Good afternoon. Again this week, the Harcourt situation and student testing are the main focus of my message.

At this point there is still a small number of districts that do not have all of their testing materials—or sometimes, the correct materials. We remain in what could be fairly described as constant contact with Harcourt, with the first priority remaining delivery of ISAT materials to districts. More than 130 districts have requested adjustment of their testing dates because of the delivery delays and we are accommodating those requests.

We’ve already begun the process of putting procedures in place to monitor the scoring process for both the ISAT and the PSAE. A Request for Sealed Proposals (RFSP) will go out this week for an independent Quality Control provider to oversee and monitor the ISAT and PSAE scoring process for data accuracy. We will work with the State Testing Review Committee as the RFSP process moves forward. ISBE’s Data Analysis and Student Assessment Divisions are working together to jointly develop discrepancy checks, data correction procedures and data correction windows through the Student Information System (SIS). Details will follow as those procedures are finalized.

While we keep hammering away on the ISAT delivery and scoring, we’re also demanding a written plan and assurances from Harcourt regarding the delivery of the PSAE testing materials. Working in conjunction with ACT, we are triple-checking Harcourt’s processes to be able to identify any problems at the earliest possible stage. The delivery process for the PSAE has actually begun with the Pre-ID labels for Day One Testing going out to districts. Please check these labels carefully and notify our Student Assessment Division immediately of problems by phone at 217-782-4823. We also ask districts to keep their data accurate and current on SIS.

We know that your faculty and staff have put in long hours and gone “above and beyond” to make sure that students have accurate testing materials in hand and that the test has remained secure. We thank you for your diligence and patience. We know that as you’ve handled all these headaches that you’ve kept students as your top priority. Becky McCabe shared an email she got from a local superintendent in the last couple of days. While I’m sure many of you have had similar conversations with students over these past few days, this one was a good reminder of what lies at the heart of what we do:

“The anxiety levels are high—and today one of my Special Ed kids broke down in tears over the test. I told her that this test wasn't going to tell me anything about her I didn't already know...and it wasn't going to tell me the REALLY important things about her—about how her eyes light up when she smiles, and how I love when she hugs me in the hall, and how hard she is working on her reading, and how cute she looked at the music program and how good she is to her friends. I told her that no 'number two lead pencil' tells that about us. She said, 'Honest?' I said, ‘Cross my heart.’”

Testing is important, more so than ever right now given NCLB—and we want to demonstrate accountability to our publics, of course—but school is about a whole lot more than the situation we’re presently in. I hope the testing mentality of this current era never overshadows that fact.

Have a great week.

Randy Dunn
Upcoming Deadlines

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Curriculum and Instruction

Reading Improvement Block Grant Annual Performance Report

The FY06 Reading Improvement Block Grant annual performance report form is now available on the ISBE website. Go to [www.isbe.net/curriculum](http://www.isbe.net/curriculum), scroll down to Grant Programs, click on Reading, and you will see the link to the interactive form for this report. You may type directly on the form on your computer, but it must be printed out and mailed to the ISBE office with data attached to establish performance progress. **Data must be submitted for every grade level served** and should have been gathered with the assessment instrument approved on the FY06 application completed on the e-Grants Management System. Please note the **due date change** for the FY06 Reading Improvement Block Grant annual performance report to **June 15, 2006**, for districts not using ISAT as an assessment tool with which to establish performance progress, or **30 days after ISAT scores are received** for districts that are using ISAT to demonstrate progress. Districts that use ISAT for some grades and different assessments for other grades should submit their report and data together no later than 30 days after ISAT scores are received. Please contact Laurie Lee at (217) 557-7323 with any questions regarding the Reading Improvement Block Grant.

PEP application posted

The United States Department of Education (USED) announcement of a notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year 2006 under the Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) has been published in the Federal Register on March 1, 2006. The deadline for the application period will be April 12. The Department expects to award approximately 58 grants at an average value of $300,000. This grant can be from one to three years in duration.

The competition includes one absolute priority and one competitive preference priority. The absolute priority states that the Department will only consider applications which initiate, expand and improve physical education programs in order to meet state standards for physical education by (1) providing equipment and support to enable students to participate actively in physical education activities, and (2) providing funds for staff and teacher training and education. The competitive preference priority will be given to those applications from novice applicants. A novice applicant is any applicant who (1) has never received a PEP grant, (2) has never been a member of a group application that received a PEP grant, and (3) has not had an active grant under PEP or its predecessor program, the Physical Education for Progress Program, in the five years prior to the deadline date for this competition.

Applications are online at: [http://www.ed.gov/programs/whitephysed/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/whitephysed/index.html), or from the Education Department Publications Center, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398 or call at 1-877-433-7827. Reference the competition as CDFA Number 84.215F.

