Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

This week we had some great news for our high schools, despite the fact some media reports did not portray it that way. Our senior class of 2011 posted the top composite ACT score for the 10 universal ACT states (i.e., those that test at least 90 percent of their students). I think this is great news and says a lot about the excellent work that many of our high schools are doing.

Our composite score of 20.9 continues our state’s trend of long-term incremental gains since we began testing all students using the ACT as part of the Prairie State Achievement Exam in 2001. There was an initial drop, which took us below the national average when we made the switch and widened our testing pool to more diverse students, not just those already identified as college-bound. Since then, we have made steady gains. In fact, over the past five years, the performance of Illinois students has increased by four-tenths of a point on the composite score while the national average has actually decreased by one-tenth of a point.

The year to year Illinois composite score increased from 20.7 in 2010 to 20.9 in 2011. This increase occurred despite an additional 4,000 students taking the test. The national average during the timeframe decreased from 21.2 in 2010 to 21.1 in 2011.

Our ACT results come on the heels of last fall’s National Assessment for Education Progress pilot program results regarding the performance of 12th graders in 11 states. In both reading and math, Illinois students performed above the national average, beating the only state comparable demographically, Florida, in both cases.

I know many of our critics like to dwell on the negatives, but I believe that we have much going in the right direction. Do we need to do a better job of preparing our students for college and career readiness? Absolutely, and as we implement the new Illinois Learning Standards based on the Common Core, raising expectations for our students across the board, we’ll continue moving in the right direction.

Have a great week!

Chris

Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

- Affidavit of School Treasurer Bonds submitted by Regional Superintendents/Intermediate Service Centers – Sept. 1
- School Safety Conference in Hillside – Sept. 8
- 2010-11 High School Students Taking Community College Courses system district-level data submission deadline – Sept. 15
• School-based Child Nutrition Sponsor Applications due – Sept. 15
• ISBE’s Transition Institute in Bloomington – Sept. 19-21
• “How Can I Help? The Summit on Aging Education and Service” in Normal – Sept. 26
• ISBE offices closed for Columbus Day – Oct. 10
• 2011-12 School District Budget form – Adopted by Sept. 30 and due to ISBE by Oct. 30
• 2010-11 LEA Annual Financial Report – Due to ROEs/ISCs Oct. 14 and due to ISBE Nov. 15 (with the exception of those who received an “Extension of Time” approval letter)
• ISBE offices closed for Thanksgiving – Nov. 24 and 25
• FY 12 School Technology Revolving Loan Program (STRLP) application deadline – Dec. 1

Funding and Disbursement Services

FY 2012 Funding for Children Requiring Special Education Services Calculations

The final FY 2012 Funding for Children Requiring Special Education Services school district amounts have been calculated and can be accessed at http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/sped_funding12.pdf.

Per Section 14-7.02b of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/14-7.02b], after the block grant allocation for Chicago District 299 is subtracted from the final appropriation, all remaining funding is distributed 85 percent on average daily attendance and 15 percent on poverty as used in the calculation of General State Aid for each school district. In addition, districts eligible for Hold Harmless have been calculated per P.A. 95-0705 (effective Jan. 8, 2008). The language added to Section 14-7.02b states that, for fiscal year 2008 and each fiscal year thereafter, individual school districts must not receive payments under [Section 14-7.02b] totaling less than they received for fiscal year 2007 (commonly referred to as a “hold harmless” provision). However, the language further states that any “hold harmless” funding is to be “computed last and shall be a separate calculation from any other calculation set forth in [Section 14-7.02b].”

The “other calculation” referenced in the new language is the existing split of the entire appropriation – 85 percent based on each district’s average daily attendance and 15 percent on poverty. The change amount between FY 07 and FY 12 has been calculated. A district is eligible for Hold Harmless if the amount calculated is bracketed in the final column on the spreadsheet. Currently, there is no supplemental appropriation to pay the FY 12 Hold Harmless amount.

If you have questions regarding these calculations, contact Jodi Whitlow at jwhitlow@isbe.net or (217) 782-5256.

