Message from State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

This week the General Assembly begins its two-week spring break. I spent considerable time at the Capitol last week, testifying before the House Education Appropriations Committee. I also spoke about the importance of learning that takes place outside of schools at the Illinois Museum Day and had a chance to discuss integrating new technologies into our classrooms at the 10th Anniversary of the Cisco Network Academy. In addition, it was Arts Education Week and we recognized our student winners in the statewide arts education poster contest in the Capitol rotunda.

I also was able to spend some time with a number of regional and local superintendents last week, both in Springfield at the Illinois Association of Regional School Superintendents legislative reception, as well as speaking to educators in Lanark at the Regional Office of Education (ROE) #8 and in Ottawa at ROE #35. It was a pleasure meeting with all of you and I thank you for inviting me.

This week will prove to be a very busy one as the Board members gather in Springfield for their March meeting Wednesday and Thursday. I will be making recommendations for how we should proceed with future testing of our English Language Learners. Since last fall, we have worked with and heard from individuals, districts, and education and bilingual organizations. One common theme throughout all of our discussions was that we should proceed using a methodical and systematic process in the development of ELL assessments.

Testing for many schools has wrapped up for the year and we are already receiving feedback. For instance, Monday I was at a meeting with representatives of Schaumburg Community Consolidated School District 54 and heard their thoughts on this year’s testing with accommodations. We will be reaching out to survey teachers around the state to get their thoughts and recommendations for improvements, making adjustments where necessary for 2009.

In addition, the Board will consider the annual School District Financial Profile. Statewide data will be discussed Wednesday in the Finance and Audit Committee meeting. School specific data will be available online Thursday after the Board approves the final report.

Finally, this week is National Agriculture Week, and specifically, March 20 is National Agriculture Day. I think it’s important for our students to get an appreciation of the enormous role agriculture plays in our lives everyday; it is Illinois’ largest industry and plays a vital role in our economy from barge traffic along the Mississippi River to action on the floor of the Chicago Board of Trade.

Thanks and have a great week.

Chris
Upcoming Deadlines

- Reading Intervention Professional Development to Support Response to Intervention (RtI) RFP – Application – April 3, 2008
- Preschool for All Children Ages 3 to 5 Years RFP – April 7, 2008
- Truants’ Alternative and Optional Education Program (TAOEP) RFP – April 14, 2008
- Migrant Education Program Summer 2008 Application – April 15, 2008
- Deadline for proposed amendments to rules regarding Driver Education (23 Ill. Adm. Code 252) – April 21, 2008
- Even Start Family Literacy RFP – April 25, 2008
- Student Advisory Council applications for 2008-2009 – April 30, 2008
- Charter Planning Grant applications & Charter Implementation Grant applications – April 30, 2008
- Prevention Initiative Birth to Age 3 Years RFP – May 6, 2008
- Deadline for waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in Fall 2008 – August 8, 2008

Illinois Response to Intervention (RtI)

Illinois Response to Intervention (RtI) District Self-Assessment Template

With the development of the State RtI plan, the next step for the stakeholder group was to develop a district self-assessment template. The stakeholder group reviewed self-assessment tools from multiple technical assistance projects, such as ASPIRE, PBIS, and CHOICES. Additionally, the group reviewed RtI self-assessment tools from several different states.

The purpose of this self-assessment template is to assist districts in determining their initial readiness towards implementation of RtI to meet the learning needs of ALL students. This template will assist districts in gathering baseline information regarding current resources and practices addressing scientific research-based instruction, progress monitoring, ongoing assessment and levels of intervention and problem-solving. The template will be available later this week at http://www.isbe.net/RtI_plan/default.htm.

The ISBE will provide training the week of April 7, 2008. We will offer the training by teleconference with presentation materials available online for viewing and printing. Further information will be provided via this publication.

RFP for Reading Intervention Professional Development to Support Response to Intervention (RtI)

The Illinois State Board of Education has released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Reading Intervention Professional Development to Support Response to Intervention (RtI). School districts, charter schools, and public university laboratory schools approved by ISBE are eligible to apply. As a part of ISBE’s effort to encourage school districts to incorporate an RtI approach to teach reading, ISBE would like to provide training to teachers in the implementation of the “Anna Plan.” The “Anna Plan” is a small group reading intervention model that enables teachers to differentiate instruction.

