Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

As we work together to implement our new assessment system, we have heard from a number of high school educators with concerns regarding PARCC implementation this spring. In response to these concerns, we have worked with our vendor and are able to offer a one-time opportunity to allow districts their choice of the sets for the high school PARCC assessments during the 2014-15 administration.

For this year only, districts may opt to change from the state-selected ELA III and Algebra II/Integrated Math 3 to one of the following combinations of tests:

- ELA I and Algebra I/Integrated Math 1
- ELA II and Geometry/Integrated Math 2

Currently ELA III and Algebra II/Integrated Math 3 are scheduled to be loaded into the Pearson system.

If – and only if – you intend to change this current selection, please go to https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TV729JZ by Dec. 5 and confirm your new choice of tests so that we can submit the correct high school student data for your newly selected courses. You will be asked to provide contact names and numbers for district staff with whom information regarding logistics may be shared.

We apologize for the tight time frame; however, we will not be able to honor change requests after Dec. 5. This is to provide your staff time to load any needed information to SIS and enable you to enter all relevant paper PNP/accommodations data prior to the Dec. 8 print deadline. If local district staff do not make changes in the systems by the above deadlines, the state-selected set of ELA III and Algebra II/Integrated Math 3 will be designated for students.

This is a one-time option that we are providing in direct response to feedback from high school educators. We listened to your concerns and worked to provide this flexibility. This is a very tight timeframe and in order for you to take advantage of this opportunity it will mean additional effort from your staff within the next week to meet these immovable deadlines.

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 [http://www.isbe.net](http://www.isbe.net).

- **Deadline to enter the 2015 Illinois Arts Education Week Poster Contest** – Dec. 2 ([www.isbe.net/arts-week/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/arts-week/default.htm))
- **Deadline to send cards for Governor Quinn’s Holiday Cards to Troops Program** – Dec. 12
- **Annual Statement of Affairs (ISBE 50-37)** – To be filed with ISBE by Dec. 15 ([http://www.isbe.net/sfms/afsr/asp.htm](http://www.isbe.net/sfms/afsr/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
- **ISBE offices closed for New Year’s Day** – Jan. 1
- **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](http://www.isbe.net/isbewaivers/default.htm) for public notice requirements for all waiver requests.)
- **ISBE offices closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day** – Jan. 19
- **Employment Information System (EIS) open for data submissions** – Jan. 26
- **TECH 2015 application deadline** – Feb. 3 ([www.iceberg.org/tech_2015](http://www.iceberg.org/tech_2015))
- **ISBE offices closed for Lincoln’s Birthday** – Feb. 12
- **ISBE offices closed for Presidents’ Day** – Feb. 16
- **Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment (DLM-AA) testing window** – March 23-May 1
- **2015 Illinois Arts Education Week** – March 16-22
- **Eighth annual Illinois School Wellness Conference** – April 23
- **TECH 2015 student showcase** – May 7
- **ISBE offices closed for Memorial Day** – May 25
- **Deadline to submit data in the Student Health Data –Vision system** – June 30
- **ISBE offices closed for Independence Day** – July 3

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**Data Analysis and Accountability**

**Employment Information Services Timeline Update**

Given the valuable feedback we’ve received from districts, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is simplifying and refocusing data collection in the Employment Information System (EIS).

David Smalley, division administrator for Data Analysis and Accountability, is working closely with the EIS team and the Information Technology (IT) staff to simplify and clarify the data entry requirements for EIS. In order to apply these helpful adjustments, we have rescheduled EIS to open for data submissions on Jan. 26, 2015. ISBE will contact districts soon with further information regarding training for the 2015 collection. Also, a webinar and referential EIS documentation will be released prior to the opening date to serve as an aid to districts.

If your school district is a 5Essentials participant, you have until March 15 to enter your positions data. For the U.S. Department of Education (C059-Staff FTE) Report, positions data will be due for all districts by April 15. We are refocusing the salary portion of the collection to after April 15, as was done with the Teacher Service Record (TSR), the data collection system that EIS replaced.

Finally, in hopes to improve future communication, EIS is creating a contact list to be able to stay in touch with our constituents. Vendors and others wishing for technical details are encouraged to send a contact
email to datahelp@isbe.net. We will send out updates via this email in the new year to help keep districts current on EIS news.

Please send any questions you may have about these changes to datahelp@isbe.net.

Office of the Governor

Elementary Students Invited to Participate in Holiday Cards to Troops Program

Gov. Pat Quinn invites elementary school students across Illinois to help spread a little cheer this season by making holiday cards for our injured service members. Each year before the General Assembly reconvenes, Gov. Quinn has made it a priority to personally deliver greeting cards from Illinois schoolchildren as a thank you to the troops for their courageous service. Gov. Quinn welcomes your students to share in this holiday tradition.

Cards must be received no later than Friday, Dec. 12, 2014. Any questions about Gov. Quinn’s Holiday Cards to Troops Program can be directed to GOV.Cards4troops@illinois.gov.

Cards can be sent to:

Office of Governor Pat Quinn
Attn: Holiday Cards to Troops Program
James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph St., Suite 16-100
Chicago, IL 60601

General Guidelines:

- Holiday cards of all types are welcome (i.e., Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, etc.)
- Cards created by grade school students only.
- Cards should be no larger than a regular 8.5x11 piece of paper.
- Cards may be handmade or computer generated.
- Stack cards neatly and bundle with rubber bands.
- Include one index card with your school’s name and mailing address.
- Cards Only - We are unable to accept items other than holiday cards.

