Weekly Message from State Superintendent Randy Dunn

Good afternoon. For this week’s opener, I want to continue the discussion I started last Monday regarding Illinois updates around the highly qualified requirement of No Child Left Behind.

Last week I noted that we are seeking to take advantage of flexibility offered by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings to extend the time for completing the work of meeting the highly qualified requirements through the end of the 2006-07 school year (instead of 2005-06).

One of the requirements for us to be successful in obtaining this added flexibility for Illinois is demonstrating to the Secretary the good faith efforts we have made to date around this challenging initiative. Some of those efforts are described below and include what we have reported to the United States Department of Education:

- **Rules adopted.** State rules were adopted and effective February 21, 2006, defining highly qualified.
- **Reporting information provided.** School, district and state report cards contain the required information. District administrators know they must inform parents of the various Parents Right-to-Know materials. Sample letters are posted on the Agency’s web site.
- **Significant progress made.** Illinois’s Consolidated State Performance Report was submitted and shows the following significant progress toward completion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Total # of Core Academic Classes</th>
<th># of Core Academic Classes Taught by HQT</th>
<th>Percent of Core Academic Classes Taught by HQT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Schools</td>
<td>146,280</td>
<td>143,619</td>
<td>98.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Elementary Schools</td>
<td>108,245</td>
<td>106,468</td>
<td>98.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Secondary Schools</td>
<td>38,035</td>
<td>37,151</td>
<td>97.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Informing educators regarding status.** ISBE has posted an interactive worksheet, at [http://www.isbe.net/certification/html/hq_worksheet.htm](http://www.isbe.net/certification/html/hq_worksheet.htm), for teacher use to determine their own HQT status, print a worksheet, and share with district offices.
- **Promoting National Board Certified Teachers in Illinois.** FY05 State funds of $4.6 million are being used to promote interest and participation in the NBPTS certification program. Particular attention was given to maintaining growth in the program by recruiting NBPTS candidates who are from financially or academically at-risk schools and from underrepresented rural areas.
- **Grow Your Own initiative.** This initiative is intended to effectively recruit and prepare parent and community leaders and paraprofessionals to become effective teachers in hard-to-staff schools—and hard-to-staff teaching positions in schools—serving a substantial percentage of low-income students. We are in the process of awarding planning grants to consortia across the state to assist in establishing cohorts of paraprofessionals and parent

### Table of Contents

- Upcoming Deadlines ...........2
- Curriculum and Instruction......3
- School Business and Support.....3
- Legislation ..........................4
- Nutrition ..............................5
- Professional Development........5
- Employment Opportunities........5
- IASA Job Bank ........................6
- In the News ............................6
volunteers who wish to become teachers. Candidates will be supported by forgivable loans (after five years of teaching in a hard-to-staff school or hard-to-fill position).

- **State data getting aligned.** Two major databases are being revamped—the existing web-based certification system called the Educator Certification System (ECS) and the Teacher Service Record (TSR) system, which currently captures up to three subject areas per teacher per year. The TSR system will be expanded for the 2006-07 school year so that if a teacher is teaching seven different assignments, all assignments can be recorded. At some point ISBE will be able to electronically match teacher credentials with teacher work assignments and be able to automatically determine if the teacher is highly qualified (plus do the gap analysis if not).

- **Paraprofessionals.** In 2003, ISBE endorsed two primary testing options for establishing a candidate’s qualifications as a paraprofessional educator under NCLB: the ETS ParaPro Assessment, and the ACT WorkKeys tests. Too, ISBE and the Illinois Community College Board worked to develop collaboratively a statewide test preparation curriculum for both the ParaPro and WorkKeys assessments. A test preparation course was created using the expertise of content developers and reviewers from the community college and K-12 systems. The results have been very effective across Illinois.

So, all of these efforts—we feel—show the commitment of Illinois to achieving the highly qualified goals of NCLB. Besides this, we are also working closely with the Education Trust and a related state work group to develop a long-term plan for teacher access and equity and for the ongoing preparation of highly qualified personnel.

