Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

As required by the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA), we continue to move forward with the implementation of the new, more meaningful teacher and principal evaluations. The first two of five modules for teacher evaluations are open and the first of five modules for principal evaluations is also available. The remaining modules are still undergoing an extensive validation process. A company that specializes in validating assessments and score setting convened a panel this weekend and will continue to validate and set passing scores for all remaining modules.

After reading many of your email messages, listening to issues raised by practitioners and consulting with several statewide stakeholder groups over the past week, we have determined that for most districts some additional timeline flexibility can be granted for the implementation of the teacher and principal evaluation training.

We have determined that for those training on the new teacher evaluation system but are not yet required to include student growth in the 2012-13 school year, only modules 1, 2 and 3 must be completed, prior to Sept. 1 or until such time as they plan to do their observation of teachers, which could be at a later date. This does not include Chicago Public Schools, which will begin implementing the new evaluation systems, including student growth in the 2012-13 school year and must complete all trainings and assessments by Sept. 1, 2012. Module 1 and its assessment provide an overview of the new requirements and should take no more than three hours to complete. Modules 2 and 3 focus on successful teacher observation processes as well as guidance for the post-observation meeting. Module 4 is designed to help evaluators develop their skills to reflect, measure and evaluate teachers to establish a summative rating and must be completed no later than Nov. 1, 2012. The delay of module 4 in no way should minimize the importance of this module to the overall evaluation process. Until module 4 is completed, evaluators should not be establishing summative evaluation ratings for teachers. Module 5 will focus on the uses of student growth in the evaluation process and needs only to be completed prior to the use of student growth in your districts’ implementation process.

Those taking the training on the new principal evaluations must complete modules 1, 2 and 3 prior to Sept. 1, and because principal evaluations include student growth beginning this year, they must complete modules 4 and 5 by Nov. 1.

We have previously noted that the traditional Administrators Academy Evaluation will suffice for those wanting to begin observations before and up until Sept. 1. After Sept. 1, you must successfully complete what is outlined above. I must note that observations and evaluations are not synonymous. An observation is only one component of a comprehensive evaluation.

Currently, we have 9,265 licensed users, with approximately 5,100 that have actually signed onto the system and started the evaluation training. We are working with our contractor on a daily basis to address the technical issues that you have identified and ask that you call (800) 416-9734 if you experience difficulties while participating in the training modules. If you have not already done so, I encourage you to register in the system and begin the training
process. We have also added study guides for the first module for both teacher and principal evaluations to our website and will continue to add as new ones are developed. ([http://www.isbe.net/PEAC/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/PEAC/default.htm))

Last week the State Board authorized me to direct the regional superintendents in Lake and St. Clair counties to remove the local school board members in North Chicago and East St. Louis. The School Code allows the State Board to take such measures after several years of poor performance in order to implement meaningful reform and improve academic achievement. Both districts have failed to make adequate yearly progress under NCLB and the high schools in these districts are among the lowest performing in the state.

I will appoint an Independent Authority made up of five members, which will exercise the powers and duties necessary to operate the district and improve school performance and student achievement. As part of the next steps, we will establish and communicate performance criteria to determine measures of district progress and eventual restoration of local control. The Board has indicated a desire to take on more intensive interventions like this in more districts in the future.

Finally, the Board honored 29 educators from across the state for their outstanding achievement in a variety of subject areas during a luncheon at the Governor’s Mansion in Springfield. The educators were chosen as the best in their field of expertise during the 2011-12 school year by their respective professional education organizations. This was the second annual Exemplary Teacher Recognition Award Luncheon hosted by the State Board and the Illinois Education Association and the Illinois Federation of Teachers. You can see a list of all the honorees at [http://www.isbe.net/news/2012/jun18.htm](http://www.isbe.net/news/2012/jun18.htm). Congratulations to all of the Exemplary Teachers honored this past week.

Thanks for all you do and especially for your patience as we implement our new evaluation processes. Have a great week.