Important Reminder Regarding Prorated General State Aid Payments

The Fiscal Year 2012 General State Aid (GSA) calculations have been finalized and will be prorated at 95 percent, which will significantly impact the final two GSA payments. All but two of the 865 school districts will not receive any June 20, 2012, General State Aid payment. In addition, nearly 96 percent of school districts will receive a June 10, 2012, payment that is about 90 percent or more of their regular GSA payment. Please take this into account as you prepare and consider cash flow planning for year end.

Final computations and individual claim information for school districts and regional offices can be accessed at http://webprod1.isbe.net/gsainquiry/asp/default.asp. For questions contact Jim Mathes at jmathes@isbe.net or (217) 782-5256.

Selected ARRA Programs Final Obligation Date Sept. 30, 2011

The final date for grant recipients that have been awarded funds under selected programs for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is Sept. 30, 2011. This date is applicable to all grant recipients with active projects that were provided project date extensions to Sept. 30. It is critical that all activities and final obligations occur on or before Sept. 30. Extensions cannot be granted. Any unexpended funds reflected on final expenditure reports must be returned. The list of the ARRA programs that will expire are provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARRA Program Name</th>
<th>Rev Code(s)</th>
<th>CFDA</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARRA Title I Low Income</td>
<td>4851, 4852, 4853 and 4854</td>
<td>84.389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARRA Sp Ed IDEA Part B Preschool</td>
<td>4856</td>
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<td>ARRA Sp Ed IDEA Part B Flow Through</td>
<td>4857</td>
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<td>ARRA Title II D Technology Competitive</td>
<td>4861</td>
<td>84.386</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARRA McKinney Vento Homeless Education</td>
<td>4862</td>
<td>84.387</td>
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</tbody>
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If you have any questions, please contact your program consultant or the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services at (217) 782-5256.
Interrupted School Days/Heat

The health and safety of students are a primary concern for every school superintendent. Section 18-12, of the School Code allows the use of Interrupted School Days for “adverse weather conditions” including extreme heat as well as extreme cold. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) allows four options with regard to extreme heat:

- Amend the public school calendar to start school at a later date
- Dismiss after 5-clock-hours of instruction
- Utilize an Emergency Day
- Utilize an Interrupted Day

If an Emergency Day is utilized, it is recommended that an Amended Calendar be submitted electronically through IWAS to the Regional Office of Education (ROE) for approval, to assure that the most up to date Public School Calendar is available online via the School Calendar Inquiry. If an Interrupted Day is utilized, an Amended Calendar must be submitted electronically through IWAS, within 30 days of occurrence, to the ROE, who will forward it to ISBE for approval as required by statute. The Calendar Code for Emergency Day is ED. The Calendar Code for an Interrupted Day is XID. When amending the calendar code to XID, Student Attendance Time is required to verify a minimum of 1 instructional clock hour was conducted, as well as a brief explanation of why the day was interrupted.

ISBE’s policy further states that if the announcement is made in advance (i.e., on the previous day) that school will be closing on any day or days after less than 5 clock hours because of heat, you must use an emergency day(s). The shortened day may not be counted as a full-day of attendance under those circumstances.

At this time, all 2011-12 Public School Calendars should now have ROE approval, making the calendar available for those interested to view on the ISBE’s School Calendar Inquiry Web page. Per Section 10-19 of the School Code, any changes to the calendar must be approved by completing and submitting an amended calendar via IWAS prior to the change taking effect.

It is our hope that this information is helpful for the upcoming school year. If you require technical assistance or have further questions regarding the public school calendar, please contact your Regional Office of Education or Marj Beck at mbeck@isbe.net or (217) 782-5256.

Special Education

Illinois LRE Data Cohort Aims to Improve Placement Options

The Special Education and Support Services division at the Illinois State Board of Education is looking for districts who are interested in participating in an exciting opportunity. The purpose of the LRE Data Cohort is to provide districts hands-on assistance in using their data to improve placement options for students with disabilities. Selected cohort districts will work with state and national technical assistance providers on modules that guide the process. Interested districts will form a team and participate in three work sessions during the spring and fall of 2012. Details can be found at http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/lre_data_cohort.pdf.

Districts who are interested in the Illinois LRE Data Cohort will be supported by ISBE through conference calls, Webinars and on-site technical assistance. To volunteer and be considered for the cohort, contact Erin Saxton at (217) 782-5589 or via e-mail at esaxton@isbe.net or contact Krista Hinton at (312) 814-8288 or via e-mail at khinton@isbe.net by Sept. 30, 2011.