In closing, anything you may be able to do to reinforce our request to USED for the additional year to allow all teachers and paraprofessionals to become highly qualified is most appreciated on my end. Of course, we will eventually share with you what we hear from Washington in this regard.

Trees are finally starting to bloom in Springfield. Baseball is underway. Spring has come. Have a great week.

Randy Dunn

### Upcoming Deadlines

- **Physical Education Grant Applications –** **April 12, 2006**
- **Fourth Quarter Hurricane Education Recover Act Counts Due –** **April 14, 2006**
- **American Stars of Teaching Award nominations –** **April 15, 2006**
- **Great American Bake Sale Grant Application –** **April 15, 2006**
- **Nature of Learning Start-Up Grants –** **April 17, 2006**
- **Public Comment Deadline – Gifted Education Rules –** **May 15, 2006**
- **Public Comment Deadline – Part 675 Rules – Supplemental Education Services –** **May 15, 2006**
- **Early Childhood Block Grant –** **May 19, 2006**
- **Public Comment Deadline – Part 1500 – School Emergency and Crisis Response Plans –** **May 22, 2006**
- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs Art Contest –** **May 31, 2006**
- **Public Comment on Special Education Rulemaking –** **September 15, 2006**

### Early Childhood

**Early Childhood Block Grant RFP for 0 to 3 Released**

The Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) for Birth to Age 3 Years: Early Learning Partners – 07 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 RFPs are available online at http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/block_grant.htm or by contacting the Early Childhood Division at 217-524-4835.

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

Springfield
Wednesday, April 12, 2006 - 1 to 4 p.m.
IEA - Professional Development Center
3440 Liberty Drive

Chicago
Wednesday, April 19, 2006 - 1 to 4 p.m.
State of Illinois Building (Bilandic Building)
160 North LaSalle
(Across from the James R. Thompson Center)
5th Floor, Room C-500

Should the conditions of this RFP change as a result of the bidders’ conference, the State Board of Education will notify all recipients of the RFP of the changes.

Curriculum and Instruction

Reading Improvement Block Grant Application

The FY07 Reading Improvement Block Grant application is now available for completion through the Electronic Grant Management System (eGMS). All school districts that serve grades K-6 may apply. Projected allocations for FY07, which are contingent upon legislative approval, can be found near the bottom of the Budget Detail page of the application. Districts may also check their projected allocations by going to http://www.isbe.net/curriculum, scrolling down to Grants and clicking on Reading. There is a link on the page to access the list of school districts and their projected allocations. Please remember that the allocations are not final as the governor’s budget has not yet been approved, therefore, the total dollars allocated to each district could change.

The due date of the Reading Improvement Block Grant application is May 10, 2006. The start date for use of grant funds is July 1, 2006, or the date a substantially approvable application has been received by ISBE, whichever is later. All FY07 funds must be spent by June 30, 2007.

Districts with approved applications for FY06 Reading Improvement Block Grant funds that have not been notified they are ineligible, who still need to create an amendment to account for reallocated funds for FY06, need to do so as soon as possible to avoid a lapse in funding. No amendments will be accepted for FY06 for any reason after May 30, 2006.

Please contact Laurie Lee at (217) 557-7323 or lelee@isbe.net with any questions regarding the Reading Improvement Block Grant. Also, please note she will be attending the International Reading Association Conference in Chicago from April 28, 2006, until May 4, 2006, and will be out of the office during that time. She will return May 5, 2006, and will be happy to help anyone needing assistance.

School Business and Support

PA 94-0234 requires school districts to submit balanced budgets

PA 94-0234 which becomes in effect July 2006 requires school districts to submit their FY 2007 budget to the Illinois State Board of Education within or before the first quarter of each fiscal year (September 30, 2006). School District will submit their budgets in the same manner that they submit their Annual Financial Reports. The 2006-2007 School District/Joint Agreement Budget Instruction Booklet is being revised and will include the detailed instructions for district personnel to follow when they transmit their budgets electronically to the State Board. This booklet can be found at http://www.isbe.net/sfms/budget/2007/instructions.pdf or the School Business and Support Services homepage.

