Message from Interim State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

Good morning.

I am pleased to announce that ISBE has hired a new Division Administrator and a Public Information Officer.

Randy Niles has joined ISBE as our new Division Administrator for Accountability, effective March 16th. Randy brings many years of public school experience to this position, most recently as Principal of Atwood-Hammond High School. He can be reached through the Accountability Division general phone number at 217-782-2948 or by e-mail at rniles@isbe.net. Our Accountability Division is responsible for a variety of issues, including health, life safety compliance, school recognition, non-public schools, private business and vocational schools, public school choice, supplemental educational services, charter schools, homeless education, Regional Safe Schools, and the Truants Alternative and Optional Education Program. We are pleased to have Randy join us. We are also grateful to Gary Greene who has been serving in an acting capacity since the position was vacated by Donna Luallen.

Matt Vanover joined the senior staff as our Director of Public Information as of February 16th. This position had previously been held by Becky Watts and, more recently, Meta Minton. Matt has most recently served as Communications Manager for the Illinois Department of Transportation where he had been for 4 years. Matt brings a wealth of experience in covering state government agencies and hit the ground running with the assessment scores release. Matt can be reached through our Public Information Office at 217-782-4648 or by e-mail at mvanover@isbe.net.

I am very pleased to have these individuals join our management team here at ISBE.

Our board convenes this week and will engage in a discussion of high schools with the Illinois Community College Board and Board of Higher Education participating. ISBE will consider entering into a Memorandum of Understanding in which the Gates Foundation will be investing time and resources into the state in the future to focus on this issue. We are pleased that Gates Foundation is considering this investment in Illinois! The board will also be taking action on the Report on the Financial Condition of School Districts, IMAGE contract amendments, the Charter School Annual Report and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers RFSP. Additionally, several sets of regulations are on the docket for initial review and one set of rules for adoption.

I wish you all a productive week.

Chris Koch
Upcoming Deadlines

- Non-Certified Staff Salary Study - March 31, 2007
- American Stars of Teaching – April 1, 2007
- 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

School Business & Support Services

Qualified Zone Academy Bond (QZAB) Program

The Qualified Zone Academy Bond (QZAB) program has, once again, been extended for two more years as a result of the passage of the Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-432). The implementing regulations provide that the Illinois share of these allocations are $14.790 million (for calendar year 2006) and $ 14.790 million (for calendar year 2007), for a total of $29.580 million. The legislation imposes several new requirements and or restrictions described below.

Furthermore:

a) If less than 95% of QZAB proceeds are spent within 5 years, the unspent QZAB proceeds must be used to redeem QZABs within 90 days. This requires the inclusion of a redemption provision in the QZABs, which may increase the borrowing cost. Alternatively, the Treasury (IRS) is authorized to extend the spending period upon request from the issuer establishing reasonable cause.

b) QZAB proceeds are generally subject to the same yield restriction and rebate requirements applicable to tax-exempt bonds.

c) Yield on QZABs is calculated without taking into account the QZAB credit, with the result that the yield is very low or 0.

d) While not entirely clear, it is probable that money held in an escrow to pay QZABs at maturity is subject to yield restriction, which would make the use of an escrow impractical.

e) It is crucial to consider the year of the QZAB allocation assigned to an issue because the new spending and arbitrage restrictions apply only to post-2005 allocations.

f) An additional reporting requirement calls for the Issuers to submit reports similar to the reports required by section 149(e) of the tax code.

For further questions or inquiries, please call Lou Ferratier, School Business and Support Services at 217-785-8779.

Teacher & Learning

Doctor of Education Degree Program in School Executive Leadership

Pending approval from the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the University of Illinois Educational Organization and Leadership Department will offer a cohort-based Doctor of Education Degree Program in School Executive Leadership, starting Fall 2007, hosted at the Multi-University Center in Oak Brook, Ill.
This program will provide Illinois superintendency endorsement. The Educational Administration and Leadership program has a long history of excellence and a strong reputation for leadership preparation. Currently, U.S. News and World Report ranks the program 20th out of over 500 educational leadership programs in the nation. Past graduates occupy positions of major responsibility in school district and educational organizations, as university professors, and in policy positions across the state of Illinois and the nation. This program has been approved by the University of Illinois and is announced, pending approval of the IBHE.

