Good afternoon. I have just returned from my third round of public testimony on the budget before the General Assembly. Many of your legislators are asking good questions about the impact of the funds being allotted.

As I review the last 21 years of data collected by the State Board of Education, I note that the percent of low income student enrollment has nearly doubled. The percent of low income students in 1986 was 23.7% and in 2006, low income enrollment was 40%. In that same timeframe, Illinois school districts have reduced the dropout rate (actually data has only been collected since 1993) from 6.2% to 3.5% in 2006. Certain reimbursements to districts, such as special education personnel has remained at the same level in the present and overall costs to deliver services to students in need has risen. Such scenarios have serious cost implications for school districts. Right now your Governor and elected officials in the General Assembly are working to address these costs and your voice needs to be heard.

The sad reality in Illinois is that there are incredible disparities between the educational have and have-nots. Both the State Board of Education and the Governor have proposed significant increases to General State Aid, Mandated Categoricals and Special Education Personnel Reimbursement.

Governor Blagojevich has proposed increasing the foundation level by $686 to $6,020 during the next school year – an unprecedented increase that will bring us closer to the recommendations of the Education Funding Advisory Board than ever before. Simultaneously, he has proposed addressing school construction and pensions.

Please continue your efforts to meet with your communities and legislators to ensure they understand the impact of the various proposals on the table. Our agency will work to ensure that discussions are made on the best information available.

Thank you for your continued advocacy for education. Your direct involvement in the process will better ensure you are satisfied with the final budget.

Chris Koch

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- Preschool for All Children Ages 3 to 5 years RFP – May 3, 2007
- Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Young Scholars Program – May 7, 2007
- Waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in Fall 2007 – August 10, 2007

Special Message from the Governor’s Office

Lowered flags honor Illinois’ fallen

Governor Blagojevich has ordered flags at all State of Illinois buildings to fly at half staff on Wednesday, March 14, 2007, to honor Staff Sgt. Paul M. Latourney of Roselle, Illinois.

Staff Sgt. Latourney, 28, died March 2, 2007, in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle while on combat patrol. Latourney was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

This information is shared with Illinois schools at the request of Regional Offices of Education and local school districts. Flying flags at school buildings at half staff is entirely at the discretion of the local administration.

Special Education

State Board seeks public comment on FY 2007 IDEA Part B application

The Illinois State Board of Education, Division of Special Education Services has completed the grant application under Part B of IDEA as amended in 2004. Upon receipt and approval of the required assurances, certifications, and information in the Application, the State is eligible to receive Part B funds.

The General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) requires that States must publish their Part B Application for at least 60 days and accept public comment for at least 30 days. The Illinois State Board of Education’s State Plan is published from March 6, 2007 through May 4, 2007. The plan includes a checklist of assurances that Illinois has policies and procedures in effect to comply with the requirements of the December 2004 amendments to IDEA. Where Illinois is not in compliance with the IDEA amendments of 2004, a date is given by which Illinois

assures that policies and procedures will be in effect. The plan for expenditure of state-level IDEA funds by category is also a component of the state plan.

A copy of the plan may be reviewed by visiting the Department of Education’s web site at http://www.isbe.net/pdf/part_b_application.doc. If you wish to submit a written comment regarding the State’s plan, you may utilize the comment form at that website.

A copy of the plan and comment form may also be reviewed at the Illinois State Board of Education, 100 North First Street, Springfield, Illinois 62777 in the Information Center 1 South.

Comment Form

Written comments will only be accepted from March 19 2007 – April 20, 2007. Public comment may be submitted either via e-mail IDEA@isbe.net or via standard mail addressed to:

Mr. John Herner
Assistant Superintendent
Division of Special Education Services
100 North First Street – N-243
Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
Phone: 217-782-5589
Fax: 217-782-0372

Revised Memorandum for Part C to Part B Transition

A memorandum was sent to Superintendents and Directors of Special Education on February 14, 2007 regarding Part C to Part B Transition. This memorandum has been revised to include the following information:

Starting February 1, 2007, districts/cooperatives will be required to return to ISBE a completed copy of the Early Intervention to Early Childhood Special Education Tracking Form for each child referred from EI to ECSE. Please mail or fax the form to Special Education Services. Our fax number is 217-782-0372.
*THIS COPY IS IN ADDITION TO THE COPY YOU WILL CONTINUE TO SEND TO YOUR LOCAL CFC.

The entire text can be viewed at: http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/revised_partC.pdf

NOTE: Also, please be aware that the fax number for the State Board of Education that appears on the back of the tracking form is incorrect. The correct fax number is 217-782-0372.

Rules & Waivers

Invitation to Comment on Rules

Four additional sets of proposed rules recently reviewed by the State Board of Education are currently available for public comment. These items have been posted on the agency’s web site at www.isbe.net/rules; choose “Proposed Rules and Amendments”. Please submit any comments or suggestions you may have to rules@isbe.net.

Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision)

Elimination of contradictory duplicate provisions in the accountability system, reflecting USDE’s formal disapproval of aspects introduced by P.A. 94-666.

Part 25 (Certification)

Several unrelated aspects of Part 25:

- Requirements for the new “teacher leader” endorsement and new alternative route to administrative certification established by P.A. 94-1039 (the “SAELP legislation”);
- Provisions for making endorsements in certain foreign languages (generally candidates’ native languages) available on a streamlined basis to individuals who could have received those endorsements when they originally received Illinois certificates;
- A technical update responding to recent changes in the Grow Your Own Teacher Education Act and in Section 21-2.1 of the School Code (Early Childhood Certificate) which expressly permit payment to certain student teachers; and
- A new requirement for thumb-printing of individuals taking certification tests.

Part 475 (Contested Cases and Other Formal Hearings)

A technical revision to eliminate the connotation that a full evidentiary hearing is available to individuals whose applications for certification are denied.

Part 485 (Appeal Proceedings Before the State Teacher Certification Board)

A new set of rules setting forth the appeal procedure developed for use by the Certification Board after a regional superintendent or the State Superintendent has suspended an individual’s certificates pursuant to Section 21-23 of the School Code.

Deadline for Public Comment: April 23, 2007

Teacher Resources

‘Pi Across America’

‘Pi Across America’ – a national celebration with the goal of improving math and science literacy among students – will be celebrated on Wednesday, March 14. The celebration’s date is significant, because the numeric expression is 3.14 – or pi.

Free program materials for teachers and students are available online at: www.piacrossamerica.org. The web site includes free downloads of pi facts, sample pi curriculum for all grade levels, suggested event activities and a pi bibliography.

Participants may also submit their ‘Pi Across America’ classroom events and receive a Certificate of Participation.

Support Services

Support to children of military personnel

The Illinois Chapter of the Military Family Association is hosting the Military Child Education Coalition’s two-day training session – “Supporting Children of the National Guard and Reserve Institute” – on March 29-30 in Springfield. The Illinois National Guard and the University of Illinois Extension’s Military Kids program are also sponsoring the event.

The Institute is a professional development program for educators and professionals to reach out in a support network to the children and families of the National Guard and Reserve.
The two-day training will be from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on both days at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 3000 S. Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, IL. The registration fee, materials and conference meals are covered by MCEC.

The deadline for registration is March 16, 2007. Registration information can be found online at www.militarychild.org/GuardForm.asp. For more information, contact Linda Neault at 254-953-1923 or Linda.Neault@MilitaryChild.org.

Federal Grants & Programs

FY08 NCLB: Training for grant coordinators

Training for all grant coordinators for the completion of the FY08 federal Titles I, II, IV, and V grants will be conducted at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 27, 2007, via teleconference. There will be a question and answer session following the presentation.

A PowerPoint presentation along with telephone and confirmation number can be found online at: http://www.isbe.net/htmls/egrants_workshop.htm.

This training will be more effective if you have access to the PowerPoint presentation. Each district will be able to make as many copies of the PowerPoint presentation as necessary for staff.

For questions or more information, contact Amy Eskew at 217-524-4832 or via email at aeskew@isbe.net.

Funding & Disbursements

Early Dismissal, Delayed Starts and School Closings

Illinois has experienced its share of extreme weather this school year which has resulted in interrupted days, delayed start days and/or school closings. Section 18-8.05 (F)(2)(d) of the Illinois School Code mandates that interrupted days and delayed start days must be approved by the Regional Office of Education (ROE) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) within a month of their occurrence.

In addition, Section 10-19 states “The calendar for the school term and any changes must be submitted to and approved by the regional superintendent of schools before the calendar or changes may take effect.” This language emphasizes the importance to provide timely notification of changes to the school calendar including the reporting of Emergency and Act of God Days. All changes must be reported via an Amended Public School Calendar through IWAS. This ensures that the most accurate school calendar is available on-line via the School Calendar Inquiry and minimizes the chance for error when transmitting the Final Calendar at the end of the school year. Instructions and guidance to accurately report the aforementioned days is provided below.

Interrupted Day (Calendar Code XID) – An amended calendar must be transmitted with the calendar code changed to XID on such day, as well as the student attendance time and a brief explanation for why the day was interrupted. Please remember Interrupted Days fall short of providing the minimum five hours of instruction; however, one hour of instruction must be provided. The required five clock hours does not include passing time, lunch, or recess. These days are approved by the ROE and ISBE via the transmitted calendar.

Delayed Start Day (Calendar Code XDS) – An amended calendar must be transmitted with the calendar code changed to XDS on such day, as well as the student attendance time and a brief explanation for why the day was delayed. These days are approved by the ROE and ISBE via the transmitted calendar.

Emergency Day (Calendar Code ED) – Emergency Days are used at the discretion of the district when an emergency situation makes it necessary to close the school. An amended calendar should be transmitted with the calendar code changed to ED on such day. No explanation is required, but one of the Proposed Emergency Days (Calendar Code XED) built into the proposed calendar must be changed to a Pupil Attendance Day (Calendar Code X). These days are approved by the ROE via the transmitted calendar.

Act of God Day (Calendar Code AOG) – Act of God Days are available only after all of the Proposed Emergency Days (Calendar Code XED) built into the proposed calendar have been exhausted. Once a district has coded the appropriate number of Emergency Days (ED) by changing the code XED to X, and coding the actual days taken as Emergency Days as ED, the next Emergency Day request would be an Act of God Day. An amended calendar must be transmitted with the calendar code changed to AOG on such day and a brief explanation provided for the AOG Day. These days are
approved by the ROE and ISBE via the transmitted calendar.

Further guidance regarding the completion of public school calendars can be found at http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/ps_guidelines.pdf.

All public school calendars can be viewed via the School Calendar Inquiry at http://webprod1.isbe.net/SchCalInquiry/SchCalInquiry.aspx.

As a final reminder, proposed public school calendars should be transmitted to the ROE no later than June 15th. Final public school calendars should be transmitted to the ROE no later than the last day of school. All data on the final school calendar must agree with the data included on the districts’ General State Aid Claim. The General State Aid claim cannot be transmitted to the ISBE until a final calendar is approved.

If you have any further questions, please contact your Regional Office or Marj Beck at 217-782-5256 or e-mail mbeck@isbe.net.

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.

In the News

**Weekly news clips**

ISBE has posted highlights from last week’s education news clips at: http://www.isbe.net/news/2007/newsclips/070309.htm