Furthermore, PA 94-0234 requires school district budgets to be balanced. The definition and calculation of balanced budgets will be incorporated within the budget forms ISBE prescribes for school districts. The budget forms are also being finalized for FY 2007 and will be located at the School Business and Support Services homepage or http://www.isbe.net/sfms/budget/2007/budget.htm. Both web sites should be live by May.

The definition to define balanced budget is as follows: district expenditures for the aggregate of
the four operating funds; Educational, Operation & Maintenance, Transportation, and Working Cash, will be compared to the aggregate of the revenues for the same said funds. If the revenues are equal to or greater than the expenditures, the budget is balanced. If the expenditures are greater than the revenues, the ending fund balance for the aggregate four funds will be multiplied by three and compared to the aggregate amount of the deficit of the four operating funds. If the deficit is greater than three times the ending fund balance, the district will be required to complete a deficit reduction plan. The deficit reduction plan will also be included in the budget form.

For example:
*If the aggregate expenditures exceed the aggregate revenues for the Educational, Operations and Maintenance, Pupil Transportation, and Working cash fund by $100,000 then the aggregate ending fund balance for the same funds must be $300,000 or greater or the district will be required to file a deficit reduction plan.*

If you have any questions, please contact Debby Vespa, Ken Wargo or Lou Ferratier of the School Business and Support Services Division at 217-785-8779.

### Legislation

#### Spring Session Update

The following bills have passed both Chambers and will be sent to the Governor. This is an update of legislation since last week's Weekly Message. A bill will not become law until signed by the Governor and given a Public Act number. As bills are passed and signed or vetoed, the information will be updated on the Governmental Relations page on the website. To access that page, please go to: http://www.isbe.net/gov_relations/default.htm.

The web page will also provide instructions for how to view these bills or any other online on the General Assembly webpage. For any additional information, you can contact Nicole Wills or Josh Jacobs in ISBE’s Governmental Relations Division at 217-782-6510.

- **HB 4193** - Among other things, this legislation creates the Statewide Child Murderer and Violent Offender Against Youth Database and would require a school district or regional superintendent to perform a check of this database for each applicant.

- **HB 4768** - Effective immediately, any unemancipated minor's application for a graduated driver's license must be accompanied by the written consent of a parent or guardian, regardless of whether the required consent accompanied the minor's previous application for an instruction permit. Provides that a parent or guardian must certify that an unemancipated minor has received 50 (rather than 25) hours of behind-the-wheel instruction, at least 10 hours of which must have been at night, in order for the minor to receive a graduated driver's license.

- **HB 4987** - Would allow reimbursement of "behavior analysts" certified by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board under the Special Ed Personnel Line.

- **HB 5416** - Puts in law several recommendations made by the taskforce appointed by SB 383 (PA 94-225) in dealing with school inspections and plan reviews. Makes other changes.

- **SB 2235** - Defines "developmental classes" and makes changes to the definition of "parent and community leaders" and "schools serving a substantial percentage of low-income students" under the Grow Your Own Teacher Act. Replaces Provides that the State Board shall establish criteria that address the inclusion in the planned program of strategies derived from community organizing that will help candidates develop tools for working with parents and other community members. Provides for partial loan forgiveness for shortened periods of service in hard-to-staff schools or hard-to-staff teaching positions and allows that school districts may use those portions of the grant money designated for the expenses of supporting the work experiences of candidates and providing mentors for graduates or other applicable public funds to pay participants in programs under the initiative for student teaching required by an accredited teacher preparation program.

- **SB 2455** - moves the provisions requiring course material and instruction to advise pupils of the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act out of the sex education provisions of the School Code and into the health education provisions.

- **HR 836 (ISBE - Growth Based Accountability)** - Urges the State Board of Education to apply for participation in the growth-based accountability pilot program established by the U.S. Department of Education and urges the U.S. Department of Education to use more flexible criteria in determining adequate yearly progress under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. This resolution was adopted March 1, 2006.
• **HR 905 (TAOEP Task Force)** - Establishes the Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Task Force for the purpose of recommending a best model for the distribution of Truant's Alternative and Optional Education Program grant funds to ensure that limited resources reach the students most in need. This resolution was adopted March 1, 2006.