Chris

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**Upcoming Dates and Deadlines**

- **Summer Regional Common Core Conference in Springfield** – June 28-29
- **FY 2103 Regional Safe Schools Program application deadline** – June 29
- **Alternative Learning Opportunities Program (ALOP) Continuation Application deadline** – July 2
- **2011-2012 Dental Examination Data Collection deadline** – July 2
- **2011-12 Eye Examination Data Collection deadline** – July 2
- **ISBE offices closed for Independence Day** – July 4
- **Part 650 (Charter Schools)** – Public comment period ends July 16
- **2011-12 Regional Safe Schools Program (RSSP) student reporting deadline** – July 31
- **The 2011-12 End of Year Report deadline** – Aug. 15
- **2011-12 Teacher Service Record reporting deadline** – Aug. 15
- **Adjusted cohort graduation data deadline** – Aug. 17
- **Postmark deadline for waiver applications to be considered by General Assembly in Fall ’12** – Aug. 17
- **Part 60 (The “Grow Your Own” Teacher Education Initiative) and Part 65 (New Teacher Induction and Mentoring)** – Public comment period ends Aug. 20
- **2011-12 High School Students Taking Community College Courses data submission deadline** – Sept. 17
PARCC

Public Comment Sought on Model Content Frameworks for Mathematics and ELA/Literacy

The state-led Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is seeking a second round of public comment on the Model Content Frameworks for Mathematics as part of an on-going development process to ensure the frameworks meet the needs of educators, curriculum directors and school leaders.

In November 2011, PARCC released Model Content Frameworks to inform item development and to support implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). That release was based on multiple rounds of feedback, including a public comment period in August 2011. The initial public review resulted in a number of conceptual changes in the frameworks, which are detailed through a recorded webinar and presentations at www.parcconline.org/parcc-content-frameworks.

In addition to seeking another round of comments on the November 2011 draft of the 3-8 Model Content Frameworks, PARCC is also seeking comments on newly created material for high school mathematics. Based on feedback gathered over the academic year, PARCC states have created materials that provide additional specificity around six high school courses. The newly revised high school Model Content Frameworks detail the standards, or parts of standards that make up the two course sequences and would be assessed in each course by the PARCC assessments.


The public comment survey for mathematics will be open until Wednesday, July 11. Users can access the comment survey at www.parcconline.org/parcc-content-frameworks. PARCC will revise the frameworks during the month of July with the goal of releasing final versions later this summer. Once the frameworks are final, PARCC will hold public webinars to walk through the changes. Information about the webinars will be available on the PARCC website later this summer.


Nutrition

Reminder: New HealthierUS School Challenge Criteria Goes Into Effect July 1

Effective July 1, 2012, HealthierUS School Challenge applications submitted will be reviewed using new criteria. Complete HUSSC applications received after June 30, 2012, will be reviewed under the new criteria, which includes breakfast menus, an “other criteria for excellence” category, updated lunch criteria reflecting National School Lunch Program meal pattern requirements, and an Average Daily Participation (ADP) calculation method change.

Schools applying for the HUSSC must participate in the School Breakfast Program. Schools must meet two to eight “other criteria” for different award levels. The criteria include program outreach, physical activity, nutrition education, and school and community involvement in wellness efforts. The ADP will be calculated using attendance rather than school enrollment. For more information, visit http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/HealthierUS/application.html. Email cnp@isbe.net if you have any questions.

Funding and Disbursement Services


American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs and vendor data for the quarter ending June 30, 2012, is due at the Illinois State Board of Education on or before Thursday, July 5, 2012. This data is required for all ARRA projects that had activity after March 31, 2012.

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

IMPORTANT: Grant recipients with active ARRA projects must report regardless of whether any jobs were funded or any payments were made to a vendor of $25,000 or more in the reporting quarter.

Please follow these three steps below to properly calculate the jobs FTE that must be reported for the period ending June 30.

- **Step 1:** Determine the number of hours in a full-time schedule for ARRA funded employees between April 1 and June 30 (i.e. an employee works 40 hours a week for 13 weeks, the quarterly hours in a full-time schedule is 520 hours). Note: This figure may change depending on the type of employee.
- **Step 2:** Determine the number of hours employees were paid with ARRA funds for the reporting quarter ending June 30.
- **Step 3:** Divide the number calculated in Step 2 by the quarterly hours in a full-time schedule calculated in Step 1. This calculation should be performed for each employee funded with ARRA dollars. The formula for reporting can be represented as:

\[
\text{Total Number of Hours ARRA Funded Within Reporting Quarter} \div \text{Quarterly Hours in a Full-Time Schedule} = \text{FTE}
\]

June 30 ARRA data must be reported for the following ARRA programs for all local education agencies with active ARRA projects after March 31, 2012:

- Title I Low Income – Revenue Code 4851, CFDA #84.394
- Title I Low Income Neglected – Revenue Code 4852, CFDA #84.394
- Title I Low Income Delinquent – Revenue Code 4853, CFDA #84.394
- Title I School Improvement – Revenue Code 4854, CFDA #84.394
- Title I School Improvement (1003g) – Revenue Code 4855, CFDA #84.388
- Title II D Enhancing Education Through Technology – Revenue Code 4861, CFDA #84.386
- Education Jobs Fund Program – Revenue Code 4880, CFDA #84.410 (If compensation and/or benefits have been or will be requested for employees from Apr through June)

If you have any questions, 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) that occurred between April 1 and June 30, the full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs and vendor data must be reported for the period ending June 30 even if an expenditure report for reimbursement has yet to be filed for that period of time. For example, if the LEA is going to submit in mid-July an Ed Jobs expenditure report requesting reimbursement of compensation and benefits expended during the reporting quarter ending June 30, the LEA is required to report FTE jobs and vendor data to ISBE on or before the required ARRA reporting deadline of July 5, 2012, 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 March 31 and after doing so still has unexpended allocation, but has no Ed Jobs expenditures between April 1 and June 30, they must still submit ARRA FTE jobs and vendor data for the June 30 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 at (217) 782-5256.

**FY 12 Reduction of Driver Education Reimbursement**

The General Assembly took action in SB 2348, Public Act 97-0685 that reduced the FY 12 Driver Education appropriation from $24,229,600 to $18,172,200. The reduction was necessary due to the insufficient revenue
in the Driver Education Fund to reimburse the obligations against the original appropriation. To date, the Illinois State Board of Education has processed three quarterly Driver Education payments to the Comptroller for fiscal year 2012. The September 2011 payment was released by the Comptroller on Feb. 27, 2012, and the December 2011 payment is expected to be released in the next few weeks. The March 2012 payment will be released before Dec. 31, 2012. However, due to the appropriation reduction, the final June payment will not be vouchered or processed.

If you have questions regarding this matter please contact Lisa Willhoit in the Division of Funding and Disbursements at (217) 782-5256.

**Webinar on FY 2012 Federal Grant Year-End Expenditure Report Changes**

As the end of fiscal year, June 30, 2012, approaches, grant recipients awarded funds for budget based federal grants such as Title I or IDEA are advised of year-end expenditure reporting changes. Grant recipients with federal projects ending June 30 will be allowed to enter and report obligations such as a purchase order or payroll expenditures for teachers that are paid over 12 months on the June 30 report. In addition, grant recipients will be allowed to submit expenditure reports after June 30 (e.g. July 31, Aug. 31 and Sept. 30) as payments are made to liquidate the June 30 obligation(s). In general, grant recipients should liquidate all June 30 obligations within 90 days. As has been the practice during this fiscal year, grant recipients will receive federal funds as cumulative (i.e. year-to-date) cash accounting basis expenditure reports are submitted. Optional monthly advances or “commitment amounts” will be allowed but the advance cannot exceed the reported obligation and a subsequent month end expenditure report will be required to reflect that the advance was expended.