Eating Disorder Conferences

The Illinois State Board of Education, in conjunction with the Mental Health Association in Illinois and the Illinois Mental Health Counselors Association is sponsoring two statewide conferences dealing with school-based prevention of eating disorders. The first is being held on April 24, 2006, in Belleville at the Our Lady of the Snows Retreat Center. The conference will be repeated on April 25, 2006, at the Oakbrook Terrace Holiday Inn in Oakbrook. The keynote speaker is Dr. Elizabeth Scott, Co-Founder and Director of the Body Positive and creator of The BodyAloud! Registration fee is $25. Participants will be eligible for five CPDUs. The conference registration form can be accessed at [http://www.mhai.org/](http://www.mhai.org/).
Reading Improvement Block Grant Reallocation

Reallocation of Reading Improvement Block Grant dollars has been completed. Districts that have an approved FY06 Reading Improvement Block Grant application and have not been notified that they are not eligible for funds have received the extra monies. An amendment must be created to account for the funds through the e-Grants Management System. This can be done by going to the same place in e-Grants where the application was originally created and choosing to create an amendment. Go to the budget page and scroll down to see the new allocation and how much additional money needs to be budgeted. The additional funds may be used for any allowable expenditure. All Reading Improvement Block Grant money must be spent by June 30, 2006. Please submit your amendment on or before March 31, 2006, to avoid the lapse of your April disbursement.

Federal Grants and Programs

Title IV-OSDFS offers two regional "crisis planning for schools" trainings

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools is hosting two 1.5 day "Crisis Planning for Schools Training" to assist schools and school districts in improving and strengthening their crisis plans. The "Crisis Planning for Schools Trainings" will emphasize crisis plan development within the framework of the four phases of crisis planning: prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Higher priority will be granted to those school-based personnel employed by school districts or private schools that have not yet been recipients of ERCM grant funding.

Registration and additional information on the "Crisis Planning for Schools Trainings" is available online at: http://www.sei2003.com/ERCM/CPNG/.

If you have any questions about these training events, or who is eligible to attend, please contact Tara Hill at: tara.hill@ed.gov or 202-708-9431.

All Pro Dad

All Pro Dad, a charity of NFL players, provides Title I schools resources at no cost to get fathers on campus. Whether it’s a dads/kids breakfast, board game night or movie night, All Pro Dad gives schools DVDs on important topics for dads and kids to watch together, door prizes, posters, flyers, brochures and activity ideas for fathers and children to participate in. More information is available online at: http://www.allprodad.com/dadsday.asp

To request an introductory DVD about bringing All Pro Dad to your school or district, email bryan@allprodad.com or call Bryan Davis at 813-222-8278.

Illinois e-Plans

ISBE and Northern Illinois University (NIU) are proud to announce the launch of Illinois e-Plans District Improvement Plan Template. Illinois e-Plans include School Improvement Plan Template, School Restructuring Plan Template and District Improvement Plan Template. Illinois e-Plans are available through the Interactive Illinois Report Card (IIRC) website at http://iirc.niu.edu/.

The Illinois e-Plans District Improvement Template may be used by districts in improvement status and academic watch status, by districts that did not meet Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) for two consecutive years and by districts receiving Supplemental General State Aid (SGAS) with an Average Daily Attendance (ADA) of more than 1,000 and less than 50,000.

Illinois e-Plans significantly streamline the process of submitting required improvement plans to local boards and ISBE. However, the use of the Template is not required. Schools and districts may continue to use a format that complies with relevant federal and state laws.

The Illinois e-Plans system is designed to be user-friendly and a welcome addition to Illinois’ system of support to schools and districts. Districts and schools will have multiple years (including 2005) of School Report Card data and information at their fingertips automatically populating the screens at the IIRC web site.

Districts may use the same passwords that were previously distributed to access the Illinois e-Plans. These passwords are also available by calling Gail Buoy, Federal Grants and Programs, 217-524-4832. NIU will also email passwords by the end of the week to district superintendents.
Professional Development

**Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum reschedules teacher workshop**

The Education Department of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum has re-scheduled its March 25 Teacher Orientation Workshop. The workshop is now scheduled for Saturday, April 8, 2006, from 9-11 a.m. This complimentary, two-hour workshop will introduce educational resources available at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. Teachers will learn how to schedule school tours, how to prepare their class for a museum visit and methods for making the most of a school trip to the Museum. In addition, educators will learn how to access digital resources from the library collections, how to utilize the library for research and other opportunities for professional development and classroom activities available through the ALPLM Education Department. This workshop is also offered on Wednesday, March 29, from 3:30-5:30 p.m.

Under its “Teaching Teachers” initiative, the ALPLM is committed to providing educators with strong content-based programs on a variety of topics relevant to the legacy of Abraham Lincoln and Illinois History. These intense history lessons assist educators in developing a solid background on unfamiliar topics or in mastering a discipline they already know and love. In addition, the Education Department’s hands-on classroom application programs will provide ideas and methods for teaching historical content across the curriculum using digital resources, primary documents and material culture.