• **Update on the Waiver Resolution for those districts that made waiver applications: SJR 82** - The waiver resolution passed the Senate 55-2-0. The resolution limits the Warren THSD 121 driver education fee increase to one year and disapproves the remaining four years and limits the waiver request made by Aurora West USD 129 with respect to the Statement of Affairs to a two year approval and disapproves the remaining three. It also entirely disapproves the waiver request for the Statement of Affairs for Huntley CSD 158. The resolution must still go to the House. Once the final resolution has passed, anything not listed in the resolution will be approved and anything that is listed will be disapproved or limited in some way.

### Nutrition

**Household Eligibility Application**

The 2006-2007 Household Eligibility Application for free and reduced-price meals will be posted at [http://www.isbe.net/nutrition](http://www.isbe.net/nutrition) on or before May 31, 2006. All forms used in prior years to create copies for distribution should be discarded. The new application form must be used.

We realize schools like to prepare materials before this time for the upcoming school year; however program regulations require schools to distribute the free and reduced-price Household Eligibility Application at the beginning of the school year (July/August).

If you have any questions, please contact Nutrition Programs at (800) 545-7892, (Illinois only), 217-782-2491, or via email at cnp@isbe.net.

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### Interactive web forum for school administrators, policymakers and AFHK State Teams

**Save the Date**

Action for Healthy Kids® is hosting an interactive web forum, *The Role of School Wellness in Creating High-Performing Schools* for School Administrators, Policy Makers and AFHK State teams on Thursday, April 27, 2006 from 2:00 until 3:15 p.m.

Registration is required. Look for registration information shortly at [http://www.actionforhealthykids.org](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org).

### Professional Development

**21st CCLC Spring Workshops scheduled**

21st Century Community Learning Center spring workshops will be held Tuesday, April 18 at the Holiday Inn in Matteson; Wednesday, April 19 at the Holiday Inn Express in Springfield; and Tuesday, May 2 at the UIC campus in Chicago. The trainings will be an excellent opportunity to gain professional development and connect with other programs around the state.

Attendance at any one of the trainings is mandatory for funded programs. All meetings will be from approximately 8:30 – 3:00. The training sessions are directed at manager level staff, which generally means the project director and site coordinators, although grants may have other staff that would benefit from the training. In some instances, a principal or key partner could be part of a team if those are the people that would benefit most from the program sessions. Time is scheduled in this spring’s workshops for programs to share their best work with each other in 45-minute sessions. Advance registration is required and is available on line at [http://www2.learningpt.org/21stcclc/](http://www2.learningpt.org/21stcclc/). Please call Gail Meisner at 217/524-4832 if there are questions related to the workshops.

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### 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](http://www.isbe.net/hr/Default.htm).
IASA Job Bank

IASA Illinois Education Job BankSM

Whether you are looking for a job or you are seeking qualified applicants to fill existing permanent, interim, full-time or part-time vacancies, the Illinois Education Job BankSM (IEJBSM) is the state’s premier educational job search website. By investing just a few minutes of your time, your opening will be seen by potential applicants from around the country. Public and private schools can post positions according to the following position types: Administrative; Instructional; Non-Certified Staff; and School Service Personnel. You can also choose to post positions for out-of-state administrators.

Subscribe on-line to the Illinois Education Job BankSM – School Districts (both public and private, instate and out-of-state) can subscribe on-line, giving them instant access to the system.

Post Illinois education job listings – With 24/7 access to the system, a district can post a position whenever they want, with control over what information is posted, how applicants should apply and whether or not on-line applications will be accepted.

View existing on-line resumes – Subscribers have access to over 2,000 resumes posted by job seekers. These resumes are submitted by people actively seeking employment.

The IEJBSM is the fast, one-stop service that is bringing the applicant, job and employer together.

To subscribe to the IEJBSM, contact the IASA at 217/787-9306; e-mail: jobbank@iasaedu.org; or access the Job BankSM online at http://www.iasaedu.org/Jobbank/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/060407.htm.