April 21, 2008

Message from State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

Last week was very busy with meetings in Washington, D.C. and Springfield. The Illinois General Assembly is on break this week, and while I will still be traveling, it will be more limited and hopefully, I’ll actually be able to do some work in the office.

As I told you last week, I attended the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) 2008 Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. The conference provided us with an interesting look at the bigger picture of education as a national issue. We heard from U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, who will announce her proposal for a national graduation rate today. States define this benchmark differently, which makes comparisons difficult.

Many of the presentations during the conference, including Secretary Spellings’ remarks, centered on the need for national and international performance benchmarks. Former Governor Roy Romer (D-Colorado) detailed how he had worked with the Los Angeles school district to raise expectations, improve the quality of teaching, increase diagnostic testing (he suggested every 90 days) and utilize data to make better decisions for student learning. Congressman Vern Ehlers (R-Michigan), who has proposed a bill on voluntary national standards for math and science, expressed his frustration about a lack of funding for the sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) at the federal level.

At last week’s meeting in Springfield, the Illinois State Board of Education approved a report detailing individual districts’ special education revenues and expenditures. While the report is required by law, I do want to point out that it was produced with very limited data and is meant to be no more than a snapshot. In fact, board members cautiously provided their approval to submit the report to the General Assembly because of their concerns that we do not have the necessary information available to put together a comprehensive look at special education expenditures.

Public Act 95-0555 requires ISBE to submit the special education expenditure and receipt report to the General Assembly by May 1. We have informed the sponsor of this legislation of the data limitations. We have worked with her and a number of professional organizations to produce what is admittedly an imperfect document; however, it will serve as a starting point for a discussion about the overall costs of providing special education.

If you are interested in reviewing this document, you can find it at http://www.isbe.net/board/meetings/apr08/fac.pdf.

As we’ve told you in previous editions of the Weekly Message, the amount that you will be receiving on your second ADA Safety Education Block Grant will be reduced because of a change in the law, which now includes private schools. Please see the Grants item in this Weekly Message for more detail.
Finally, we’ve received some questions about a letter school districts have received from Pearson indicating that for a fee, school districts may receive their SAT-10 scores early from the company. Whether to pay a fee to receive the scores early is a decision for each district to make. Keep in mind, however, that you will not receive results from the Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT). The SAT-10 results will be separated from the ISAT results. Districts are still on schedule to receive their preliminary ISAT scores (SAT-10 included) in June at no cost.

Thanks, and best of luck to your students on the Prairie State Achievement Exam!

Chris

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**Upcoming Deadlines**

- **Even Start Family Literacy RFP** – April 25, 2008
- **Student Advisory Council applications for 2008-2009** – April 30, 2008
- **Charter Planning Grant applications & Charter Implementation Grant applications** – April 30, 2008
- **Enhancing Education through Technology RFP** – May 1, 2008
- **Prevention Initiative Birth to Age 3 Years RFP** – May 6, 2008
- **Those Who Excel/Illinois Teacher of the Year Nominations** – April 16, 2008
- **Deadline for commenting on proposed rules – Part 25; Part 180; Part 235; Part 305; and Part 401** – May 19, 2008
- **Request for Proposals (RFP) for Advanced Placement Classes** – May 22, 2008
- **Regional Safe Schools Program (RSSP) FY 2009 application** – May 23, 2008
- **FY09 Consolidated Application to Serve English Language Learners** – June 30, 2008
- **Deadline for waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in Fall 2008** – August 8, 2008
- **Annual Superintendents’ Conference** – October 23 – 24, 2008

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**Student Assessment**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE: RETURN OF PSAE TESTING MATERIALS**

All PSAE initial, makeup, and accommodations testing materials must be returned on time to facilitate timely reporting and avoid compromising security, which could result in score invalidations. Pre-scheduled pick-up dates have been arranged with Fed-Ex, according to the schedule below.