Nutrition

HealthierUS School Challenge News

The HealthierUS School Challenge is the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s voluntary school nutrition and wellness initiative to improve student health and well-being. HUSSC rewards schools for excellence in promoting nutrition and physical activity. USDA’s national goal to certify 1,250 schools by June 30, 2011, has been exceeded by 23 schools; 1,273 achieved this recognition.

Kudos to Illinois’ 60 HUSSC certified schools representing five school districts. Schools participating in the challenge are recognized with Gold of Distinction, Gold, Silver, or Bronze-level certification. Illinois boasts three Gold of Distinction, 14 gold, four silver, and 39 bronze certified schools. These schools are certified for four years. Challenge certification also includes monetary incentives for schools – $2,000 for Gold Award of Distinction, $1,500 for Gold, $1,000 for Silver and $500 for Bronze, a plague and national recognition and prestige. A special celebration to honor the HUSSC certified schools, effective June 30, 2011, will be held at the White House, South Lawn in October.
Take the HealthierUS School Challenge today. Go to [http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/healthierUS/index.html](http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/healthierUS/index.html) for the application, training and technical assistance, FAQs, tips from award winners, a calculator, and more useful information. Contact [cnp@isbe.net](mailto:cnp@isbe.net) if you have any questions regarding the application.

To view the locations of schools that have received a HUSSC award by state, region, and nationally, use the newly developed tool, Healthy Access Locator at [http://www.healthyaccesslocator.com/](http://www.healthyaccesslocator.com/).

**Reminder Regarding Notice of School Breakfast Availability**

School Food Authorities (SFAs) participating in the School Breakfast Program (SBP) must inform eligible families of the availability of reimbursable breakfasts served under the SBP. This must be done just prior to or at the beginning of the school year in the informational packets that are sent to each household with free and reduced price meal applications for the new school year, as well as through reminders sent multiple times throughout the school year.

Schools can provide reminders to children through their public address systems in schools or through means normally used to communicate with the households of enrolled children. Other acceptable outreach activities may include developing or disseminating printed or electronic material to families and school children. For example, information about the SBP should be posted on the school’s Website.

The Illinois State Board of Education encourages SFAs to use the information in Expanding Your School Breakfast Program, the SBP Toolkit found at [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Breakfast/expansion/default.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Breakfast/expansion/default.htm), as a resource for outreach and expansion activities.

**Early Childhood**

### Feedback Sought for Early Learning Challenge Grant Application Process

Illinois is pursuing additional funding for early childhood education from the U.S. Department of Education through the recently announced Early Learning Challenge. Parents, guardians, early childhood practitioners and other stakeholders can contribute to the process by answering a survey at [http://www2.illinois.gov/earlychildhood/Pages/EarlyLearningChallenge.aspx](http://www2.illinois.gov/earlychildhood/Pages/EarlyLearningChallenge.aspx).

Additional information about the grant is also available at the Web page, including a summary of the grant program and the official announcement from the U.S. Department of Education. The goal in pursuing these funds is to design a system, from birth through school entry, that more tightly coordinates all early learning initiatives paid for with state and federal dollars, better facilitates transitions of students and ensures our work force has the skills and knowledge to maximize overall child development, language and numeracy skills, and social and emotional development.

**Legal**

### New Law Allows School Districts to Charge More for Driver’s Education

Under Illinois law, school districts have been able to charge a fee not to exceed $50 to students who participate in a driver’s education course, unless a student is unable to pay for the course, in which event the fee must be waived. Public Act 97-145, signed by the governor on July 14, 2011, amends Section 27-24.2 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/27-24.2] to allow a district, following a public hearing and via board resolution, to increase this fee to an amount not to exceed $250 (but must continue to waive the fee for students unable to afford the course).

Please note, however, that this increase in the fee that may be charged for driver’s education does not allow districts, in determining a reasonable fee, to include any portion of the salaries or benefits of school district personnel providing driver’s education in that equation.