A letter of intent was due by Wednesday, March 12, and the application is due by Thursday, April 3. If you have any questions, please contact Sarah McCusker, Curriculum & Instruction, at 217-557-7323 or by e-mail at smccuske@isbe.net.

To access the RFP look under What’s New: http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/Default.htm.

Early Childhood

FY 09 Prevention Initiative Birth to Age 3 Years RFP Released

The Prevention Initiative Birth to Age 3 Years: 09 Request for Proposals (RFP) for new funds has been
released. This RFP is for Prevention Initiative programs offering coordinated services to at-risk children and their families. Public school districts, university laboratory schools approved by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), charter schools, area vocational centers, and other entities are eligible to submit a proposal. Applicants other than public school districts must provide evidence of existing competencies to provide early childhood education programs.

The RFP is available online at [http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/block_grant.htm](http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/block_grant.htm). The RFP can also be obtained by contacting the Early Childhood Division at 217-524-4835.

Prevention Initiative Bidders’ conferences will be held for this RFP. Attendance at a bidders’ conference is recommended but is not required. Security procedures require a photo identification for entry at each location.

There is a form on the Early Childhood website for submitting questions prior to the Bidders’ Conference entitled **Submit Questions Regarding the PI RFP by April 2, 2008**. Questions that are submitted will be answered during the Bidders’ Conferences.

**Springfield**
- IEA - Professional Development Center
- 3440 Liberty Drive
- Tuesday, April 8, 2008
- 1 – 3 p.m.

**Chicago**
- State of Illinois Building (Bilandic Building)
- 160 North LaSalle (Across from James R. Thompson Center)
- Thursday, April 10, 2008
- 9 a.m. to Noon
- 5th Floor, Room C-500

If you would like to attend, please respond to Yaya Madrigal by e-mail at ymadrigal@Ounceofprevention.org and indicate which location you will attend.

**Additional Resources for Preschool for All RFP Available**

The Preschool for All Children Ages 3 to 5 Years – 09 Request for Proposals (RFP) for new funds was released on Tuesday, February 26. The RFP is available online at [http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/preschool/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/preschool/default.htm). The RFP can also be obtained by contacting the Early Childhood Division at 217-524-4835. The following resources have been added to the website.

- FY 09 Preschool RFP Review Rubric
- Resource Document for Responding to Statement of Need in FY 09 Preschool RFP
- Two PowerPoint Presentations from the Bidders’ Conferences
- PFA Bidders’ Conference
- DCFS Licensing Information

**Prevention Initiative Pre-Bidders’ Conference**

An overview of Prevention Initiative (PI) research-based program models will be provided at a pre-bidders’ conference session scheduled prior to each of the Prevention Initiative Bidders’ Conferences. This session will provide an opportunity for both Program Directors of existing PI Programs, and those wishing to apply for new funding to get important information about Parents As Teachers, Healthy Families America, Baby Talk and Early Head Start/Center-Based models. A flyer with details is available on the Early Childhood Block grant website at [http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/block_grant.htm](http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/block_grant.htm).

**Student Assessment**

**PSAE Modifications**
In order to comply with the recommendations of the third peer review, it is necessary to modify the scoring methodology of the PSAE beginning with the April, 2008 test administration. The components of the PSAE, including the ACT, WorkKeys, and state specific Science questions will remain exactly the same. There will be no change in the number of test items or the cut scores used to determine individual student progress toward meeting state standards.

Since 2001, when we first administered the PSAE, some items on the test counted more than others when calculating a PSAE student score. In an effort to better align the test scores to the Illinois Assessment Framework for Math, Reading and Science, the federal peer review team recommended that we modify the calculation process so that every item tested has equal weight when figuring an individual student’s PSAE score.

For example, for Math, the normalized score on the 60-item ACT Math test and the normalized score on the 30-item WorkKeys Applied Math test, each counted for half of the overall score, giving greater weight to the WorkKeys items.

Starting with the 2008 test, each of the 90 items will contribute equally to the overall score. A psychometric process was used to equate the 2007 results from the old methodology to the new methodology. This minimizes the impact on the percentage of students meeting standards.

**ISAT Assessment Correction Window for Demographic Data is now open**

The ISAT Assessment Correction window is now open for correcting all demographic data. Please check your SIS data to ensure completeness and accuracy. To identify data that needs to be added or corrected, utilize the SIS Assessment Correction Summary and Detail reports to review the students in your district. Missing information must be added through the Assessment Correction Batch or On-Line process. Failure to populate this information will result in errors displayed next to the student that has missing information on the Assessment Correction Detail Report. Please double check all data for accuracy. We encourage you to review and correct the demographic data now, prior to receiving the individual student scores.

**2008 Applications for 1% Cap Exceptions for AYP Purposes**

If more than one percent of students in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11 are identified as significantly cognitively disabled, districts should prepare a request for an exception to the one percent cap. If the conditions for the exception are approved, then all proficient and advanced scores earned by students taking the Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA) in reading and math will be counted as passing scores in making determinations for school, district and state AYP.

- **K-8 districts** may apply after ISAT testing is completed in those districts.
- **High school and K-12 districts** should apply after the PSAE makeup test dates (May 7-8, 2008).

Applications are due **Friday, June 2**. The form may be **mailed or faxed** to 217-782-6097, attention Pearl Schneider. For additional information please contact **Pearl Schneider**, Student Assessment, at 217-782-4823 or by e-mail at pschneid@isbe.net.


**Data Analysis & Progress Reporting**

**Teacher Service Record**

The 2007-2008 Teacher Service Record (TSR) opened Friday, March 14, for salary submission. The deadline for submitting salaries is **Tuesday, July 15**. The deadline for adding teachers and/or changing teaching assignments in the 2007-2008 TSR is the close of business **Tuesday, April 1**.

Any questions about the 2007-2008 TSR salary submission can be directed to the Illinois State Board of Education, Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division, at 217-782–3950.

**Special Education**

**State Board seeks public comment on FFY 2008 IDEA Part B Application**
The Illinois State Board of Education, Division of Special Education and Support 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 may be reviewed by visiting the web site at http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/part_b_aplication.pdf through Friday, May 16. 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.

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.

Written comments regarding the State’s plan will be accepted Tuesday, April 1 through Wednesday, April 30, 2008. To submit a written comment, you may utilize the comment form available at http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/word/part_b_comment.doc. Public comment may be submitted either by e-mail PartBapplication@isbe.net or by standard mail addressed to:

Ms. Elizabeth Hanselman
Assistant Superintendent
Division of Special Education and Support Services
100 North First Street – N-243
Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001

2006 Annual State Report on Special Education Performance

The 2006 Annual State Report on Special Education Performance is now available in the “What’s New” section of the Special Education webpage at http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/default.htm.

As in previous years, this report summarizes key performance data for students with disabilities that the Illinois State Board of Education regularly reports to the U.S. Department of Education. These performance areas include high school completion, student performance on statewide assessments and educational environments. Each of the three performance areas is introduced by providing the desired results as related to the Illinois State Performance Plan followed by overall observations. In addition, a background information section is provided to give an overall picture of students with disabilities in Illinois. The Illinois State Board of Education publishes this report annually to ensure that parents, teachers, administrators, legislators and the public remain informed of the current performance and progress in improving results for students with disabilities.

Curriculum & Instruction

Special Opportunity for Elementary and Secondary Mathematics and Science Teachers

The Illinois Mathematics and Science Partnerships (IMSP) Program is expanding its format for helping K-12 teachers meet the endorsement requirements for their teaching assignments. Twenty-four partnerships are focusing on creating new or revitalizing existing graduate programs that will incorporate specific endorsement areas through graduate degree programs for cohorts of approximately 25 teachers. Not all of the 600 openings in these 24 cohorts are filled at this point.

Please review the details for these innovative programs, found at http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/Default.htm, under What’s New, for consideration at your classroom, building, or district level.

If you have further questions, contact Gwen Pollock, Curriculum & Instruction, at 217-557-7323 or by e-mail at gpollock@isbe.net.

Funding & Disbursements


The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) issued correspondence dated September 5, 2007 to all school bus operators in Illinois regarding new school bus transportation laws effective January 1, 2008. A copy of the IDOT letter regarding the new laws can be accessed at
As a reminder, a couple of the new laws require a district policy to be in place to ensure compliance.

Public Act 95-0260, effective August 17, 2007, requires each school district and contractor in Illinois to have a policy in place by January 1, 2008, that requires the driver to shut off the ignition, activate the interior lights and walk to the rear of the bus to check for children still on board. If an electronic device is used, that device must activate the interior lights when the ignition is shut off.

**PROPOSED Policy:**
As required by Public Act 95-0260, the School Bus Driver shall at the end of each run, turn off the ignition of the vehicle, activate the interior lights and walk to the rear of the bus to check for children still on board as well as articles left behind.

Public Act 95-0176, effective January 1, 2008, requires each school bus operated in Illinois to display a telephone number on the rear of the bus to be used to report erratic driving. Requires school districts and contractors to have a policy in place to investigate reports of erratic driving and to report what action was taken to the complainant.

A white decal with black one inch letters and numbers displaying, "TO REPORT ERRATIC DRIVING (AREA CODE-SCHOOL BUS OWNER’S TELEPHONE NUMBER)" must be displayed on the rear of the bus. The decal shall be located on the rear window glazing below the seat back or on the bus body below the window line. The decal cannot be located on any emergency door glazing or any emergency window glazing. The decal must be visible to the motoring public from the rear of the bus and cannot obstruct any required lettering or numbers. Magnetic signs are not acceptable.

It is recommended that the district have a dedicated phone line and require the complainant to provide their name, phone number, address, and location of incident. A post card can be mailed to the complainant to report what action was taken. A form that may be used to record reports of erratic driving can be accessed at http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/erratic_callin_form.pdf

**PROPOSED Policy:**
As required by Public Act 95-0176, the district will display signage located in accordance with the law stating “TO REPORT ERRATIC DRIVING (DESIGNATED PHONE NUMBER TO CONTACT)”. The District will investigate the reports and report back the complainant.

School District Transportation - Charter Coach Requirements
Please be advised that all school districts that contract with a charter coach transportation company to transport students to and from an event or field trip should require the following information from the charter coach company at minimum:

- Date of Event or Field Trip
- Proof of Insurance
- Full Name of Charter Coach Driver(s) Assigned to Drive for the School District
- Driver’s License Number Including State of Issue
- Illinois File Number for Out–of–State Drivers

This information will ensure compliance by the charter coach company and avoid potential liability issues with the school district. If the school district does not have a form in place, it is suggested that you use the Charter Coach Requirement Form which can be accessed at http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/charter_requirements.pdf.

You are encouraged to access the following statutes and administrative rules to provide further detail on this topic:

- 625 ILCS 5/6-104 - Classification of Driver - Special Restrictions
- 625 ILCS 5/6-508 - Commercial Driver's License (CDL) - qualification standards
- 92 Il Adm. Code Section 1030.81 - Charter Bus Driver Endorsement Requirements
- 92 Il Adm. Code Section 1030.82 - Charter Bus Driver Endorsement Requirements

Rules & Waivers

**Notice of Completed Rulemaking**
Please be advised that a rulemaking recently adopted by the State Board of Education is now in effect. These rules have been posted on the agency’s website at www.isbe.net/rules; choose “Rules Currently in Effect” and scroll to the relevant Part number. If you print the
affected Sections, please be sure to include the table of contents, which changes each time a Part is revised.

**Part 675 (Providers of Supplemental Educational Services)**
Strengthen code of ethics; qualifications of tutors; criminal background checks; annual approval process; approval of notification to parents; reports of agreed-upon procedures.

**Affected Sections:** 675.30, 675.40, 675.50, 675.60, 675.65, 675.70, 675.150, 675.175, 675.230, and 675.240

**Effective Date:** February 26, 2008

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**Federal Grants & Programs**

**21st Century Community Learning Centers Spring Workshop Planned**

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) Statewide Spring Workshop, “Growing Strong Programs,” will be held on Tuesday, April 8, 2008, at the Holiday Inn Select Convention Center, 18501 S. Harlem Ave, Tinley Park, Ill.

This is a mandatory, day-long meeting for all Illinois grantees, particularly Project Directors and Site Coordinators. Registration is free and can be found online at [http://www2.learningpot.org/21stcclc](http://www2.learningpot.org/21stcclc). Check in on the day of the meeting begins at 8 a.m., with the meeting commencing at 8:30 a.m. and concluding at 3 p.m.