For more information on the program or informational meeting, please visit the following URL: www.ao.uiuc.edu/eol/oakbrook/doctorate.

Find the Evidence Theme for Illinois Dietetic Association’s Spring Assembly


The program covers whole grains, the importance of evidence-based practice, the Health Initiative Dietary Modifications, Fruits and Veggies: More Matters, Nutrition Education, and more!

First 100 Volunteers Receive Half-Price Registration for School Nutrition Association’s Conference – July 15–18, 2007

Why You Should Attend the Annual National Conference 2007 Chicago

Each year, the School Nutrition Association (SNA) brings together thousands of child nutrition professionals for its Annual National Conference (ANC). It is the largest and most substantive meeting of its kind in the nation for the child nutrition industry. ANC features over ninety quality education sessions; informative and entertaining speakers; educational program tracks that reflect the top concerns of school nutrition professionals; exhibits showing the very latest in food, supplies, and services; tours; special events and participation by individuals representing all school foodservice disciplines.

SNA invites you to register for the ANC before May 25, 2007, and receive a HALF-PRICE REGISTRATION if you sign up to be a volunteer Hospitality Staff Member. Not only will you get the chance to enjoy an amazing professional conference, but also you will learn, grow, and exchange ideas with others committed to the healthful feeding of our children.

Registration Discount — To receive a 50 percent discount, you must sign up to volunteer a total of eight hours between July 15 and 18. The conference hosts are limited to 100 volunteers, so this will be on a first come, first served basis.

Please contact Micheline Pickarski, Local Arrangements Chair for Chicago, at

Nutrition

3-A-Day-of-Dairy Nutrition Education Grant Due April 6

America’s low calcium intake is recognized as a major public health problem. To address this concern, The National Dairy Council will award grants of $5,000 for innovative nutrition education programs that empower youth to become advocates for healthy eating, including three daily servings of milk, cheese, or yogurt through its 3-A-Day of Dairy nutrition education program.

Applications must be postmarked by April 6, and winners will be announced on May 11. Depending on your location, contact either the St. Louis District Dairy Council or the Midwest Dairy Council at the locations below to access submission guidelines and to download a sample application. Good luck!

St. Louis District Dairy Council
  • www.stdairyCouncil.org
  • 312-961-3100

Midwest Dairy Council
  • www.midwestdairy.com
  • 800-642-3895
mpiekarski@oprhhs.org or 708-434-3142 for registration information. A special form is required.

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. A question and answer session will follow 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.

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) Program – Seventh Annual Safe School Symposium

The Illinois State Board of Education, in conjunction with the Regional Office of Education #12/Safe Schools, invites districts across Illinois to participate in the 7th Annual Safe School Symposium from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Friday, May 4, 2007, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, in Springfield, Ill.

More information and registration materials can be found online at: http://www.isbe.net/pdf/safe_school_2007.pdf. For additional information, contact Albert J. Holmes at 312-814-3618, aholmes@isbe.net or Diane Taylor at 618-3395-8626, dtaylor@roe12.net.

Funding & Disbursements

Indirect Cost, Cost Allocation Plans and Retirement Guidance

Please access the memo at http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/indirect_costs.pdf regarding important information on Indirect Cost, the use of Cost Allocation Plans and the allocation of Retirement, Termination and Severance cost on grants.

The memo contains critical information that defines Indirect Cost and the use of an Indirect Cost Rate, local responsibility for the development of a Cost Allocation Plan when General Administration costs are utilized on grant documents as well as updated guidance from the United States Department of Education regarding the proper allocation of Retirement and Termination costs on grants.

If you have questions regarding the information contained in this memorandum, please contact Kim Lewis or Sally Cray in the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services at 217-782-5256.

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