To assist you with the new federal grant year-end expenditure reporting process, you are highly encouraged to review the following webinar:

- **Slide presentation only:**

- **Audio and slide presentation:**
  [http://www.isbe.net/asx/2012/FY12_Year_End_Exp_Rpt_Changes_051012.asx](http://www.isbe.net/asx/2012/FY12_Year_End_Exp_Rpt_Changes_051012.asx)

Please note that these year-end expenditure reporting changes apply to federal budget based grant programs only. Traditional expenditure reporting is still in place for all state budget based grant programs.

If you have any questions about the new reporting procedures, please contact Kim Lewis (klew@isbe.net), Sally Cray (scray@isbe.net) or Marj Beck (mbeck@isbe.net) at (217) 782-5256.

**UPDATE: Funding Available for 2011-12 State Excess Cost Claims**

On May 15, an email was distributed to inform you that based on the best available data we had at that time there would be insufficient unused Federal IDEA Room and Board funds to reimburse 2011-12 State Excess Cost student claims. Since then, we finalized the payment for 2010-11 Room and Board claims which were paid at 100 percent. In addition, we have reviewed our year-end obligations for IDEA and have determined that we will have enough measurable funds available for 2011-12 State Excess Cost Claims. While there is not an exact amount at this time, it is estimated that there will be at least $1 million to distribute. As in the past, the unused IDEA funds will not be sufficient to pay Excess Costs claims at 100 percent. Proration at less than 10 percent can be expected.

**Important Reminders:**

- June 29 is the last date to transmit student approval records who may qualify for Excess Cost identified as Fund Code X. For guidance on students that may qualify, go to [http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/hb4225_excess_cost.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/hb4225_excess_cost.pdf).
- Aug. 15 is the date for districts to transmit Excess Costs reimbursement claims. A single payment will be distributed by Sept. 30.

Questions regarding the 2011-12 State Excess Cost Claims can be directed to Jodi Whitlow at jwhitlow@isbe.net or (217) 782-5256.

**2011-12 General State Aid Claim Deadlines**

Please be advised that per Section 18-12 of the School Code, the 2011-12 General State Aid Claim must be transmitted via IWAS to each respective Regional Office of Education by June 21 for districts with an official school calendar end date before June 15 or within two weeks following the official school calendar end date for districts with a school year end date of June 15 or later.
The regional superintendent shall certify and file with the State Superintendent of Education district State aid claims by July 1 for districts with an official school calendar end date before June 15 or no later than July 15 for districts with an official school calendar end date of June 15 or later. Failure to file by these deadlines constitutes a forfeiture of the right to receive payment by the State until such claim is filed and vouched for payment.

To assist you with completing the General State Aid claim, you are highly encouraged to review the following webinar:

- **Slide presentation only:**
- **Audio and slide presentation:**
  [http://www.isbe.net/asx/2012/Elec_Sub_GSA_042012.asx](http://www.isbe.net/asx/2012/Elec_Sub_GSA_042012.asx)

A final school calendar must be transmitted and approved before the General State Aid claim can be transmitted. If you need technical assistance with completing the final school calendar, you may contact your Regional Office of Education or Marj Beck, Funding and Disbursements, at mbeck@isbe.net. Questions related to completing the General State Aid Claim can be directed to Jim Mathes, Funding and Disbursements, at jmathes@isbe.net. Marj and Jim can also be reached in the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services at (217) 782-5256.

### Special Education and Support Services

#### Regional Safe Schools Program Application Deadline Coming Up

ISBE has released the application for FY 2013 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 Regional Safe Schools Program application can be accessed through IWAS. The deadline for submission is June 29, 2012. If you have questions about the RSSP application, contact Sally Veach at (217) 782-5589 or sveach@isbe.net.

### Presentation on Developing Required Summary of Performance Available Online


This presentation provides the legal framework and provides practical information as well as strategies for district staff on the development of SOP’s that support students’ successful transition to post-school goals and adult life. Advice on who gets the SOP, how the requirement impacts practice, tips for timing of completion, who should be involved, the connection to student self-advocacy skills, and information on what a well-written SOP should look like are included in the presentation. Viewers can access the slide “note’s” by hovering over the icon in the upper left-hand corner.