Highlights of the day will include keynote presentations by the Illinois Teacher of the Year, Ruth Meissen, and USDE 21st CCLC Team Leader, Shawn Susan Stelow. Grantee-led workshops on varied topics related to quality programming will provide opportunities for networking and learning from one another. Statewide updates will include information by the statewide evaluator to assist grantees with completing the 21st CCLC Continuation Application for FY09 Funding.

For additional information about the meeting, please contact Gail Meisner, Federal Grants and Program Division at 217-524-4832 or by e-mail at gmeisner@isbe.net.

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**Teacher Leader Endorsement Update**

The Educator Preparation and Recertification Division is currently accepting applications from higher education institutions interested in offering the Teacher Leader endorsement.

Each institution’s “specially designed strand of Teacher Leadership courses” must include a range of graduate level courses addressing:

- subject-specific content knowledge,
- subject-specific content pedagogy,
- professional development in curriculum design, and
- subject-specific curriculum implementation.

An application form and instructions are available online at [http://www.isbe.net/certification/html/higher_education.htm](http://www.isbe.net/certification/html/higher_education.htm). For questions, contact the division at 217-557-6763.

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**School Business & Support Services**

**Rule Changes – Illinois Program Accounting for School Districts and Joint Agreements**

**Rule Changes – (23 Illinois Administrative Code – Parts 100, 110, 125)**

Please be advised that the new rules and regulations for the Illinois Program Accounting Manual (IPAM) will go into effect on July 1, 2008 (for FY09). Currently in effect are the Parts 110 and 125 Rules. Beginning **July 1, 2008**; these rules will no longer be in effect and Part 100 will become effective.

- To access revisions to IPAM, please go to: [http://www.isbe.net/finance/htmls/rule_changes.htm](http://www.isbe.net/finance/htmls/rule_changes.htm).
- To view the IPAM rules, go to: [http://www.isbe.net/rules/archive/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/rules/archive/default.htm).

The Regional Superintendents have been very helpful in assisting ISBE with coordinating training sessions in each of the six areas of state. Please plan to attend one of the training sessions. Please inform your school district’s accounting software provider of these sessions and invite them as well.
To access locations, dates and times of the training session, please go to http://www.isbe.net/finance/htmls/rule_changes.htm.

If you have any further questions, please call the School Business Services Division at 217-785-8779.

**Nutrition**

**Illinois School Wellness – From A to Z Conference**

The Illinois School Wellness – From A to Z Conference will be held on **Tuesday, May 6** at the Decatur Conference Center in Decatur.

This exciting one-day workshop is designed to showcase and highlight successful Illinois wellness policy implementation. Physical education expert Dr. Robert Pangrazi will deliver the morning keynote, followed by a choice of breakout sessions on wellness winning ways, 24/7 curriculum, and successful nutrition and foodservice practices. Browse the exhibit room for free resources, ideas, and networking.

Early bird registration is available through **Tuesday, April 15** at $25 or after Tuesday, April 15 at $35. The registration fee includes lunch, refreshments, and materials.

More information, including registration materials can be found online at http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/StateSpecificInfo.php?state=IL.

**Westland Meat Company Recall**

For clarification regarding the Westland Meat Company recall, Illinois received one truckload of the A608 beef subject to the recall. That truckload was received in the Lanter warehouse in January 2007 and subsequently delivered to approximately 200 Illinois schools in March 2007. If you were one of these 200 schools, you would have received an email notification regarding this United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) beef on January 31, 2008, from ISBE. If you diverted A594 beef to Pierre Foods, due to the comingling of meat within the processing plant, there are products that contain Westland Meat Company meat. A list of those Pierre products can be found at the website below.

At this point in time, these are the only known trucks and products of beef subject to the recall that Illinois received.

You can find all the detailed information regarding the recall at http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/default.htm.

**Print and Save Your April Bulletin Report**

All schools are audited each year by their own independent auditors. Part of this audit includes the value of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) commodities allocated to your school. It is the responsibility of each school to provide the needed information for the auditors, including the information regarding USDA commodities and the amount received from the Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

The needed information for commodities is easy to locate. We suggest this information be given to the school bookkeeper by the end of each school year. The information is available on the Monthly Commodity Bulletin for April, which is located on the Illinois Commodity System (ICS) website under Reports, then select Bulletin Report.

