Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

Today the Illinois State Board of Education’s Finance and Audit Committee will host its second fiscal year 2016 budget hearing. The hearing is scheduled from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Adams County Health Department in Quincy.

This is the second of five public hearings our Finance and Audit Committee is convening around the state to receive public input on the state’s education priorities as the Board prepares its FY16 budget recommendation for the Governor and General Assembly.

In addition to hearing testimony on the FY16 budget, the Board is encouraging testimony on Senate Bill 16, which proposes changing the method of distributing state education funds. Testimony from the budget hearings regarding this legislation will be shared with legislators and State Board staff.

Those who are unable to attend one of the five public hearings are encouraged to email their testimony to isbefy16@isbe.net.

I want to remind you that applications for the 2015 Illinois Green Ribbon Schools Award program are due Nov. 19. This program recognizes schools that are leading the way to promote sustainability and environmental education. We are accepting applications from schools that have integrated best practices in energy, water and waste management; healthy school environments; and environmental education.

We will announce the winners in late December. The schools chosen for the Illinois Green Ribbon Schools Award will be entered in the U.S. Department of Education’s Green Ribbon Schools program. The national winners will be announced in April 2015 and will be invited to an award ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Thanks,
Chris

Upcoming ISBE Dates and Deadlines

Please note this is not a complete list of events, meetings 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
Deadline to complete all revisions to the Pupil Transportation Reimbursement Claim – Nov. 10
ISBE offices closed for Veterans Day – Nov. 11
Deadline to complete the 2014-15 Unfilled Positions Survey in IWAS – Nov. 13
Limitation of Administrative Costs Worksheet deadline – Nov. 14 (www.isbe.net/sfms/AdminCaps/AdminCaps.htm)
Deadline to transmit outstanding Special Education Room and Board monthly claims for the 2013-14 cycle – Nov. 14
Part 425 (Voluntary Registration and Recognition of Nonpublic Schools) – Public comment period ends Nov. 17
Deadline to submit data in the Student Health Data – Immunization system – Nov. 17
Green Ribbon Schools Award applications due – Nov. 19 (www.isbe.net/green_ribbon/pdfs/green-ribbon-app-14-15.pdf)
School District Library Grant program deadline – Nov. 21 (www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/grants/schoolpercapgrant.html)
Extended deadline for districts to submit plans for an alternate learning conditions survey – Nov. 27 (www.surveymonkey.com/s/ISBELearningConditions)
ISBE offices closed for Thanksgiving – Nov. 27-28
FY 2015 NCLB Monitoring Instrument – Nov. 30
FY 2015 NCLB Title I Comparability Analysis – Nov. 30
Deadline to enter the 2015 Illinois Arts Education Week Poster Contest – Dec. 2 (www.isbe.net/arts-week/default.htm)
Annual Statement of Affairs (ISBE 50-37) – To be filed with ISBE by Dec. 15 (http://www.isbe.net/sfms/afr/asp.htm)
Part 30 (Programs for the Preparation of Principals in Illinois) – Public comment period ends Dec. 15
ISBE offices closed for Christmas Day – Dec. 25
Deadline to submit written opt-out petition to regional superintendent of schools for Summer Food Service Program mandate (Public Act 096-0734) – Jan. 15
Postmark deadline for waiver applications to be considered by General Assembly in spring 2015 – Friday, Jan. 16, 2015 (See http://www.isbe.net/isbewaivers/default.htm for public notice requirements for all waiver requests.)
TECH 2015 application deadline – Feb. 3 (www.iceberg.org/tech_2015)
Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment (DLM-AA) testing window – March 23-May 1
2015 Illinois Arts Education Week – March 16-22
TECH 2015 student showcase – May 7
Deadline to submit data in the Student Health Data – Vision system - June 30

Special Education Services

IDEA Excess Cost Documents Released

Federal guidance requires the development and implementation of a process for documenting local district compliance with federal special education regulations and the use of federal special education funds.

Please carefully review all information provided regarding this annual process that will be used to collect Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) excess cost documentation. The IDEA Excess Cost Worksheet, IDEA Expenditure Detail Report form (for cooperatives and member districts) and accompanying instructions are available on the IDEA grant webpage at www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/idea_part-b.htm.

IDEA Excess Cost

The 34 CFR 300.202 allows districts to use federal IDEA funds to meet the excess cost of educating students with disabilities. The IDEA funds are to
supplement local spending on special education expenses, and as such, each district must calculate its excess cost threshold annually. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has directed state education agencies that written assurances are not sufficient means to verify that districts calculate the local excess cost threshold and expend IDEA dollars as supplemental funds. Illinois previously relied on written assurances in the IDEA grants for excess cost purposes. In order to ensure compliance with IDEA excess cost requirements, the Special Education Services Division has developed an IDEA Excess Cost Worksheet to assist districts in documenting the excess cost threshold.