U.S. Department of Education

Office for Civil Rights Releases Guidance to Schools for Offering Single-Sex Classes

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has released guidance for K-12 schools that offer or want to offer single-sex classes.

In response to numerous inquiries about the legality of single-sex classes, OCR issued guidance that charts a path for schools on how they can provide boys-only or girls-only instruction while remaining in compliance with civil rights laws.

To offer single-sex classes or extracurricular activities, schools must:

- Identify an important objective that they seek to achieve by offering a single-sex class (such as improving academic achievement);
- Demonstrate that the single-sex nature of the class is substantially related to achieving that objective;
- Ensure that enrollment in the single-sex class is completely voluntary (through an opt-in, rather than an opt-out, process);
- Offer a substantially equal coed class in the same subject;
- Offer single-sex classes evenhandedly to male and female students;
- Conduct periodic evaluations at least every two years to ensure that the classes continue to comply with Title IX;
- Avoid relying on gender stereotypes;
- Provide equitable access to single-sex classes to students with disabilities and English language learners; and
- Avoid discriminating against faculty members based on gender when assigning educators to single-sex classrooms.

The guidance document is presented in a question-and-answer format, offering common scenarios aimed at assisting schools and educators in designing single-sex programs that comply with Title IX.

For more information about OCR, please click here.
Assessment

PARCC Accessibility Features and Accommodations Manual Available

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) has released an updated PARCC Accessibility Features and Accommodations Manual.

The manual is a comprehensive accessibility policy document that provides guidance to districts and decision-making teams to ensure that the PARCC mid-year, performance-based and end-of-year assessments provide valid results for all participating students. This manual and its 11 supporting appendices are to be used as training tools to prepare schools for full administration of PARCC assessments. It also addresses the specific needs of students with disabilities, English learners and English learners with disabilities. The manual allows for maximum participation of all learners in Illinois schools and is a reflection of PARCC’s commitment to engage all students and establish equitable access as well as comparability of results for all students, schools, districts and states in the PARCC consortium.

Within the context of PARCC, accommodations are defined as adjustments to the testing situation, test format or test administration that provide equitable access during assessments for students with disabilities, students who are English learners and students with disabilities who are also English learners. Accommodations are to reduce or eliminate the effects of a student’s disability and/or English language proficiency level; however, accommodations do not reduce learning expectations.

On PARCC computer-delivered assessments, accessibility features are tools or preferences that are either built into the assessment system or provided externally by test administrators. Accessibility features can be used by any student taking the PARCC assessments (i.e., students with or without disabilities, gifted students, English learners and English learners with disabilities). Accessibility features are not accommodations. They are intended to benefit a wide range of students, and are available to any student at his or her discretion during testing.


Nutrition and Wellness Programs

Presentation Proposals Sought for Annual Illinois School Wellness Conference

Illinois Action for Healthy Kids (IL AFHK) invites individuals with expertise in school health and wellness to submit session ideas for presentation during the eighth annual Illinois School Wellness Conference.

The conference is scheduled for April 23 at the Hilton Garden Inn, 1501 S. Neil St., in Champaign.

AFHK is specifically interested in presentations that highlight successful school health and wellness-related outreach in schools, innovative projects that improve the overall health of the school community and emerging issues affecting school health and wellness. Presentations will be selected based on the need for the topic as it relates to school health and wellness and the speaker’s knowledge and expertise on the subject.

More information and the proposal application are available here or contact Jocelyn Toney at jtoney@actionforhealthykids.org. Please call (312) 878-2712 if you have questions. All proposals are due by 5 p.m. on Dec. 12.

Illinois Arts Education Week

Last Call for Entries From High School Students for Annual Poster Contest

High school students are encouraged to enter the 2015 Illinois Arts Education Week Poster Contest.

Gov. Pat Quinn traditionally designates the third week of March as Illinois Arts Education Week. In cooperation with the Illinois Art Education Association (IAEA) and ISBE, the 2015 Arts Education Week is scheduled for March 16-22.

The contest reinforces the importance of the arts in the growth and development of all students. This year’s theme is “Art is Timeless!” The contest
winner’s artwork will be featured on a poster that is sent to all public and private schools in Illinois.

Entries must be postmarked no later than Dec. 2.

The contest focuses on different grade levels (K-8 and 9-12) in alternating years. The 2015 contest is open to all public, nonpublic and home-schooled high school students.

For more information and contest criteria, visit www.isbe.net/arts-week/default.htm.

Grant Opportunities

- The Illinois Coastal Management Program is accepting applications for Illinois Coastal Grants for environmental education and outreach projects and sustainable coastal planning projects. New for this year will be proposals for habitat restoration projects and small grants. Application materials are available at www.dnr.illinois.gov/cmp/Pages/grants.aspx. Applications will be accepted through 5 p.m. Dec. 15. All potential applicants are invited to sign up for a one-on-one consultation about your project idea. Email Lisa Cotner at lisa.cotner@illinois.gov for more information.

Educator Opportunities

- Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) fishing and aquatic ecology programs are available for central Illinois educators. These programs work to develop positive attitudes towards natural resources, conservation and fishing in young people. Lessons align with the state and national learning standards and are adapted to all grade levels. For more information or to schedule a program, contact Van Grissom at (217) 720-3501 or van.grissom@illinois.gov. The counties served are Adams, Brown, Cass, Champaign, Christian, Clark, Coles, Cumberland, DeWitt, Douglas, Edgar, Ford, Hancock, Iroquois, Livingston, Logan, Macon, Mason, McLean, Menard, Morgan, Moultrie, Piatt, Sangamon, Schuyler, Scott, Shelby and Vermilion.

Employment Opportunities

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