In the **Contract Summary for School Year 2008** section, the value of commodities allocated for that year will be the total of the amounts shown as **Total PAL (Planned Assistance Level) Deductions** plus **Total Bonus Deductions**. If you received DoD fresh fruits and vegetables, you will need to include that value as well. You need to calculate this from your DoD invoices.

We ask that schools provide this information to auditors when requested.

**New NET Training Program Provides Recipe for Success**

How do you get students to select more whole grain foods, opt for low-fat milk options or choose more fruits and vegetables?
As you know, adding more healthful food items to your menus may not be enough. New food options require proper promotion to ensure student acceptance. A new workshop focusing on marketing healthful foods is being developed by the Illinois Nutrition Education and Training (NET) Program and will be available this May. The workshop will help you positively promote nutrient-rich menu options and create a more eye appealing serving line. You will also discover classroom and home nutrition connections to reinforce these healthy food choices.

**Annual Superintendents’ Conference**

**Important Update: Annual Superintendents’ Conference Date Change**

The dates for the Annual Superintendents’ Conference have been changed. The conference will be held on Thursday and Friday, October 23-24, 2008 – [http://www.isbe.net/supts_conf/date_saver.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/supts_conf/date_saver.pdf). Please make the change on your calendars.

The conference will still be held at the Crowne Plaza Springfield. Information will be posted on our website at [www.isbe.net](http://www.isbe.net) as it becomes available.

**Professional Development**

**Educational opportunities at Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum**

The Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum in Chicago continues to offer a variety of educational offerings — from interactive demonstrations to graduate level coursework — that are designed to equip participants with the skills and desire to learn more about our universe.

This spring, National-Louis University, Adler Planetarium, and Chicago Math and Science Initiative (CMSI) have partnered to offer "Astronomy for Teachers." The graduate level course will explore selected topics in astronomy and cosmology relevant to the K-8 science curriculum using a laboratory-based approach and can be applied to a science endorsement. The class will meet from 4:30 – 7:20 p.m. on Wednesdays from April 9 – June 18. Registration for the three semester hour class is $1,200. And up to $700 tuition reimbursement is available for Chicago Public School teachers through CMSI.

For more information, contact Dr. Michael Mott, Associate Director for Curriculum and Instruction, at 312-322-0514 or by e-mail at mmott@adlerplanetarium.org.

The Adler Education Department’s additional programs include professional development workshops for teachers and administrators, standards-based curricula and resources to use in the classroom, distance learning sessions that bring Adler experts to schools and libraries, and focused gallery guides and standards-based programs that enhance a field trip to the Adler. Information about these education programs can be found online at [http://www.adlerplanetarium.org/education/index.shtml](http://www.adlerplanetarium.org/education/index.shtml).

For questions, contact Demi Brand, Senior Educator, at 312-322-0510 or by e-mail at dbrand@adlerplanetarium.org.

**Kids Count Symposium – Building Better Lives for Generations of Illinois Children**

The Illinois Kids Count Symposium will feature numerous policy experts, advocates and academics who will discuss how public policy has profoundly changed children's lives. Speakers will reflect on the well-being of children over the last 20 years and will look forward to how public policies will impact the lives of the next generation of kids.

The Symposium is from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., **Friday, March 28**, at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, 230 S. LaSalle St. in Chicago.

The keynote speaker is Mike Lawrence, director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University. Other speakers include: Harriet Meyer, president of the Ounce of Prevention Fund; Sylvia Puente, director at the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame; Jesse Ruiz, chairman of the Illinois State Board of Education; and Maria Whelan, president of Action for Children.

More information is available online at [http://www.voices4kids.org/getinvolved/attendevent.html](http://www.voices4kids.org/getinvolved/attendevent.html). Registration information is available online at [http://action.voiceshub.org/ct/Ud3tCZp1ORqG/](http://action.voiceshub.org/ct/Ud3tCZp1ORqG/).

**Grant & Award Opportunities**
American Stars of Teaching Award 2008

The U.S. Department of Education’s (USDE) Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative is now accepting nominations for its 2008 American Stars of Teaching Award. Nominations for teachers across the United States, at all grade levels and disciplines, are being sought by the USDE to be honored this fall.

