Good afternoon.

I have the privilege this week of attending the Council of Chief State Schools Officer’s Secondary School Redesign National Meeting in Austin, Texas with State Board member Joyce Karon, Superintendent Robert Gillum from Sherrard CUSD 200 and Principal William Freyman of Central High School in Champaign. This is timely given the State Board’s approval of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Governor’s office, ISBE and the Gates Foundation for an Illinois College and Work Readiness Partnership and having recently attended the High School Coalition meeting in Bloomington. It appears that Illinois is poised to reflect on high schools in a major way.

Board member Karon, Superintendent Gillum, Principal Freyman and I will be focusing on the topic of adolescent literacy this week and it is a small wonder why this topic has gained national attention. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress:

- Approximately two-thirds of 8th and 12th graders read below the proficient level
- Almost 29 percent of 12th grade public school students scored below the basic level on NAEP 2005 reading assessment (a figure which excludes those students who drop out)
- Trend data with NAEP indicated that the 2005 scores for most 12th graders were lower than those in 1992.
- NAEP figures show that only 11 percent of African Americans and 14 percent of Hispanics are reading at or above the proficient level compared to 37 percent of white 8th graders

The good news is that we now have proven strategies about what constitutes effective reading instruction - including such instruction for students in high school. The not-so-good news is that we have not yet been able to implement those strategies in a systemic or sustainable way. In the Winter 2007 Information Brief, The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development identified five strategies for effective high school reform: multiple assessments, personalized learning, flexible use of time and structure, professional development for teachers and school leadership, and business and community engagement. Similarly, the National Association of State Boards of Education in their April 2007 publication, “From state policy to classroom practice: Improving literacy instruction for all students” by Mariana Haynes, discusses components of effective literacy instruction which expands on some of these same reform elements.

The vast majority of educators and administrators I have met realize that one size fits all strategies, “sit and get” professional development and annual standardized assessments aren’t going to result in the changes they are seeking for the diversity of their student populations. They also realize that by the time many top down, non-participatory change strategies reach the classroom they are often dead on arrival. Effective school leaders understand that high school students need to feel connected in order to excel and that the demographic representation of their high school
population should be distributed in everything high schools do – from advanced placement classes to cheerleading to drama club.

Over the next few weeks I will continue to write about adolescent literacy and high school reform in more detail and will provide you with additional strategies and resources being used across the country. For more information about NASBE’s State Adolescent Literacy network, you may access information online at www.nasbe.org/Adolescent_Literacy/.

Enjoy your week!

Chris Koch

Upcoming Deadlines

- Illinois History Teacher of the Year nominations – April 9, 2007
- Bilingual Transition to Teaching Program applications – April 20, 2007
- Mathematics and Science Partnership program RFP – April 30, 2007
- Preschool for All Children Ages 3 to 5 years RFP – May 3, 2007
- Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Young Scholars Program – May 7, 2007
- ‘Teacher Service Record’ salary submission – June 15, 2007
- Waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in Fall 2007 – August 10, 2007

Data Analysis & Progress Reporting

Teacher Service Record

The deadline for submission of the 2006-07 salary data is June 15, 2007.

Data collected through the Teacher Service Record is used in providing the Educator Characteristics information in the school report cards. Such things as the student-to-staff rations, teacher information, teacher/administrator salaries are included in the report cards. It is crucial that your salary date be submitted by the June 15 deadline for it to be included in the School Report Card Form 86-43 online review of your data for the school report card.

A new salary upload function has been added to the Teacher Service Record website to make the salary data submission process easier for school districts. The following link will connect you to the IWAS logon-in page: https://sec1.isbe.net/iwas/. After you have logged in select the salary upload function on the Teacher Service Record home page. Please carefully read and follow the instructions so that your salary data will be submitted correctly.

You may begin submitting your salary data on April 2, 2007.

If you have any questions or encounter problems with your salary data submission, please contact Amy Sedivy at 217-782-3950 or by email: asedivy@isbe.net. You may also contact the helpdesk at 217-558-3600.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

English Language Learning

2nd Annual Illinois Statewide Bilingual Parent Summit set for April 14

The 2nd Annual Illinois Statewide Bilingual Parent Summit for members of the Bilingual Parents Advisory Councils (PAC) will be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, April 14, 2007, at the Doubletree Oak Brook in Oak Brook, Ill.

This year’s conference will address four important topics:
- Pre-K-12 educational programs and services,
• higher education opportunities,
• parental leadership and advocacy,
• and community outreach and family support.

Speakers will include State Senator Willie Delgado, and noted children’s book authors Alma Flor Ada, F. Isabel Campoy, and Ji-Li Liang.

Registration reimbursement is available for up to five individuals per district. Lodging and mileage is available for those traveling more than 50 miles.

For further information and registration, please call the Illinois Resource Center at 224-366-8500 or visit us at our website at www.thecenterweb.org and click on the IRC. The registration form is also available at http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/pdfs/irc_parent_summit.pdf

The registration deadline has been extended to Friday, April 6, 2007.