**PSAE Initial Testing April: 23 & 24**
- Day 1 Initial PSAE Materials (to ACT): Pre-scheduled pickup is Friday, April 25
- Day 2 Initial PSAE Materials (to Pearson): Pre-scheduled pickup is Friday, April 25
  
**Reminder: Day 1 Materials should be packaged separately from Day 2 Materials**

**PSAE Makeup Testing: May 7 & 8**
- Day 1 Makeup PSAE Materials (to ACT): Pre-scheduled pickup is Friday, May 9
- Day 2 Makeup PSAE Materials (to Pearson): Pre-scheduled pickup is Friday, May 9
  
**Reminder: Day 1 Materials should be packaged separately from Day 2 Materials**

**PSAE Accommodations Testing: Day 1: April 23-May 7; Day 2: April 24-May 8**
- Day 1 Accommodations PSAE Materials (to ACT): Pre-scheduled pickup is Friday, May 9
- Day 2 Accommodations PSAE Materials (to Pearson): Pre-scheduled pickup is Friday, May 9
  
**Reminder: Day 1 Materials should be packaged separately from Day 2 Materials and Day 1 ACT-Approved Materials should be packaged separately from State-Allowed Materials**
If you experience any problems with the pick-up for Day 1 or Day 2 materials, do NOT contact Fed-Ex directly. If you experience any Day 1 materials pick-up problems, contact ACT at 1-800-553-6244 x2800. If you experience any Day 2 materials pick-up problems, contact Pearson at 1-800-627-7990 x814.

Grants

School Safety and Educational Improvement Block Grant


As mentioned in the February 5 and February 11 State Superintendent Weekly Messages, average daily attendance (ADA) data from the prior school year is used to calculate two statutory payments on October 30 and April 30 each year. The FY2008 budget did not include a separate appropriation for 657 State-recognized nonpublic schools that chose to transmit 2006-07 school year attendance. Therefore, the $75 million FY2008 appropriation was divided among both public districts and nonpublic schools. A summary of the recalculation can be accessed at http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/ADABlockGrantFY08.pdf.

Grant Announcement: Illinois Innovation Talent Pilot Project

ISBE and leaders across Illinois recognize the need for more students to become globally competitive and collaborative innovators. Students must be prepared to critically examine and solve complex problems as members of diverse, interdisciplinary teams utilizing leading-edge information technology tools and platforms. In order to meet these challenges, the Illinois State Board of Education has joined a unique team of business and industry associations, government agencies and educational institutions to work with high schools and business, government and community partners to explore how schools and their partners can produce the next generation of innovation talent in Illinois. For the purposes of this project, innovation is defined as the development and application of new ideas to create solutions to complex real-world problems.

This new partnership is pleased to announce that it is requesting applications from Illinois high schools for a pilot project designed to promote innovation-centered education in Illinois that will support schools to assemble teams of students and teachers to develop a project that will solve a community problem. If interested in participating in the Innovation Talent Pilot Project, a letter of intent and a simple application should be submitted by May 16, 2008. The full details may be accessed at the following link: (http://www.illinoisbiz.biz/dceo/).

English Language Learning

The 2008 National Refugee and Immigrant Conference will be held in Chicago on September 25-26, 2008

The Illinois Department of Human Services, the Adult Learning Resource Center and the Illinois State Board of Education are pleased to announce the “2008 National Refugee and Immigrant Conference: Issues and Innovations” which will be held at the Holiday Inn Chicago-Mart Plaza in Chicago on Thursday and Friday, September 25-26. Last year 475 people from 33 states attended the conference which has become a truly national professional development event for educators, social service agency staff and other professionals who work with refugee and other immigrant children and their families.

If your student population includes refugee or other immigrant children, you will find this conference of benefit to general education and bilingual program teachers and school administrators. Information about the conference and the call for workshop proposals can be accessed at http://www.thecenterweb.org/alrc/refugee.html. Please circulate this information to your staff and others who may be interested in attending and who might want to submit a workshop proposal. The deadline for workshop proposals is Friday, May 2. If you have any questions regarding the conference, please contact Lynn Osheff, Adult Learning Resource Center, at 224-366-8632 or by e-mail at Losheff@thecenterweb.org.

This conference is supported by a federal Refugee Children School Impact Grant administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services and by the
Illinois State Board of Education, Division of English Language Learning.

State Superintendent seeks individuals to serve on the Illinois Advisory Council on Bilingual Education

State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch, is seeking five individuals to serve on the Illinois Advisory Council on Bilingual Education (ILCS 5/14C-13). Members would serve a three year term of office and be expected to attend four meetings in the Chicago area between September 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009.

If you are interested in serving on the council, please e-mail a cover letter and resume to Robin M. Lisboa, English Language Learning, at rlisboa@isbe.net by the close of business on Friday, May 23.

Resumes will be reviewed and successful candidates will be notified by Tuesday, July 1.

FY09 Consolidated Application Update

Local school districts and Regional Offices of Education are advised that the FY09 Consolidated Application to Serve English Language Learners will be available for downloading at www.isbe.net/bilingual/htmls/consolidated_application.htm beginning the week of April 17, 2008. Short video segments explaining how to complete the application forms for program approval and funding will also be found at this website.

To qualify for both state TBE/TPI and federal Title III funding, the completed application must be received or postmarked by Monday, June 30. Applications postmarked after the June 30 deadline will not be eligible for federal Title III funding. Please remember that the Consolidated Application is not yet part of the e-grant system and therefore, will only be available via downloading from the above website.

Additionally, on both May 1 and 2, the Division of English Language Learning staff will host phone conferences to answer questions related to the application. To access the conference calls, you must RSVP to obtain a call-in number and code. The purpose of the RSVP is to assure that we have an adequate number of phone lines. To download the teleconference RSVP form, click on www.isbe.net/bilingual/htmls/consolidated_application.htm. You may submit written questions concerning the application to dell@isbe.net before and after the phone conferences.

Please be advised that the conference calls will take the place of the regional application workshops held in previous years.

If you have further questions, contact the Division of English Language Learning at 312-814-3850.

Public Information

ISBE Internet Site

It has come to our attention that some users are not able to access the ISBE website search engine due to local firewalls. Normal web traffic runs on Port 80 and our Search Engine runs on Port 8765. If you can not access the ISBE website search engine you will need to ask your local system administrator to allow access to Port 8765.

In addition, we are currently redesigning our website which will allow for improved performance of the search engine. We anticipate the redesigned website to be ready for public use this summer, and improved modifications to the search engine and website will be an ongoing process.

Accountability

FY09 Regional Safe Schools Program Application Available

The Regional Safe Schools Program (RSSP) FY 2009 application is available and may be accessed through the State Board of Education webpage at http://www.isbe.net/accountability/html/regional_safe_schools.htm.

RSSP funds are distributed by formulas established in the school code. Eligible entities are Regional Offices of Education, Intermediate Service Centers and Chicago Public Schools. Programs should use the FY 2008 award amount to complete the FY 2009 application. The due date is Friday, May 23.

For questions or more information, contact Sally Veach, Accountability Division, at 217-782-2948 or by e-mail at sveach@isbe.net.

Curriculum & Instruction
Request for Proposals (RFP) for Advanced Placement Classes – College Success for All Students Program

The purpose of this grant is to support and promote Advanced Placement (AP) and pre-Advanced Placement programs at schools serving populations with 40 percent or more students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. During the past several years, AP has been expanding to include a far greater number of students.

Grant funds can be utilized to begin or expand AP or pre-AP programs as well as provide professional development for teachers and other school personnel. Professional Development is a required part of the proposal process; at least 20 percent of all funds awarded will need to be invested in training with the College Board in such areas as vertical team training and content specific training.

The requirements for this RFP are posted online at http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/html/advanced_placement.htm. A listing of eligible schools and districts is also posted on the website. This list includes both high schools that will offer AP and middle schools that will offer pre-AP. Those districts believing they meet eligibility, but not the list, must provide a school report card with low income information to be eligible. Additionally, a question and answer forum will be available for those wishing to apply. The RFP is due Thursday, May 22.

For more details on the RFP, or other aspects of current AP programming, please visit http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/html/advanced_placement.htm. For questions, contact Mike Hatfill, Curriculum & Instruction, at 217-557-7323 or by e-mail at dhatfill@isbe.net.

Data Analysis & Progress Reporting

2007-2008 Dental Data Collection

A revised Dental Information Sheet and a revised Data Entry Worksheet are posted on the Illinois State Board of Education’s website. The addresses are:

School Dental Examinations—Information Sheet: http://www.isbe.net/research/pdfs/dental_information.pdf

Dental Information--Data Entry Worksheet: http://www.isbe.net/research/xls/dental_worksheet.xls

Please share this information with your school nurses or health technicians and those submitting dental data to ISBE. Questions may be addressed to Md. Shafiquel Azam, Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division, at 217-782-3950 or by e-mail at mazam@isbe.net.

Funding & Disbursements

2007-2008 Final Public School Calendars

The ability to file the 2007-2008 Final Public School Calendar will be available May 1, 2008 via IWAS. Please complete and transmit calendars to the appropriate Regional Superintendent by the last day of school. A final public school calendar must be transmitted and approved prior to filing the 2007-2008 claims for General State Aid, Annual Pupil Transportation Reimbursement and Section 18-3 Regular Education Orphanage.

HELPFUL HINT: The unused proposed emergency days (XED) that are included at the end of the school year may be removed by correcting the Regular School End Date to the last day of actual school activity. Once the Regular School End Date has been corrected, the calendar codes after that date will be omitted.

If you have further questions that are not addressed in the Public School Calendar Guidelines, you may contact the office of your Regional Superintendent or Marj Beck at the Illinois State Board of Education, mbeck@isbe.net or telephone 217/782-5256. If you encounter technical issues with the Public School Calendar in IWAS please contact the ISBE Call Center at 217/558-3600 during business hours: Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Segregation of Driver Education Fees and Revenue

Per PA 94-0426 that was enacted on January 1, 2006, all driver education fees and state reimbursement for driver education must be deposited into the school district's driver education fund as a separate line item budget entry. The money in the district’s driver education fund can only be used for the funding of a high school driver education program approved by the State Board of
Education that uses instructors certified by the State Board of Education.

**School Bus Driver Permit and Annual Refresher Course Requirements**

All school bus drivers are required to possess a valid school bus driver permit. The requirements for permit issuance can be found at [http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/092/09201035000150R.html](http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/092/09201035000150R.html). All school bus driver permits are issued by the Illinois Secretary of State (ISOS) and are valid for one year from the date of issuance. Each year, all drivers must attend an annual refresher course that is two to four hours in length per Section 6-106.1(a)(8) of the Illinois Vehicle Code. The date on which the driver attends a refresher course becomes the new annivervary date for the driver next year regardless of the expiration date of the permit. A driver cannot legally drive a school bus with a lapse in attending an annual refresher course if it is taken after the anniversary date even though the permit has not yet expired. In addition, the driver must take a yearly physical which is valid for 90 days. The driver cannot renew their permit with ISOS any earlier than 60 days prior to permit expiration or 30 days after expiration.

The example below assumes a new driver, John Doe, and the date(s) on which John is able to legally drive a school bus.

John Doe takes an initial eight hour training course and completes the other necessary requirements in order to obtain a valid school bus driver permit (i.e. physical, fingerprint, background check, practice driving etc.). John receives his initial permit from the ISOS on May 1, 2007. John’s permit is valid until May 1, 2008. John is required to take an annual refresher course between May 1, 2007 and April 30, 2008. John elects to take his refresher course early on January 15, 2008. This date becomes the new annual refresher date for John regardless of the fact that his permit expires on May 1, 2008. In addition, John elects to take his physical on January 17, 2008 which is valid until April 17, 2008 (90 days). The ISOS will only accept applications for permit renewal for a period of 60 days prior to the expiration of the permit or 30 days after expiration. In this example, John cannot make an application for renewal with ISOS until March 1, 2008 (60 days) prior to his permit expiration (May 1, 2008) even though he chose to take his refresher and physical in January 2008.

The following year, John is required to take an annual refresher course on or before January 14, 2009 due to the fact that he chose to take his refresher course early the prior year. If John does not take his refresher before January 15, 2009 he cannot legally drive a school bus even though his permit does not expire until May 1, 2009. It is highly recommended that drivers take their annual refresher course as close to their permit renewal date as possible to avoid early annual refresher dates each year.

**Nutrition**

**Illinois School Wellness – From A to Z Conference**

The Illinois State Board of Education, Divisions of Nutrition Programs and Curriculum and Instruction in cooperation with Action for Healthy Kids–Illinois are sponsoring a one-day wellness conference highlighting successful implementation of school wellness programs involving nutrition, nutrition education, physical activity, and physical education. In addition, to meet Public Act 094-0190’s School Health Recognition Program, the conference will recognize and celebrate schools having success with their wellness efforts. Browse an exhibit room for free resources, ideas, and networking. Early Bird Registration ended on Tuesday, April 15. The conference is Tuesday, May 6 at the Decatur Conference Center.

The registration form is online at [www.isbe.net/nutrition](http://www.isbe.net/nutrition). A registration fee of $25 includes lunch, refreshments, and materials.

**AG Mag and the Illinois Learning Standards**

The AG Mag, developed by Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC), is a new resource for teachers to use for classroom activities and programs. Contact your local farm bureau to request Ag Mags in packages of 30. AITC has 20 different Ag Mag titles to choose from, including Apples, Pumpkin, Dairy, Corn, Soybeans, and more. Visit their website (www.agintheclassroom.org) to view the variety of activities and resources available.

**Summer Mandate Exemption**

This is a reminder that as part of the Public Act 095-0115, Summer Mandate, all regional superintendents must send a listing of those schools where an exemption...
was granted. Please fax this listing to Amy Bianco, Nutrition Programs, at 217-524-6124 or mail it to:

Nutrition Programs,
Illinois State Board of Education,
100 North First Street W270
Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
Attn: Amy Bianco

Schools affected by this legislation include any public school with at least 50 percent of the children qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch AND conducting a summer school program. In order to receive an exemption from this mandate, the school must have filed a petition with the regional superintendent by January 15, 2008. If you have any questions, please contact the Nutrition Programs Division at 800-545-7892 or 217-782-2491.

Wellness Policy Reminder

According to Public Act 094-0199, adopted in October 2007, "All remaining public school districts not participating in the Federal Child Nutrition Programs shall have a Local Wellness Policy in effect no later than the first day of school during 2008–2009 school year.” For guidance on developing a Local Wellness Policy, visit http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/wellness_policy.htm and http://www.kidseatwell.org/LocalWellnessPolicy.html.

National Child Nutrition Employee Appreciation Week

May 5–9, 2008


HealthierUS School Challenge: Recognizing Nutrition Excellence in Schools

Consider taking the HealthierUS School Challenge next school year! By meeting the Food and Nutrition Service’s standards, your school may be eligible for a bronze, silver, or even a gold school status. Visit http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/HealthierUS/index.html for the application information. Consider challenging your school to join the 166 gold schools and 17 silver schools nationally in 2009! Become the first Illinois HealthierUS School Challenge recipient!

Professional Development

Online Course for Improving Education Data

The National Forum on Education Statistics released the first of two online courses for local education agencies (LEA). These two courses, focused on improving education data, have been developed by the National Forum on Education Statistics, in cooperation with the Schools Interoperability Framework Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit.

The first course, Improving Education Data Part 1- Creating a Foundation, presents concepts related to creating a culture of quality data. The four lessons in this course concentrate on establishing a culture of quality data, assessing your local education agency’s data quality, classifying education data, and examining security and confidentiality. The course is designed to be either instructor-let or self-paced and incorporates activities, discussions, presentations, and support materials.

The second course, Improving Education Data Part 2- Coordinating Data Quality will be available in the summer 2008.

These courses are available free of charge to LEAs or anyone interested in taking the courses through SIFA University. To access the courses, visit http://www.sifinfo.org/sifau.asp.

Criminal History Record Check Symposium

The Illinois State Police, in conjunction with the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, and the College of DuPage, Suburban Law Enforcement Academy will be hosting two annual Criminal History Record Check Symposia in 2008. The State Police have requested assistance in getting this information out on as many web sites as possible. If possible, please post the registration
form on your site from now until Friday, September 19, 2008. The registration form is available at http://www.isbe.net/pdf/criminal_hstry_symposium.pdf Please post it on your home page under Hot Topics/Resources—If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Assistant Bureau Chief Tammi Kestel at kesteta@isp.state.il.us or Ms. Patricia Fagen at 630-942-2677.

CCSSO Announces New Educator Resource

A new resource on the CCSSO website provides general educators with information about teaching students who have disabilities.

An outcome of the Special Education Resources for General Educators (SERGE) project, the website provides educators with easy-to-access information and hyperlinks to federal and non-profit resources that will help them more effectively address the learning needs of students with disabilities. Please visit http://serge.ccsso.org for additional information.

Illinois Teacher Receives 2008 ProStart Educator Excellence Award

Loretta Johnson, a teacher at Neal F. Simeon Career Academy in Chicago, is one of 33 teachers nationwide to receive a 2008 ProStart Educator Excellence Award.

Teachers were selected based on their innovative techniques for motivating students to learn and participate in mentored internships to prepare them for a career in the foodservice industry.

ProStart is a program encompassing approximately 60,000 students and 1,600 educators in 47 states, territories and districts. The career-building program was developed by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. The two-year curriculum is designed to teach high school students the management skills needed for a career in the restaurant and foodservice industry.

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: http://www.isbe.net/news/2008/newsclips/080418.htm