April 9, 2007

Message from Interim State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

Good afternoon.

The Council for Chief State School Officers Secondary School Redesign National meeting held April 1-3 included nearly 40 states participating with Arizona, Illinois, Louisiana, Nevada, New York, Rhode Island and Virginia focusing on the issue of adolescent literacy. Representatives from IASA and IPA attended with us. Rhode Island seemed to our group to be somewhat advanced given their work with literacy coaches at the secondary level. More and more, the themes of personalized learning and progress monitoring emerge as critical to assisting students to attain literacy. Uri Treisman of the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin provided wonderful insights into the capacity for students to make gains with such measures, particularly in mathematics. We are seeking to bring him to the Illinois Superintendent’s conference so that you may also hear from him.

Among measures discussed whereby states can promote literacy:

- Setting Standards
- Building capacity for high school improvement and ensuring quality teachers;
- Reaching more students;
- Facilitating informed decision making; and
- Supporting data-responsive action;

As you may expect, higher performing high school districts have clarified and specified state standards into the district’s written curriculum through such means as curriculum mapping, pacing guides, aligned instructional programs and materials and formative benchmark assessments. (Dolejs, 2006). Higher performing schools viewed state standards as the floor for achievement and not the target and saw state standards as foundational. Additionally, strong instructional leaders were found to be critical both among administrators and teachers. Teachers expected and found it normal for other teachers to visit their classes and to engage in dialogue about what was and was not working in terms of instruction and student placement data was consistently a part of this discussion. Finally, higher performing schools incorporated time within the school day for teachers to collaborate on ways to address needs identified by data and classroom observations. Many state participants commented how they struggle with the morass of data available and the need to make it meaningful and useful to teachers in the classroom. For additional suggestions of what makes a higher performing high school view the “Report on Key Practices and Policies of Consistently Higher Performing High Schools” (October 2006) from the High School Center at www.betterhighschools.org.

Our team also spent time discussing the value and importance of establishing a means for Illinois to pursue a growth model in high schools by adopting “Explore” and “Plan” as well as practice ACT tests. These items were included in the ISBE budget request for this year. Additionally, we discussed ways to increase student investment in the Work Keys exam. As with all reform and efforts toward school improvement, it is important to note that it is a process.
involving the entire school community. We hope to learn from the mistakes of others as we embark on our efforts toward improved literacy among Illinois adolescents.

I wish you a great week.

Chris Koch

Upcoming Deadlines

- 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

Curriculum & Instruction

Technology planning process

The Curriculum and Instruction Division has received much communication concerning the technology planning process. To address discussion centering on technology planning and the details involved in writing to satisfy federal requirements, a Technology Integration Plan has been developed.

The online technology plan has been streamlined to work seamlessly with the district improvement plan and other plans that will be available at the Interactive Illinois Report Card (IIRC) website. Although the use of this template is not mandatory, it encompasses all the components necessary to assist districts in fulfilling the federal components required in the technology planning process.

Districts are able to submit their technology plan documents to techplan@isbe.net or they may submit it through the ISBE website. Instructions for submission of plans can be found at http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/elearning/html/tech_plan_info.htm.

Some technology plans will need a July 1, 2007 start date to qualify for E-Rate funding. In an effort to expedite the technology approval process, all plans submitted no later than Sunday, April 15, 2007 will be guaranteed a July 1, 2007 start date on record. Plans submitted after April 15, 2007 will go through the peer review process, but a July 1, 2007 start date can not be guaranteed. Districts not receiving E-Rate funding do not have a required submission date.

Technology plans that are near completion but missing some components, such as an Internet Safety Policy, can still receive a July 1, 2007 start date by submitting their technology plans on April 15, 2007. These plans will be moved through the peer review process and returned – outlining necessary changes and additions. This option provides districts additional time to complete the plan and achieve a July 1, 2007 start date.

Data Analysis & Progress Reporting

Reporting of the 2007 Bilingual Education Program Delivery Report

The Bilingual Education Program Delivery Report (PDR) for 2007 is now available on IWAS. Every school district or educational agency enrolling LEP students is required by law to submit this report to ISBE (Section 14C-3 of the School Code). The due date is June 30, 2007.
It is imperative that you submit your data within the required timeline. The guide for reporting the PDR on IWAS is available online on the Bilingual Education Program Delivery Report webpage link below: ftp://help.isbe.net/webapps/BilEdPgmDelRpt/pdf/PDR User Guide.pdf

Questions about the PDR system should be referred to the ISBE Help Desk at 217-558-3600 and questions about reporting the PDR should be referred to Lilibeth Q. Gumia at 217-782-3950 or lgumia@isbe.net.

Nutrition

Successful Special Events Begin with Early Planning – Plan Now for Fiscal Year 2008 Observances

As you begin to look back at the school year highlights, were you pleased with the quality and quantity of your special events in your food service and nutrition program? Bring your team together including, students, and start drafting your action plan to make next year’s observances even more meaningful and important to your quality school meals programs.

- National Food Safety Education Month — each September http://www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/september.html
- National School Breakfast Week — March 3–7, 2008 www.schoolnutrition.org
- Child Nutrition Employee Appreciation Week — May 5–9, 2008 www.schoolnutrition.org
- National Nutrition Month® — each March www.eatright.org

If you are looking for special health observances, the National Health Observances Calendar Website provides a goldmine of information. The 2007 National Health Observances resource is posted and categorized for easy referencing. Download or order a hard copy of this resource at www.health.gov/NHIC/Pubs/.

Source: 2007 National Health Observances, National Health Information Center, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C.

Week of the Young Child Approaching – April 22-28

The Week of the Young Child’s 2007 theme, Building Better Futures for All Children, sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) reminds us of opportunities to help young children succeed.

The statistics are startling. In the United States, 24 percent of children under age 6 live in poverty. Almost 12 million children do not have enough food to meet their basic needs and over 3.2 million are suffering from hunger. Visit www.isbe.net/nutrition to learn about the Child Nutrition Programs.

Visit http://www.naeyc.org/about/woyc/ for free information on the Week of the Young Child including a communication kit, logos, suggested activities and much more.

Rules & Waivers

Invitation to Comment on Rules

Three 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 180 (Health/Life Safety Code for Public Schools)

Part 350 (Secular Textbook Loan)
Elimination of the bonding requirement for vendors in this program, in response to Public Act 94-927.

Part 555 (Children’s Mental Health Initiative Grants)
New rules describing the intended focus of the “School Mental Health Support Grants” and the “Grants for Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning Standards”.

Deadline for Public Comment: May 21, 2007

Notice of Completed Rulemaking
Please be advised that one additional set of amendments recently adopted by the State Board is now in effect. These rules have been posted on the agency’s web site 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 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision)
This rulemaking affects three aspects of Part 1.
- Sections 1.10 and 1.85: Under P.A. 94-875, revised school and district improvement plans and restructuring plans no longer require approval by the State Superintendent of Education. Further, the entire discussion of district restructuring plans has been deleted, to conform to NCLB. However, local development of plans is now required to involve “outside experts”.
- Section 1.705 and Appendix B: The needed existing information has been transferred from the Appendix, which is quite old and out of date, into a narrative rule. Appendix B has been repealed.
- Appendix A: The validity of the provisional vocational certificate has been liberalized somewhat in order to assist with staffing concerns in CTE programs.

Affected Sections: 1.10, 1.85, 1.705, 1.Appendix A, and 1.Appendix B

Effective Date: March 16, 2007

Professional Development

Teacher Orientation Workshop offered at Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum
The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum will offer its “Teacher Orientation” workshop from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 14, 2007.

The four-hour workshop will introduce educators to the resources available at the library and museum. Participants will learn how to schedule a tour; prepare their class for a visit; and methods for making the most of a school trip. The session will cover other topics and include a tour, as well.

All workshops are free and linked to the Illinois State Learning Standards. Professional development units will be offered. Advanced registration is required. To register, contact Carol Manning, Education Coordinator, at 217-558-8929 or via e-mail at carol.manning@illinois.gov.

For additional information, visit the museum’s web site at www.aplm.org/education.

Online professional development available for math teachers
Microsoft, in partnership with the Math Forum at Drexel University, will provide online professional development to educators to support teaching and learning mathematics with technology.

The new workshop, Tools for Building Math Concepts, explores how teachers can use software tools to help third- through fifth-grade students develop fundamental math concepts by gathering data and investigating patterns. These concepts are the building blocks for success in middle school math.

The Microsoft-sponsored Math Forum workshop was announced at the annual meeting of the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics in Atlanta.

Teachers who complete the Tools for Building Math Concepts workshop will receive continuing education credits at no charge. Teachers can register online at http://mathforum.org/toolsandconcepts.

The workshop connects teachers with the Math Forum's Math Tools, a digital library and teaching community of technology tools, lessons, activities, and support materials. The Math Forum also hosts online programs
for teachers to work collaboratively to continue their professional development throughout their careers.

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**Teacher Resources**

**Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust**

During the week of **Sunday, April 15 – Sunday, April 22, 2007**, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum will lead the nation in the annual Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust.

This year’s observance will honor the memory of the children with the theme – *‘Children in Crisis: Voices from the Holocaust.’* When World War II ended in 1945, six million European Jews were dead, included more than one million Jewish children.

For additional information and educational resources, visit the museum’s web site at: [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org).

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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**