**Relevant Points:**

- **Federal Regulations** – The excess cost worksheet was developed in accordance with 34 CFR 300.16, 300.202 and Appendix A to Part 300.
- **Expenditures** – The excess cost calculation is specific to district expenditures (not revenue, not budgets). The Excess Cost Worksheet will direct districts to the data sources by fiscal year to collect the correct district expenditure information.
- **Format** – The Excess Cost Worksheet is an excel spreadsheet that uses district specific data to calculate the excess cost threshold. The completed IDEA Excess Cost Worksheet must be submitted to the IDEA grant coordinators by email.
- **General Education and Special Education Coordination** – The excess cost calculation requires child count and financial data for the entire district, not limited to special education expenditures.
- **Special Education Cooperative and Member District Coordination** – Districts that are members of special education cooperatives must coordinate with the cooperative to secure accurate data regarding IDEA flow-through expenditures. An additional form, the IDEA Expenditure Detail Report, is provided for the cooperatives to document IDEA expenditure data for each of the member districts.
- **Data Sources** – Districts must use the Fall Enrollment count, IDEA Child Count, Annual Financial Report (AFR), the Financial Reimbursement Information System (FRIS) and local financial records when completing the Excess Cost Worksheet. The instructions and the excel worksheet will direct users to the required data sources.

- **Separation of Elementary (K-8) and Secondary (9-12)** – All directives from OSEP require districts to calculate IDEA excess cost for elementary and secondary separately. The excel worksheet provides separate columns for elementary and secondary costs with additional information provided in the IDEA Excess Cost Worksheet instructions. We have provided a list of all districts with the verified Fall Enrollment count with student populations separated by elementary and secondary. That list and all other IDEA excess cost documents and resources are available on the IDEA grant webpage.
- **Resources** – In addition to the instructions, excess cost resources are available on the IDEA grants webpage, including:
  - A videotaped IDEA Excess Cost session from the August 2014 Directors’ Conference, presented by Deb Morrow, former OSEP fiscal consultant.
  - An IDEA Excess Cost webinar presented by the IDEA grant team.
- **Annual Requirement** – Districts will be required to complete and submit an IDEA Excess Cost Worksheet by the end of January each fiscal year.
- **Timeline for Completion** – The Excess Cost Worksheet must be completed and submitted to the Special Education Services Division via email no later than Jan. 30, 2015.

The Special Education Services Division and the IDEA grant coordinators strive to provide technical assistance and guidance to ensure that Illinois districts and special education cooperatives expend IDEA funds in accordance with federal/state regulations. The IDEA grant coordinators are available for questions as districts embark on this new process. Please direct questions to your IDEA grant coordinator by telephone at (217) 782-5589 or by email:

- Dawn Camacho, dcamacho@isbe.net
- Tammy Greco, greco@isbe.net
- Felicia Malloy, fmalloy@isbe.net

**Funding and Disbursement**

**Final 2013-14 Special Education Room And Board Claims Due Nov. 14**

Nov. 14 is the deadline to transmit any outstanding Special Education Room and Board monthly claims for the 2013-14 cycle (Sept. 1, 2013, through Aug. 31, 2014). All claims and adjustments must be
submitted to ISBE via the Special Education Room and Board Claim system available in IWAS. Outstanding 2013-14 claims not received by Nov. 14, 2014, will forfeit any reimbursement due.

Once all claims are received, districts will be notified of the final proration percent and payment in December.

If you have questions regarding the Room and Board claim process, please contact Lisa Willhoit at (217) 782-5256 or email lwillhoi@isbe.net.

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**School Business Services**

**Reorganization Feasibility Studies**

ISBE is now accepting agreements for the fiscal year 2015 School District Reorganization Feasibility Studies.

Feasibility studies are a tool to be used by school districts wanting to investigate the advantages and/or disadvantages of reorganization options. Interested school districts should submit a proposed agreement with an independent contractor(s) to their Regional Office of Education (ROE) or Intermediate Service Center (ISC) in Cook County. The ROE/ISC will submit the agreement to ISBE for approval.

State funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Each study will be funded between $4,500 and $8,000 based on the number of school districts involved in the study and the combined student enrollment of the districts involved in the study. Any study cost above the state funding will be the responsibility of the participating districts.

In order to receive reorganization feasibility study funds in FY 2015, agreements must be approved by both the ROE/ISC and ISBE and studies must be completed and approved for payment no later than June 30, 2015.

Procedures, funding allotment, and sample forms are available at www.isbe.net/sfms/html/feasibility.htm.

If you have any questions, please contact Michelle Heninger, School Business Services, at (217) 785-8779 or mheninge@isbe.net.

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**Illinois Environmental Protection Agency**

**Alternate Fuel Programs for School Districts and School Bus Companies**

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) has two funding programs for school buses owned and operated by school districts.

The Illinois Alternate Fuels Rebate Program, which covers school districts or school bus companies statewide, will provide up to $4,000 for the purchase of new natural gas, propane or electric school buses or school support vehicles. Conversions are also included. Funding is also available to use biodiesel (at least 20 percent blend) in a fleet of existing diesel school buses. Please note that this rebate program is not a competitive grant program, and school districts/bus companies that meet the eligibility requirements will receive a rebate under this program.

