Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

Last week at the Illinois State Board of Education’s March meeting, held in Belleville, Board members reviewed the 2013 Financial Profile. The analysis shows our schools are under significant financial strain and may face more challenges under the pending FY 2014 budget.

The 2013 Financial Profile, based on Fiscal Year 2012 data, shows that 100 fewer districts are in the highest fiscal category and that the number of districts in the lowest category has doubled. This is a direct reflection of the significant cuts to state funding in education and the decline in local revenues to districts.

The Financial Profile provides a snapshot in time. It shows that school districts have been forced to not only reduce expenditures but also increase cash balances by issuing debt or restructuring debt payments. Information provided by school districts for FY 2013 forecasts that the number of districts deficit-spending will increase to 573 or 66.7 percent of all districts, compared to 415 or 48.2 percent in Fiscal Year 2012.

Districts’ financial pictures are expected to grow even bleaker in the FY 14 Financial Profile, because this year’s profile is based on 95 percent General State Aid proration in Fiscal Year 2012, while next year’s will be based on the current year’s 89 percent proration. To help ease school district’s financial burden, the Board is asking for an $875 million increase above last year’s P-12 education budget to restore funding levels, primarily ensuring that districts receive the GSA funding required under state law.

For each year since 2009, the Financial Profile scores have been adjusted for delayed state-mandated categorical payments, such as pupil transportation and special education, due to the state and national recession. The school code was amended to ensure that districts are not designated as being in financial difficulty solely due to delayed state payments. As of this week, the state’s current backlog of bills owed to schools totals more than $700 million. The 2013 Financial Profile for all districts in Illinois can be found online at [http://www.isbe.net/sfms/P/profile.htm](http://www.isbe.net/sfms/P/profile.htm).

The 5Essentials survey window has been extended to April 12. We have received a lot of valuable feedback that will allow us to make improvements to the survey. One of most frequently asked questions we have received has to do with response rates on the teacher survey that exceed 100 percent. As school districts have reported this issue to us, we have investigated. In the cases we have investigated, the issue has been that ISBE had an incorrect count of teachers. This is due to the fact that we had to use one-year-old data from our Student Information System (SIS) regarding teacher course assignments. Looking forward to next year, we’ll be working to refine our process so that we can use more recent data. For schools experiencing the issue this year, please contact the 5Essentials help desk at (866) 440-1874. We will be happy to investigate and correct teacher counts so that schools have an accurate response rate.

I want to recognize the students and staff at Westhaven Elementary School in Belleville Public School District 118 for hosting our Honor Roll ceremony last week. The Board members and I enjoyed the program they put together for us and it was a pleasure to recognize the schools in Randolph, Monroe and St. Clair counties.
I also want to thank the students and staff at Belleville Township High School District 201 for hosting our Board meeting. Our Board members had the opportunity to sit down with some of the students from both campuses and were particularly impressed with their mentoring program. The program pairs successful upper class African-American male students with incoming freshman African-American males. The initiative aims to close the achievement gap within the district and it’s receiving high praise from students. The students say it empowers them to assist their peers, driving the program to foster positive attitudes and help freshman get on the right track early in high school. We’re hopeful it will lead to greater success in college and career readiness.

Have a great week!

Chris

Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

Please note this is not a complete list of dates and deadlines. For questions, call the Illinois State Board of Education at (866) 262-6663 or (217) 782-4321 or visit the agency’s official website at http://www.isbe.net.

- Illinois School HealthierUS School Challenge Request for Proposal due date – April 1 (For more information, visit http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/sos.htm#huscrfp)
- Promoting Enhanced Physical Education Committee Meeting – April 8 (For more information, go to http://www.isbe.net/EPE/html/EPETF.htm.)
- Part 226 (Special Education) – Public comment period ends April 22
- Truants’ Alternative and Optional Education Program (TAOEP) FY 2014 RFP – Must be submitted to ISBE by 5 p.m. on April 22
- Physical Education II. Learning Standards Revision Committee – April 29 (For more information, go to http://www.isbe.net/EPE/html/EPETF.htm.)
- Promoting Enhanced Physical Education Committee Meeting – April 30 (For more information, go to http://www.isbe.net/EPE/html/EPETF.htm.)
- Enhance Physical Education Task Force Meeting – May 15 (For more information, go to http://www.isbe.net/EPE/html/EPETF.htm.)
- Applications for the Exception to the 1.0 Percent Cap due – May 17
- Physical Education II. Learning Standards Revision Committee – May 31 (For more information, go to http://www.isbe.net/EPE/html/EPETF.htm.)
- Enhance Physical Education Task Force Meeting – June 14 (For more information, go to http://www.isbe.net/EPE/html/EPETF.htm)
- Student Health Data – Vision system report deadline – July 1
- Regional Safe Schools End of Year Data reporting deadline – July 31 (User guide for the IWAS reporting system, http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/rssp_iwas_user_guide.pdf)
- Truants’ Alternative and Optional Education Program (TAOEP) reporting deadline – July 31 (User guide for the IWAS reporting system, ftp://help.isbe.net/webapps/taoep/pdf/TAOEP.pdf)
- Enhance Physical Education Task Force Meeting – Aug. 2 (For more information, go to http://www.isbe.net/EPE/html/EPETF.htm.)
• Postmark deadline for waiver applications to be considered by General Assembly in Fall 2013 – Aug. 16 (see http://www.isbe.net/isbewaivers/default.htm for new public notice requirements for all waiver requests)

