinois residents are encouraged to notify state officials if they see lenses for sale at retail outlets that do not require a prescription from a licensed eye-care professional. Consumers can file complaints at http://www.idfpr.com or by calling IDFPR’s consumer hot line number at (800) 280-4149.

Illinois House of Representatives

Resolution Aims to Spread Message About the Dangers of Ice-Covered Water

On March 2, the Illinois House of Representatives passed a resolution to warn people about the dangers of ice-covered water. The resolution promotes Project SKiPPeR, which stresses those who fall in the ice to “stay calm, kick like a swimmer, aim for ice edge, prop arms onto ice opening, pull yourself up onto ice, exit the water, roll away.”

According to the resolution, Project SKiPPeR was created after Kathy Kohler Baxmeyer, her son, Kadin, and Kadin’s best friend, Austin, all drowned on Feb. 19, 2010, after ice gave way on a frozen pond. Baxmeyer died trying to save the two boys. The educational program will go into schools to teach children about the dangers of ice-covered water. Read the resolution at http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/97/HR/PDF/09700HR020lv.pdf.

U.S. Department of Education

Resources on School Attendance for Children of Service Men and Women

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently distributed a letter to superintendents about school attendance and children of service men and women. Citing concerns
about finding balance between requests for extended absence and educational outcomes, Secretary Duncan offered several examples of districts that have developed successful ways to respond to the needs of military families without adversely affecting academic performance or accountability ratings.

Of course, the best place to start is by reviewing state laws and regulations relating to attendance policies. While state laws and policies may define the parameters of policies on deployment-related absences, local educational agencies (LEAs) are generally responsible for the specific implementation of such policies. A publication released by the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) may be helpful when considering various attendance policies. The publication is available at [http://www.militarychild.org/education/leavepolicies/](http://www.militarychild.org/education/leavepolicies/).

You can read Secretary Duncan’s entire letter at [http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/110301.html](http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/110301.html).

**ILCC**

**Annual Project Sticker Shock Event Fights Underage Drinking**

The Illinois Liquor Control Commission (ILCC) will hold its third annual Project Sticker Shock event this April as part of Alcohol Awareness Month. For the Project Sticker Shock event, stickers, window decals, posters and proof of age signs reminding consumers that providing alcohol to minors is illegal will be posted in liquor establishments across the state.

Community leaders, administrators, teachers, parents and students can help spread the message by placing Project Sticker Shock materials in their community. Visit [http://www.dontbesorry.org](http://www.dontbesorry.org) for more information about the event and free materials. Tips on conducting a successful event in your community are available at [http://www.dontbesorry.org/SSmanual.htm](http://www.dontbesorry.org/SSmanual.htm).

In Illinois, selling or providing alcohol to a minor is subject to a $2,500 fine; a teen may be sentenced to six months in jail if found possessing alcohol in a public place; and a parent or guardian can spend up to a year in jail for allowing underage drinking to occur in their home.

For questions, call (312) 814-4802 or e-mail [ted.penesis@illinois.gov](mailto:ted.penesis@illinois.gov).

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**School Opportunities**

**Apply for the Excellence in Science School Award**

The Illinois Science Teachers Association announces an innovative program to recognize excellence in science teaching and learning at the school building level. The Excellence in Science School Award aims to recognize schools whose teachers of science embody a special creativity and dedication in their work, developing a solid understanding of science for their students. The association invites school teams to apply for the 2011-12 awards, with recognition at the Illinois Science Education Conference, Oct. 28, 2011, at the Tinley Park Conference Center.

The ISTA Excellence in Science award program, designed for school-building level teams throughout Illinois, is built on the concept of “Critical Mass.” Critical Mass describes the contributions of each member of the school’s team, all working toward achieving a common goal associated with success in the sciences for their students. Critical Mass depends on the special talents and skills of each member, realizing that the success of science teaching and learning is a shared, common responsibility of the teachers, administrators and the school’s community. The Excellence in Science Award will celebrate holistically envisioned science programs that are designed and implemented by each of the team members. Such a program is driven by the anticipated success of all students and guided by the professional learning community for science teaching.

Interested schools are encouraged to apply at [http://www.ista-il.org](http://www.ista-il.org). Deadline for applications is June 1, 2011. Selected schools will be notified by July 1, 2011.

For more information, contact Harry Hendrickson, Executive Director, Illinois Science Teachers Association, at [hrhendrickson@comcast.net](mailto:hrhendrickson@comcast.net) or (217) 498-8411 or Tara Bell, Awards Chairperson, at [taracmcdonald@gmail.com](mailto:taracmcdonald@gmail.com).

**Professional Opportunities**

**Program Targets Teachers Who Teach or Want to Teach Chinese**

The Taiwan Ministry of Education is sponsoring an opportunity for teachers to travel to Taiwan during the summer to promote teaching of Chinese. This program is
open to educators who teach or want to teach Chinese. This program will not lead to an endorsement but will provide opportunities for teachers to enhance their understanding of Chinese culture and language and provide opportunities to bring this knowledge back to your classroom. Teachers who want to use this to meet professional development, must have approval prior to traveling. Contact your local LPDC or your Regional Office of Education for more information if you want to count this for professional development.

Participating teachers will receive methodological and theoretical advanced instruction for K-12 level Mandarin Chinese pedagogy, respectively. Professional development includes curriculum and oral training, Chinese teaching pedagogy, classroom visits, cultural introductions, and a conference promoting Chinese language learning. The program is proposed for July 18-29. The deadline to apply is April 10. For more information, contact the Taipai Economic and Cultural Office in Chicago at info@edutw.org or (312) 616-0805.

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