Districts that wish to increase the fee for driver’s education to the new limit of $250, and that wish to use salaries and benefits to justify the cost of this increase, will need to seek a waiver of rules (Section 252.30(a)(3))
from the State Board of Education to allow for consideration of personnel costs in setting the district’s fee. Information on the waiver process can be found online at http://www.isbe.net/isbewaivers/default.htm or call Rules and Waivers at (217) 782-5270.

Districts with an approved waiver from the General Assembly to raise fees above the former $50 limit set in the School Code will continue to hold that waiver until its expiration date. At that time, districts will face three possible situations:

- Districts intending to charge $250 or less, and not planning to use salary or benefits costs in their fee calculations, will not need to apply for a waiver, but will need to hold a public hearing and set the new fee via board resolution in accordance with PA 97-145.

- Districts intending to assess a fee of $250 or less, and planning to use salary and benefit costs in their fee calculations, will need to seek a waiver of rules from the State Board of Education allowing them to include such costs in their calculations.

- Districts choosing to request driver’s education fees above $250 will need to continue to seek a waiver of the School Code (105 ILCS 5/27-24.2) from the Illinois General Assembly. Districts should note the timelines that govern submission of such waiver requests (see the Website link above), since a waiver may not be implemented by a district until it has been approved by the General Assembly.

For additional information on the State Board of Education interpretation of this Section, please refer to the State Superintendent’s Weekly Message for May 3, 2010, and May 11, 2010, which can be accessed at http://www.isbe.net/board/archivemessages/archivemessage.htm.

Section 3-8 of the School Code (105 ILCS 5/3-8) describes the duties of the Regional Superintendent of Schools upon receipt of the treasurer bonds. When the bond of any school treasurer is filed with the Regional Superintendent of Schools, the Regional Superintendent shall carefully examine it. If the bond is found to be in all respects according to law and the sureties sufficient, the Regional Superintendent shall endorse his/her approval and file it with the papers of his/her office. If the bond is in any respect defective, or if the sureties are insufficient, the bond shall be returned for correction.

In Cook County, the responsibilities and duties of the Regional Superintendent of Schools detailed in Section 3-8 and Section 8-2 of the School Code (105 ILCS 5/3-8 and 105 ILCS 5/8-2) will be assumed by the respective Intermediate Service Center.

An electronic version of the Affidavit, and other information, can be found online at www.isbe.net/sfms/html/t_bonds.htm.

Please contact Michelle Heninger, School Business Services Division, at (217) 785-8779 or mheninge@isbe.net with any follow-up questions.

**PARCC**

**Draft Model Content Frameworks Feedback Extended Until Aug. 31**

On Aug. 3, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers released draft model content frameworks for public review. The model content
frameworks identify the main ideas in the Common Core State Standards for each grade level and will help determine the focus for various assessments being developed.

The draft frameworks in English language arts/literacy and mathematics will be posted on the PARCC Website at [http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-content-frameworks](http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-content-frameworks) until Aug. 31. Feedback is sought from K-12 educators, curriculum and assessment experts and other stakeholders via a survey at the site listed above. All feedback will be reviewed and final model content frameworks will be released in the fall.

PARCC is 24-state consortium working to develop common assessments, which is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The alliance is led by the member states and Achieve, a nonprofit group that aims to align K-12 education policies with the demands of employers and the postsecondary community. Visit [http://www.parcconline.org](http://www.parcconline.org) for more information.

### Upcoming Events

**The Summit on Aging Education and Service to be Held Sept. 26**

The Illinois Policy Academy on the Civic Engagement of Older Adults and the Intergenerational Initiative through the Center for Health for Law and Policy at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale are planning an upcoming summit. Other participants include the Illinois State Board of Education and the P-20 Council. “How Can I Help? The Summit on Aging Education and Service” is set for 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 26 at the Illinois State University Alumni Center, 1101 N. Main St., Normal.

The summit will discuss ways to utilize the knowledge and skills of all generations to increase student achievement, with an emphasis in reading and writing. Registration is $15. To register, go to [http://seniorprofessionals.illinoisstate.edu/](http://seniorprofessionals.illinoisstate.edu/). For more information, contact Jane Angelis at intnews@siu.edu or visit [http://www.solit.siu.edu/GenServeGen](http://www.solit.siu.edu/GenServeGen).

### 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).

### In the News

**Weekly News Clips**