For questions, contact Sue Walter, Transition Consultant, at swalter@isbe.net or (618) 651-9028.

### School Nurse Consultant Joins ISBE Staff

The Illinois State Board of Education welcomed Jessica Gerdes, School Nurse/Health Related Issues, Principal Consultant, to its staff on May 16, 2012. Gerdes came to ISBE from North Carolina, where she served as State School Nurse Consultant for the past five years. Prior to that position, she was School Health Program Manager at DuPage County (Ill.) Health Department.

Gerdes holds a bachelor’s degree in nursing from Excelsior College (University of the State of New York), and a master’s in public health nursing, with school nurse concentration, from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She holds an Illinois Type 73 School Nurse Certificate. Her position is located within the Division of Special Education and Support Services. Her responsibility spans across regular education and special education, individualized nutrition and health.

### Registration Under Way for Annual Special Education Directors’ Conference

The registration for the annual Special Education Directors’ Conference 2012 is now open. The conference will be held July 18-20, 2012 in Springfield.
Each year, the Illinois State Board of Education works toward improving the performance of special education programs and the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education programs throughout the state in relation to our State Performance Plan. Our continuing goal for the conference is to provide districts and cooperatives with the needed information to meet the ongoing compliance issues required by the federal government, along with the best possible learning environment for students with disabilities.

The fee for attendance remains at $120 per person. Registration will close on July 11. Directions for registering can be found at [http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/conf/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/conf/default.htm).

**U.S. Department of Education**

**Deadline to Apply for 2012 Teacher Incentive Fund Competition is July 27**

School districts, states and not-for-profit organizations are eligible to apply for the 2012 Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) competition, ending July 27, 2012. This year’s $285 million competition includes a new focus on supporting districtwide evaluation systems that reward success, offer greater professional opportunities and drive decision-making on recruitment, development, and retention of effective teachers and principals. It also invites applications for a separate competition that centers on improving science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) instruction. For more information, go to [http://www2.ed.gov/programs/teacherincentive/](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/teacherincentive/).

**Rules and Waivers**

**Invitation to Comment on Rules**

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

**Part 60 (The “Grow Your Own” Teacher Education Initiative):** Repeals Part 60 due to P.A. 96-1393, effective July 1, 2010, which transferred the authority of The “Grow Your Own” Teacher Education Initiative to the Illinois Board of Higher Education. [Public comment period ends August 20, 2012.](#)

**Part 65 (New Teacher Induction and Mentoring):** Updates the new teacher induction and mentoring program requirements to reflect best practices and to align program quality and improvements, as well as grant continuation, to the Illinois Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Beginning Teacher Induction Programs and the Illinois Induction Program Continuum. [Public comment period ends August 20, 2012.](#)

**Illinois Principals Association**

**High School Principals in Illinois Asked to Complete Online Education Survey**

The Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois Principals Association are asking high school principals in Illinois to take 10-15 minutes to respond to a brief survey about online learning. From the pool of principals who complete the survey, two will be randomly selected to receive a free iPad. The survey closes on June 29. Go to [http://www.edstaranalytics.com/survey_il.php](http://www.edstaranalytics.com/survey_il.php).

In recent years, advances in technology have resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of digital, virtual and online educational tools available to schools. These tools have vast potential to meet a wide range of student needs. Like any new educational product, effective implementation needs to be driven by school leaders and classroom teachers focused on careful and thoughtful inclusion into the existing school model.

There is increasing demand from schools across Illinois and nationwide for innovative, high quality online offerings. Due to the tremendous complexity of existing products, models and possibilities, ISBE is supporting a statewide effort to gather feedback directly from principals on opportunities, desires, challenges and goals for online learning. Building on a survey sponsored by the Illinois Principals Association in spring 2011, and working in collaboration with the International Association for K12 Online Learning, ISBE and IPA are seeking to hear directly from front-line school leaders:

- Which online tools and courses would you most like to make available to students?
- What opportunities and challenges do you see for online course delivery?
- Would your school use resources dedicated to growing or expanding an online learning program?