On Wednesday, April 12, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. one workshop will be offered on the Lincoln family in the White House. Entitled “‘This Damned Old House,’ Abraham Lincoln in the White House,” the workshop will cover the adjustments the Lincoln’s experienced in moving from Illinois to the White House and the impact of Washington’s social scene on the family. The daily routine of President Lincoln will be examined from the burdens of the Civil War, to dealing with office seekers, his lack of privacy and the responsibilities of the presidency. Participants will also explore Mary Lincoln’s renovations and how her endeavors were viewed by her contemporaries. Practical ideas and activities will be offered for incorporating the Lincoln’s experience into the classroom curriculum.

All workshops are free, however class size is limited. Workshops will be held in the first floor classroom of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Two continuing professional development units (CPDUs) will be offered for each workshop. To register, contact Carol Manning, Education Coordinator, at 217-558-8929 or via email at Carol_Manning@IHPA.state.il.us. For additional information visit the museum website at [http://www.alplm.org/home.html](http://www.alplm.org/home.html).

Grant Opportunities

**Anti-Bias Grant Program**

The Illinois Violence Prevention Authority (IVPA) is pleased to announce the release of a new FY 07 School District Anti-Bias Grant Program. The Request for Proposal (RFP) and Regional Bidders Conferences information is available on the IVPA website [www.ivpa.org](http://www.ivpa.org). Grantees will receive an anti-bias curriculum training provided by the Anti-Defamation League’s A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute and will then implement the curriculum in the classroom. Junior high and high school district applicants may also apply to create an on-site Peer Institute. Grant awards will range from $5,000 to $10,000. Eligible applicants are Illinois public school districts, Pre-K - 12th grade. A Notice of Intent to apply for grant funds is required and must be submitted by April 14, 2006 (the form is included in the RFP). The full proposal is due by May 12, 2006.

**Allstate Foundation supports national and local programs**

Safe and Vital Communities including: catastrophe response; youth anti-violence, neighborhood revitalization and teen safe driving.

Tolerance, inclusion and diversity including:

- Teaching tolerance to youth;
- Ending hate crimes;
- Alleviating discrimination.

There is no deadline for submission: [http://www.allstate.com/Community/PageRender.asp?Page=contactfound.html](http://www.allstate.com/Community/PageRender.asp?Page=contactfound.html)

**Contact:**

Midwest Region, The Allstate Foundation
Ms. Lisa Miner
2150 East Lake Cook Rd, 11th Floor
State Farm Insurance supports Community Grants

Safe Neighbors: Supporting disaster preparedness programs and recovery services
K-12 Public Schools: Teacher excellence programs that improve teacher quality; Service-Learning programs that integrate core classroom curriculum with service to the community; Programs that incorporate Systematic Improvement criteria into educational systems to improve overall effectiveness.

Proposals are accepted year-round. Visit http://www.statefarm.com/foundati/cogrants.htm for guidelines and instructions to apply.

Congressional Hunger Center and Victory Wholesale Grocers grants to hunger-fighting organizations

Washington, DC – February 26, 2006 – The Congressional Hunger Center and Victory Wholesale Grocers of Springboro, Ohio and Boca Raton, Florida, are announcing the 2006 Fourteenth Anniversary “Victory Against Hunger Awards.” The awards are fifteen $1,000 grants to be presented to anti-hunger organizations, food banks, schools, state agencies and nutrition and health groups. The total unrestricted grants from Victory Wholesale Grocers have now reached $218,000 since their inception in 1993.

A panel of experts will choose awardees based on their success in achieving the goal expressed by this year’s theme, “Fighting Hunger through Developing and/or Implementing Local and State School Meals Wellness Policies.” Organizations or schools that can demonstrate innovative local or state wellness policies for school children are eligible for a Victory Against Hunger Award.

Under the Hunger Awards program, potential awardees may only be nominated by a member of U.S. Congress. The application process consists of a one or two page letter from a member of Congress to the Congressional Hunger Center highlighting the nominee’s efforts in “Fighting Hunger through Developing and/or Implementing Local and State School Meals Wellness Policies.” The nomination period is April 10 through May 31, 2006. Awards will be made in July. Congressional nomination letters should be addressed to Victory Against Hunger, c/o Congressional Hunger Center, 229 ½ Pennsylvania Ave, SE, Washington, DC 20003. The name and telephone number, including area code, of a contact person from the Congressional office accepting the check must accompany each nomination.

For additional information about the Congressional Hunger Center, visit http://www.hungercenter.org/.

Nutrition and Support

School Wellness Policy Task Force meeting this week

The second meeting of the School Wellness Policy Task Force will be held this Wednesday, March 22, in Bloomington. A major focus of the second School Wellness Policy Task Force meeting is to investigate statewide school nutrition standards in preparation for the report on recommendations due to the General Assembly and the Governor on or before January 1, 2007. In addition, preliminary discussion on the evaluation of the effectiveness of school wellness policies in five to ten school districts will begin.

Employment Opportunities

Higher Education

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Office of Continuing Education is seeking a Program Director for Programs for Educators and Human Services Professionals. Information is available at http://www.continuinged.uiuc.edu/. Click on employment.

ISBE employment opportunities

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

Highlights from last week’s education news clips are posted at: http://www.isbe.net/news/2006/newsclips/060317.htm