Funding and Disbursements

2012-13 Pupil Transportation Reimbursement Estimation Tool

Gov. Pat Quinn has released his proposed FY 14 budget that includes a $145.6 million reduction to the Regular/Vocational Transportation appropriation from fiscal year 2013. You can access a side-by-side comparison of the State Board of Education’s recommendation and the governor’s proposal at http://www.isbe.net/budget/FY14/FY14_budget_comparate_gov.pdf. The governor’s proposed FY 14 appropriation of $60.1 million for the Regular/Vocational Transportation program as compared to the anticipated 2012-13 claims of $320.8 million due Aug. 15, 2013, results in an estimated proration of 19 percent of each district’s reimbursable Regular Transportation cost. Please keep in mind, these are only the first steps in the FY 14 budget process and we will likely see many changes before a budget is finalized in late May.

In an effort to provide districts with assistance to estimate the impact of this reduction a Reimbursement Estimation Tool is now available in the Pupil Transportation Claim Reimbursement System (PTCRS) accessible in IWAS. District personnel approved to access PTCRS can log in and choose “Reimbursement Estimation Tool” listed under the History & Data Analysis heading. All district claim data from the 2011-12 school year payable in fiscal year 2013 has been carried forward. Districts may update pupil ridership, allowable costs, enter 2011 equalized assessed valuation (EAV) information as well the estimated proration of 19 percent.

Many districts will see significant reductions compared to the reimbursement due in fiscal year 2013 as the wealth factor of a district or EAV Qualifying Offset will be greater than the allowable costs after proration is applied. The current Transportation statute in Section 29-5 calculates reimbursement for districts in this situation to a maximum of $16 multiplied by the number of eligible pupils transported for Regular Transportation.

IMPORTANT: Please keep in mind that the final fiscal year 2014 proration percentage and actual reimbursement amount for each district will be dependent on the submission of 2012-13 Transportation claims due Aug. 15, 2013, as well as the application of final audit adjustments.

If you have questions regarding this information, accessing or using the reimbursement estimation tool, please contact Jamie Johnson at jjohnson@isbe.net or (217) 782-5256.

Special Education Services

Resource Materials Available and Activities Planned for National Autism Awareness Month

The ISBE-funded Illinois Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project (IATTAP) participated through the national IDEA Partnership in the development of a collection of resource materials on Autism Spectrum Disorders. These materials are now available for schools to access at www.ideapartnership.org.

IATTAP has many educational resources and supports available on their website (www.illinoisautismproject.org) and will be posting a list of autism awareness activities happening across Illinois throughout April, which is National Autism Awareness Month.

Early Childhood

Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) Pilot Year Two in 2013-14

Adopted by the ISBE in 2012, the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) is a comprehensive process designed to assess kindergarten students’ growth and development and provide information about students’ competencies across developmental domains, with the goal of generating more effective classroom instruction.

Based upon developmental research and theory, KIDS uses an observation-based assessment instrument to record students’ progress over time. Starting this school year, 64 districts participated in the KIDS pilot and received training on how to implement KIDS in their kindergarten classrooms. KIDS will continue as a pilot, with volunteer districts, until it is implemented statewide in 2015-16.
The KIDS pilot begins its second year this summer with trainings throughout the state for participating districts. If you would like to inquire about participating in the pilot for school year 2013-14, contact the Division of Early Childhood at (217) 524-4835. To learn more about KIDS, log onto the ISBE KIDS page at http://www.isbe.net/KIDS.

Nutrition and Wellness Programs

Annual School Wellness Conference Scheduled for May 3 in Springfield

The sixth annual Illinois School Wellness Conference is set for Friday, May 3, 2013. The Illinois State Board of Education and the Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) is once again sponsoring the event. The conference is ideal for school administrators, school nurses, educators, food service staff, wellness committee members, parents, students and anyone else who wants to learn more about encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy food at school.

Action for Healthy Kids Chief Executive Office Rob Bisceglie, M.A., and Connie Mueller, MS, RD, SNS, have been selected as co-keynote speakers, who will be presenting key results of “The Learning Connection II” report, describing the Every Kid Healthy Week and share an update on the Illinois Action for Healthy Kids. Other topics will include an update on the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, School Health Initiatives, New National Nutrition Education Standards, Free Health and Wellness Programs, Employee Staff Wellness and more.

CPDUs will be available. Register now for a chance to win a “Do-It-Yourself Health Fair” (valued at $499). The conference is Friday, May 3, at the Springfield Hilton, 700 E. Adams St. Registration opens at 8 a.m. The conference begins at 9 a.m. and concludes at 3:15 p.m. Space is limited.

Register on or before April 19 for $45 per person rate. After April 19, the registration fee is $55 per person. Registration includes continental breakfast, lunch, materials and a chance to win the raffle prize. To register, go to http://goo.gl/2N2z2.

Division Issues Reminders for Health Education Funding Opportunities

Carol White Physical Education Program: The Carol M. White Physical Education Program provides grants to local education agencies and community organizations to initiate, expand or enhance PE programs that help to move school-aged children toward reaching state physical education standards. Proposed projects must include both instruction in healthy nutrition and a physical fitness component. Applications are due April 12, 2013. For more information, go to http://www2.ed.gov/programs/whitephyped/index.html.

Adventure Capital Grants: The GENYOUth Foundation’s Adventure Capital Grants is looking for student-driven solutions to building healthier schools. Up to five schools will be awarded $4,000 to launch an innovative student-led plan to boost healthy foods and physical activity in educational settings. Student architects of the plan will also receive recognition for their idea, including the opportunity to meet entrepreneur Warren Buffett. Applicants have until March 23, 2013 to apply at http://school.fueluptoplay60.com/adventure-capital/.

ASAP Acceleration Grants: The Active Schools Acceleration Project (ASAP) is requesting applications for its Acceleration Grants campaign to assist schools with launching a new physical activity program. The grant will offer 1,000 schools nationwide with seed funding, a game plan, and a network of support to jumpstart the ASAP program of their choice. Interested schools have until April 22, 2013 to apply at http://www.activeschoolsasap.org/acceleration-grants.

Presidential Youth Fitness Program: The Presidential Youth Fitness Program opportunity provides eligible schools support over two years to incorporate the three core elements of the program, including funding for a FITNESSGRAM assessment, professional development and training for physical education teachers, and award certificates for students. Online applications will be accepted April 1 through April 30. For details, click http://www.presidentialyouthfitnessprogram.org/funding/index.shtml.

Funds for Fuel Up to Play 60: The Fuel Up to Play 60 program have made available up to $4,000 each to help schools enrolled in the initiative for the 2012-13 year to build on and sustain improvements in healthy eating and physical activity. Schools are encouraged to apply early for the next round of applications, which are due on June 4, 2013. More details can be accessed at http://school.fueluptoplay60.com/funds/funds_for_futp60.php.
Sign up for Let’s Move - Active Schools! This national initiative, spearheaded by the first lady, is designed to be a roadmap for you and the members of your school community to transform your campus into a more active environment for kids. This roadmap is called the Six-Step Process and will help you identify your school’s specific fitness needs, measure progress through achievable goals, and create momentum by celebrating regular successes. Join at no cost, get instant feedback from a customized online dashboard, and access professional development, training, and grant opportunities. Learn more at http://www.letsmoveschools.org.

Title Grant Administration

Illinois Association of Title I Directors to Hold Spring Conference on April 17

The Illinois Association of Title I Directors, in collaboration with the Illinois State Board of Education, will be hosting its annual Spring IATD Conference at the Crown Plaza in Springfield on Wednesday, April 17, 2013.

All sessions will bring directors of Title programs and their designees up to speed on current State and Federal educational issues. Please go to the IATD website, http://www.iatd.net to register. A block of rooms at the Crown Plaza have been reserved for attendees.

In Brief

Student Opportunities

• The National World War II Museum is seeking entries for its annual essay contests for middle school and high school students. This year’s theme asks, “How can people who disagree still work together for victory?” The deadline for submissions is 5 p.m. March 29. For more information, visit http://www.nationalww2museum.org/essaycontests.

Professional Opportunities

• The Illinois Network of Charter Schools’ Teacher Job Fair is scheduled for 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. April 6 at Veterans Memorial Campus, 4248 W. 47th St., which is near Midway Airport. For details, visit http://incschools.org/school_supports/programs/job_fair/.

• A conference titled “How to Build Wealth in Today’s Economy” is set for April 26 at the McLean County Extension Office in Bloomington. Six CPDUs are available for the training, which will present new technologies for teaching students. Get more details at http://www.cefc.illinois.edu/calendar/event_04_26_13.html.

• The annual Cook County Department of Public Health Update for School Nurses is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on May 10 in Brookfield. CEUs and CPDUs will be available pending approval. For more information and to register, go to http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/events.

School Opportunities

• Build A Plane and the General Aviation Manufacturers Association recently announced a STEM educational competition for high school students. The winners of this competition will travel to the Glasair Aviation facilities to build two Glasair Sportsman aircraft. Schools interested in the competition can click here for more information.

In the News

• Congrats to Elgin High School and the Technology Center of DuPage for recently taking top honors at the Illinois ProStart Invitational. Teams from across the state competed in the Culinary and Hospitality Management competitions. For complete results visit http://ira.affiniscape.com/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=823.

Weekly News Clips

• The Illinois State Board of Education has posted highlights from recent education news clips at http://www.isbe.net/news/2013/newsclips/130319.htm.

Employment Opportunities

• An External Vacancy List for ISBE is available at http://www.isbe.net/hr/Default.htm.