Please take 15-20 minutes to click on the link above and complete the survey. Please forward this email to other administrators or teachers in your school who are
especially knowledgeable or insightful about online learning.

**English Language Learning**

**Migrant Education Program Application Available Online**

The Migrant Education Program application for funding for the 2012-13 fall and regular school year is available on the Division of English Language Learning webpage at [http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/htmls/migrant.htm](http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/htmls/migrant.htm).

Funding is available under Title I, Part C of the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act for supplemental academic and support services for qualifying migrant children and youth. Applications must be submitted no later than July 1, 2012.

Children ages 0-21 who have not graduated from high school may be eligible for the program if they have moved within the past three years across state or school district lines with a parent or guardian or on their own to obtain temporary or seasonal work in agricultural production, fishing or food processing industries.

A certified recruiter must document that children qualify as migrant students. ISBE can assist districts with this process. For more information, contact Beth Robinson at (312) 814-3850.

**Professional Development**

**Illinois Alliance for Arts Education to Hold Conference in Chicago on July 20**

The Illinois Alliance for Arts Education, in partnership with Columbia College Chicago, will hold a professional development conference on Friday, July 20, in Chicago. This year’s Arts Alive conference is titled “Connecting Through the Arts” and will be held from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the Columbia College building at 33 E. Congress Parkway. Participants can earn up to six CPDU credits at the institute, which features a wide variety of sessions and workshops.

The deadline to mail in registration with a check is July 1, after which participants can register onsite at the college on July 20 and pay with a check or cash. For more information and to register for the conference, go to [http://www.illinoisalliance4artsed.org/Events.html](http://www.illinoisalliance4artsed.org/Events.html). For questions, contact the institute coordinator, Becky Blaine, at beckyblaine@gmail.com.

The Illinois Alliance for Arts Education is a non-profit organization with a mission to ensure high quality arts education and classroom arts experiences for all Illinois students in grades K-12. IAAE is partially funded by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

**Community Transformation Grants – Small Communities Program**

School districts and non-profit and community organizations are among the entities eligible to apply for the Community Transformation Grants — Small Communities Program, administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The deadline for applications is July 31, 2012.

The program is designed to help small communities prevent heart attack, stroke, cancer, diabetes and other leading chronic disease causes of death or disability through implementation of a variety of evidence based programs, policies and infrastructure improvements to promote healthy lifestyles. For more information, go to [http://www.cdc.gov/communitytransformation/](http://www.cdc.gov/communitytransformation/).

**Illinois Department of Natural Resources**

**Lending Locations Added for Field Trip Packs for Early Childhood Educators**

The Field Trip Packs from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Division of Education are available from more than 200 lending locations statewide. Visit [http://dnr.state.il.us/education/fieldtrippack.htm](http://dnr.state.il.us/education/fieldtrippack.htm) to find the closest lending location. The packs were developed for use with children of grades prekindergarten through third. Contents include books about many animals and plants, magnifying glasses, binoculars and much more.

**In the News**

**Illinois Gigabit Communities Challenge Deadline is June 30**

The governor’s office is holding a competition that will award up to $4 million in funding to promising ultra-high-speed broadband deployment projects in Illinois as part of the comprehensive, multi-year Illinois Jobs Now! economic development program.
Open to any private or public organization, the Illinois Gigabit Communities Challenge will result in seed funding awards to build or expand broadband networks in Illinois. Each proposal should outline a plan to connect at least 1,000 end users to an ultra-high-speed broadband network.

For more information, see the application online at [http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/gigabit/Documents/Gigabit Challenge_Application.pdf](http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/gigabit/Documents/Gigabit Challenge_Application.pdf). The application deadline is June 30.

**Weekly News Clips**

ISBE has posted highlights from last week’s education news clips at [http://www.isbe.net/news/2012/newsclips/120625.htm](http://www.isbe.net/news/2012/newsclips/120625.htm).

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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).