Anyone, including parents, students, colleagues, school administrators or others can, nominate an exceptional teacher who they believe is making a difference in the lives of their students. If you know a teacher who is using innovative strategies in the classroom and improving student achievement and who you believe has the qualities to be an American Star of Teaching, go to http://www.ed.gov/teachers/how/tools/initiative/index/html and nominate them today!

The deadline for submitting nominations is Tuesday, March 31.

ISLMA/LBSS Endowment Fund Grant

The Illinois School Library Media Association/Library Book Selection Service (ISLMA/LBSS) Endowment Fund will issue its first set of annual grants in 2008. Public and private school libraries as well as public libraries registered in any of the children’s choice reading awards programs — the Monarch Award, the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers Book Award, and the Abraham Lincoln Illinois High School Book Award — are eligible to apply.

Grant recipients will be awarded one set of books for the 2009 reading campaign for the book award the library indicated on their application. Book set titles are determined by the committees in charge of the reading award programs. One copy of each title is in each set. Sets contain 20 or 22 books, depending on the award program selected.

Information about the grant is available at the ISLMA/LBSS Endowment Fund website at www.lbssfund.org. The application form is available on the website. All applications must be postmarked by Thursday, May 15.

Questions may be sent to info@lbssfund.org or by phone at 309-649-0916. Applicants must also be registered to participate in the children’s choice program for 2009 by May 15.

Student Opportunities

2008-2009 Student Advisory Council now accepting applications

The Illinois State Board of Education is currently seeking applications for the Student Advisory Council (SAC) to the Illinois State Board of Education for the 2008-2009 school year.

The students who comprise the Student Advisory Council are very diverse, as they come from different geographic locations, ethnic backgrounds, and types of schools. However, they possess similar qualities, which include a strong work ethic, ability to think “outside-the-box,” the willingness to set aside time from their busy schedules for SAC work and the skill of working well in groups. Members are invited to attend Board meetings and sessions of the General Assembly. As SAC members, students also may review and critique ISBE’s existing or proposed programs, policies and regulations, as well as inform Illinois students of SAC activities.

Eligibility to apply for the 2008-2009 SAC is limited to public high school students who will be either a sophomore, junior or senior during the 2008-2009 school year. Given the need to hear from students on some of the more complicated issues faced by our state, special consideration will be given to applicants from low-performing schools or districts.

An application is now available online at: http://www.isbe.net/SAC/sac_application.pdf. It must be returned to the State Board of Education by 5 p.m., Wednesday, April 30. The mailing address is:

Illinois State Board of Education
Student Advisory Council
S-202
100 N. First St.
Springfield, IL 62777

Activities of the Student Advisory Council in 2008-2009 are contingent upon final State budget allocation.

For more information, contact Andrea S. Wingo at 217-782-6434 or by e-mail at awingo@isbe.net.

CDC Student Poster Contest – Fight the Bite
Fifth- and sixth-grade students are encouraged to enter the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s *Fight the Bite* poster contest.

Mosquito bites can be annoying, but more importantly can cause serious diseases. In the U.S., the West Nile virus is the most common disease from mosquitoes. People who get infected with West Nile virus can get very sick, with anything from feeling like they have the flu to the virus affecting their brain. Although rare, the disease can be fatal, particularly for older people. Tick bites can also cause big health problems with the bacteria or viruses that they may carry. Lyme disease is the most common disease caused by ticks in the United States.

Learn how to fight the bite and more about why it’s important, and enter a poster into our contest. Two winners will be picked from each state (one 5th grader and one in 6th) to receive a $50 bond. Two Grand Prize winners (one from each grade) will get a $1,000 bond and invitation to an awards ceremony in Atlanta this spring (travel expenses included).

All entries must be postmarked by Friday, April 4. More information, including contest rules, can be found online at [http://www.cdc.gov/Features/FightTheBiteContest/](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/FightTheBiteContest/).

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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).

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**In the News**

**Weekly news clips**

ISBE has posted highlights from last week’s education news clips at: [http://www.isbe.net/news/2008/newsclips/080314.htm](http://www.isbe.net/news/2008/newsclips/080314.htm).