The Chicago Area Green Fleet Grant Program, which covers school districts or school bus companies in the six-county Chicago area, will provide grants for 50 percent of the incremental purchase cost of a new natural gas or propane school bus versus its diesel counterpart. Conversions are also included. While this program offers more funding than the Alternate Fuels Rebate Program, applicants must apply in advance and be selected. This grant program is not a rebate program. Please note that propane and natural gas school buses are a “high priority” for this grant program; therefore, school districts/bus companies in the Chicago area will likely receive favorable consideration. There is no application deadline, and funding is allocated through 2017.

For more information on the IEPA’s programs or to complete and submit application(s), go to www.illinoisgreenfleets.org.

Specific questions can be directed to Darwin Burkhart at (217) 524-5008 or Darwin.Burkhart@illinois.gov.

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**U.S. EPA Announces National Rebate Program for New School Buses**

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has just announced its “School Bus Rebate” funding.
School buses with engines model year (MY) 2006 and older may be replaced with new school buses (MY 2014 and newer) that operate on diesel, are hybrid-electrics or are alternative fuel school buses. Five million dollars is available nationally, and selections will be made on a random basis. Application forms, information, eligibility, funding amounts and other requirements are available here: http://epa.gov/cleandiesel/dera-rebate-schoolbus14.htm.

Applications are due by Nov. 17, and scrapping the same number of older buses is required. These applications go to the U.S. EPA and not to the Illinois EPA.


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**Federal and State Monitoring**

**NCLB Monitoring Instrument and NCLB Title I Comparability**

The fiscal year 2015 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Monitoring Instrument is now available for completion and submission in the IWAS system. The due date is Sunday, Nov. 30.

All districts receiving NCLB funding are required to submit the document every year. As before, the previous year’s information will be imported to the document, and the district should ensure its accuracy before submitting. Each “Comment/Proof Indicator” will need to have a comment that identifies the documents that support your answers or clarifies your “yes,” “no” or “N/A” response. You will not be able to submit the form without providing an answer in each box. There are additional validation and status questions that will require your attention. The form has changed in conjunction with the NCLB waiver approval concerning Supplemental Educational Services (SES)/Choice and other NCLB components that were previously required.

There is a sample list of proof indicators on the Federal and State Monitoring website at www.isbe.net/ea/pdf/proof-indicators.pdf. We have also added two new training presentations that were used at the recent Title I Directors’ Conference addressing “How to prepare for an audit/monitoring visit” and “Updates on the changes to the Super Circular,” as well as “Time and Effort” documentation requirements.

The Title I Comparability analysis is now available for completion and submission in the IWAS system. There are new adjustments to how districts complete their analysis this year.

For those that were not able to attend the Title I Director’s Conference in Springfield, we have posted the training video on our website that explains the changes in the FY 2015 Comparability application and how to submit the form. The video is approximately 33 minutes in length. However, you may fast-forward to the portions that are of most concern to you and repeat them as many times as you like.

Districts that are “exempt” will continue to select the “Exempt” radio button and then “Submit.” Their submittal requirements will have been met when the superintendent submits it.

An updated “Comparability User’s Guide” for FY 2015 is located on the menu bar of the comparability application and on our Federal and State Monitoring website.

All districts receiving Title I funds must complete the document. Failure to comply will result in frozen program funds and a recovery of expenditures of Title I funds in buildings where they are determined to be non-comparable.

If you have questions concerning the Title I Comparability or the Monitoring Instrument, contact Paul Williams, Federal and State Monitoring, at (217) 782-7970 or pwilliam@isbe.net.

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**In Brief**

**Awards and Recognition**

- Nila Hawkins of Centralia City Schools received the School Nurse of the Year award during the Illinois Association of School Nurses (IASN) conference on Oct. 24-25 in Rockford.
- Monica Blum from the Marquardt School District in Glendale Heights received the School Nurse
Administrator of the Year award during the IASN conference.

- Cheryl Hayes of the East Moline School District was recognized for her award of National Special Needs School Nurse of the Year from the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) during the IASN conference.

Professional Development


- The Illinois Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (IAHPERD) state convention will be held Nov. 20-21 at Pheasant Run Resort in St. Charles. All health and physical education teachers, as well as others interested in promoting physical development and health, can register by clicking here.

Student Opportunities

- The 41st annual Illinois Young Author’s Conference will take place at Illinois State University in Bloomington-Normal on May 16, 2015. Sponsored by the Illinois Language and Literacy Council and Illinois Reading Council, this daylong event is designed to honor exceptional writing by K-8 students across the state. Guidelines and registration materials can be found at www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org/yac.html or www.isbe.net/young-authors/default.htm. Volunteers are always needed and appreciated for this event. If interested, please email Dr. Christina Podraza at cpodraza@naperville203.org.

- High school and college students can enter the eighth annual $10,000 Create-A-Greeting-Card Scholarship contest sponsored by The Gallery Collection. The deadline for submissions is Feb. 18. Contest rules and other details are available at www.gallerycollection.com/greeting-cards-scholarship.htm.

Employment Opportunities

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