Federal Grants & Programs

Summer Bridges program training

Training has been scheduled for districts interested in participating in the Summer Bridges program. If 50 percent or more of students do not meet standards in reading in grades 3, 5 or the IMAGE, your district may be eligible for the program.

Training for Professional Development Providers and administrators is scheduled for April 19, 2007 at the Schaumburg Marriott; for PDPs only May 10 at John A. Logan College in Carterville; and May 18 at Our Lady of the Snows Shrine in Belleville.

For additional information please contact Sharryon Dunbar at sdunbar@isbe.net.

Illinois e-Plans

Illinois e-Plans are available to support school and district improvement planning. Now that official notification has been made of academic status, the deadlines for posting these plans via the Interactive Illinois Report Card http://iirc.niu.edu/ are as follows:

• District Improvement Plans – June 1, 2007
• School Improvement Plans – July 16, 2007
• Title I District Plans – Aug. 16, 2007
• Restructuring Plans – Sept. 1, 2007

For more information, call the Federal Grants and Programs division at 217-524-4832.

Nutrition

Barriers to Implementing Breakfast Survey Results – Funding Identified as Biggest Need

In compliance with Public Act 94-0981, ISBE’s Nutrition Programs conducted an electronic survey designed to document barriers to establishing the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and to identify parental interest in the SBP. As indicated in the November 2006 issue of The Outlook, we are now providing the results of this survey below.

School Staff Results

Eighty respondents representing 43 Illinois counties completed the survey. Of these respondents, 85 percent presently operate a SBP. The majority of the respondents were administrators (71 percent), followed by food service staff or food service directors (18 percent).

Fifty-six percent agreed strongly that a SBP provided benefits, i.e. students who receive school breakfast may not eat at home; students perform better in classroom activities, on standardized tests, and retain more information.

Funding was the top response for types of assistance needed to implement a SBP. Pricing, what other schools are doing related to school breakfast, financial management and marketing of the SBP, and finally food preparation followed closely after funding. (Range of 25 percent to 18 percent, respectively.)

School staff ranked the barriers to implementing a SBP as follows in order of most difficult to least difficult to overcome.

• Limited school funds
• Bus schedules
• Requires additional staff
• School schedule
• Lack of time before the start of the school day
• Perception that only low-income students eat school breakfast
• Too many state/federal guidelines to follow
• Lack of parental support
• Not enough students to use the program
• Lack of space and facilities
Parent Survey Results

Thirty-one respondents representing 12 Illinois counties indicated 84 percent have a child(ren) in a school operating a SBP. Of the 31 surveys, 25 percent indicated a child never eats at school because he/she does not like the food. All respondents who indicated their school did not operate a SBP indicated they would like their school to implement the SBP. Fifty-seven percent of this group indicated their child would eat school breakfast everyday if it was offered.

To view the entire survey, visit our website at www.isbe.net/nutrition. Under What’s New, click on Annual Report on School Breakfast Incentives

School Nutrition Association’s Awards and Scholarships

As you begin planning for fiscal year 2008, remember that the School Nutrition Association (SNA) offers a variety of awards and scholarships to its members. Membership in the SNA may provide incentives to your employees to further their education, and receive acknowledgement of their hard work and service to Illinois school children.

Awards
- Louise Sublette Award of Excellence
- Heart of the Program Award
- Outstanding Director of the Year Award
- Thelma Flanagan Gold Award of Service
- Membership and Professional Development Awards

Scholarships and Research Grants

The Child Nutrition Foundation (CNF) offers opportunities for further education.

If interested, visit www.schoolnutrition.org for further information on the awards programs, scholarships, and research grant opportunities.

Professional Development

13th Annual Character Education Conference set for July 19-20, 2007

The 13th Annual Character Education Conference is set for July 19-20, 2007, at the Hyatt Regency-Union Station in St. Louis. The conference is sponsored by CHARACTERplus

The Character Education Conference is a High Quality Professional Development Opportunity that is framedworked within the No Child Left Behind Legislation and parallels the National Staff Development Council’s Staff Development Standards.

Illinois teachers attending the conference can earn 15 CPDUs. Conference topics include:
- Reaching and teaching students who don’t like you.
- Dealing effectively with school violence.
- Changing the culture in your schools using proven methods.
- Innovative ways to manage cyber and other types of bullying.
- Designing service learning projects tailored especially for your students, school and community.

More information and registration materials can be found online at: www.characterplus.org. For additional questions, contact Barbara Levin, CHARACTERplus, at 315-692-9721.

Illinois History Teacher of the Year

Applications are due Monday, April 9

Nominations are currently being sought for the annual Illinois History Teacher of the Year Award. The award honors experienced teachers who are dedicated to sharing with students an understanding of America’s past. The history teacher of the year program is sponsored by the Illinois State Board of Education, in partnership with the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History and Preserve America.

The state winner will receive a $1,000 honorarium and will be in the running for the National History Teacher of the Year award to be selected this fall. His or her school library will receive a core archive of history books and materials.

The deadline to submit a nomination for the Illinois History Teacher of the year is Monday, April 9, 2007. For more information, contact John Craig, Illinois Coordinator, at 217-782- 4823 or j craig@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: