I want to thank the members of the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) for inviting me to speak to them last Friday. It’s always good to get out among my peers to hear what’s on their minds and talk about the problems we all face and the possible solutions to consider as we move forward. I also had the opportunity to stop by the new IASA headquarters in Springfield and was very impressed with its design and decor.

Earlier in the week, I was able to attend a forum at Normal Community High School sponsored by the Central Illinois Safe Schools Alliance. The forum included a panel of students, parents and faculty who spoke about their experiences with issues arising from sexual orientation and the safety of all of our students in public schools. I want to thank Dr. Gary Niehaus and Dr. Robert Nielsen, superintendents for the Normal and Bloomington school districts, for their attendance and participation. The leadership of school administrators is critical to ensure that students and their parents have an opportunity to interact with school leaders about safety issues that affect our students every day. Their presence, as well as the presence of so many other local administrators, teachers and city officials, demonstrates an ongoing commitment to understand and support each and every student.

Bullying is a behavior that affects all of our students and it cannot be tolerated in our schools. A student can be singled out for bullying based on any perceived or actual difference, such as sexual orientation, religious beliefs, economic status, his or her style of dress, or simply the way the student “looks”. Our job as educators is to ensure that all of our students have the opportunity to attend school in a safe environment and have the support necessary to ensure their ongoing success. School personnel must be vigilant about identifying and holding students accountable for inappropriate behaviors.

I want to take this opportunity to remind you that all districts are required to have a policy on bullying and that this policy must be communicated to all staff, students and parents every year. I encourage you to re-examine your policy and its implementation in your schools. The Illinois Association of School Boards has a model that you can use as a framework when reviewing your own policy.

U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings outlined her plans for making administrative adjustments to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). As you are all probably aware, the prospects for renewing NCLB this year are slim. Since Congressional action is unlikely, Secretary Spellings has proposed changes to the law through federal rulemaking procedures. Proposed changes include:

- National High School Graduation Rate—calculate the rate by determining the number of students who graduate within four years and divide that number by the number of students who started high school four years prior to the graduation date, making adjustments for those who transferred in and out during that four-year period. It would allow for possible flexibility for some student subgroups (e.g., English
Language Learners and students with Individual Education Programs) who may take longer to graduate. We currently use a similar cohort method for calculating graduation rate. The proposed change would also break down graduation rates to the subgroup level and include graduation rates in Average Yearly Progress (AYP) calculations.

- Require states to include National Assessment of Educational Progress state reading and math results on report cards.
- Create the National Technical Advisory Council to advise the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) on state standards, assessments and accountability systems.
- Require all states to justify their current subgroup size or recalculate subgroup size.
- Develop criteria that would allow for the use of growth models in all states.
- Conduct an analysis of current restructuring efforts with the requirement that future interventions be more rigorous and comprehensive than what is currently required under corrective action.

The entire document that outlines the proposed changes is about 140 pages long. To read or comment on these changes, go to [http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/other/2008-2/042308a.html](http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/other/2008-2/042308a.html).

Have a great week!

Chris

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**Upcoming Deadlines**

- **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** – May 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 Reading Improvement Block Grant application** – June 15, 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
- **FY09 School Budget Form** – October 31, 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): Prescheduled pickup was Friday, April 25
Day 2 Initial PSAE Materials (to Pearson): Prescheduled pickup was 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
(May be picked up on April 25 if all Day 1 accommodations testing is completed)
Day 2 Accommodations PSAE Materials (to Pearson): Pre-scheduled pickup is Friday, May 9
(May be picked up on April 25 if all Day 2 accommodations testing is completed)
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.

Curriculum & Instruction
FY09 Reading Improvement Block Grant Applications

The FY09 Reading Improvement Block Grant application became available for completion through the eGrants system on Thursday, April 17. All eligible school districts serving grades K-6 may apply. Projected allocations for FY09, which are contingent on legislative approval, can be found near the bottom of the Budget Detail page of the application. Districts also may check their projected allocations by going to www.isbe.net/curriculum/reading/html/grant.htm. Some districts will see changes in funds due to census poverty data.

Please remember that the allocations are not final since the legislature has not yet approved the state’s budget. The total dollars allocated to each district could change.

The due date for the Reading Improvement Block Grant application is June 15. The start date for use of grant funds is Tuesday, July 1, or the date a substantially approvable application has been received by ISBE, whichever is later. All FY09 funds must be spent by June 30, 2009.

Data Analysis & Progress Reporting
Reporting ELL (English Language Learner) Individual Student Data on SIS

Starting this school year (2007-2008), districts must provide their annual report of individual student information for Limited English Proficient (LEP) or English Language Learner (ELL) students via the ISBE Student Information System (SIS). There is no longer a Bilingual Education Annual Student Report (ASR) that must be completed by districts. Staff responsible for overseeing LEP services for a district should coordinate with SIS technology staff for the district to ensure that required ELL data are reported on SIS before ELL students are exited from the district for the current school year. The template for reporting ELL data on SIS is available at:
http://www.isbe.net/sis/html/excel_templates.htm

If you have technical questions related to reporting ELL data on SIS, please contact the ISBE Help Desk at 217-558-3600. Other questions about ELL data may be directed to Dr. Lilibeth Q. Gumia, Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division, at 217-782-3950.

School Business & Support Services
FY2009 School District/Joint Agreement Budget Forms now available

Now available at the School Business Services Division website are FY2009 School District/Joint Agreement Budget Forms (ISBE Form 50-36/50-39) with related additional information and instructions.

At the website:

- The “Cover Letter” briefly explains new and existing laws in effect for fiscal year 2008-09.
- Mechanics of the Budget
• Instructions to help complete the adoption process.
• Links are listed to direct you to the Rules and Public Acts.

School districts should pay close attention to the deadline date for submitting the electronic FY2009 School District Budget Form in the excel spreadsheet to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) by Friday, October 31. The School Code, Section 17-1 (105 ILCS 5/17-1), requires school districts to electronically submit the adopted annual budget to ISBE; and also requires school districts who adopt an unbalanced budget in the operating funds to complete a Deficit Reduction Plan to balance the budget within three years. The Joint Agreement Budget Form 50-39 is excluded from this state filing requirement and should be filed locally as determined by the provisions of the joint agreement.

**New Rule (23) Illinois Administrative Code** – Part 100: New requirements for accounting, budgeting, financial reporting and auditing effective July 1, 2008 (FY2009). The Fiscal Year 2009 School District/Joint Agreement Budget form reflects these new rules. For further information on these revisions, please visit our website at: [http://www.isbe.net/finance/htmls/rule_changes.htm](http://www.isbe.net/finance/htmls/rule_changes.htm)

If you have any questions, please contact the School Business Services Division at 217-785-8779.

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**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 cannot 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.

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**Funding & Disbursements**

**FY 2008 State and Federal grant amendments and project extension requests**

Many State and Federal grant projects are approaching a June 30 end date for obligating FY 2008 grant funds. Please be advised that per Policy Statements #2 and #3 on page 3 of the [State and Federal Grant Administration Policy and Fiscal Requirements and Procedures](http://www.isbe.net/finance/htmls/rule_changes.htm), all State and Federal project end date extension requests and final budget amendments must be received in the agency no later than 30 calendar days prior to the end date of the project.

Final amendments for federal or state funded grants with a Project End Date of June 30, 2008, must be received by ISBE no later than May 31, 2008. For those grants with a Project End Date of August 31, 2008, the last day amendments will be accepted is August 1, 2008. Budget increases for state funded grant projects must be received by June 30, even if the project end date has been extended. For grant applications in the electronic Grants Management System (eGMS), the deadline is also referenced on the Program Overview page under “Amendment Due Date.”

**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](http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/ADABlockGrantFY08.pdf)

**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, Funding & Disbursements, at 217-782-5256 or by e-mail at mbeck@isbe.net. 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 a.m. – 5 p.m.

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/092/092010350000150R.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 anniversary 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 the 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, finger print, 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

Westland Beef Recall – Last Chance for Claim Submission

If you have not done so already, please submit your claim for reimbursement of storage, disposal and processing costs associated with beef that was destroyed in accordance with the Westland Meat Company recall. Instructions regarding claim submission, reimbursable costs and claim forms can be found online at: http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/food_recall.htm then select “Important: Westland Meat—Change of Status From Administrative Hold to Recall 2-19-08.” Please note, reimbursable costs does not include the cost of the
beef itself. The beef will be replaced by the USDA. Claim forms should be faxed to 217-782-4550 no later than **Friday, May 2**. If you have any questions regarding the recall, the claim process or reimbursable costs, please call Nutrition Programs at 217-782-2491 and ask for the Food Distribution division.

**DoD Unused Funds**

Schools participating in the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program are now able to use unused funds from other schools. Funds will be available until the state as a whole runs out of money. If you need help with ordering, please contact **Pam Hamlett** with the DoD at 215-737-3676.

**Use up your commodities**

With summer break fast approaching, please be sure to use up your commodity food inventory. All food has a shelf life and in an effort to prevent food being wasted or thrown out because of expiration, please use your commodities before summer break.

**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](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!

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**Educator Preparation & Recertification**

**National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) – New “Spring Window” is open until June 30, 2008**

**National Board Candidates** – The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has opened the spring window for new NBPTS candidates and will provide a $2,000 Candidate Subsidy for the NBPTS Candidate Fee for eligible Illinois teachers. Interested Illinois teachers must meet the NBPTS eligibility guidelines as well as the licensure requirements established by Illinois.

**TAKE ONE Candidates** – The Illinois State Board of Education will provide a $395 Candidate Subsidy for the NBPTS Take One! Candidate fee for eligible Illinois teachers.

For more information, visit the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) website, [http://www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org), about becoming either a National Board Candidate or a Take One! Candidate.

For more information about how to apply for the $2,000 Candidate Subsidy for Illinois National Board Candidates or the $395 Candidate Subsidy for Illinois Take One! Candidates, visit the National Board Resource Center at Illinois State University (NBRC) website ([www.coe.ilstu.edu/ilnbpts](http://www.coe.ilstu.edu/ilnbpts)). Teachers may print the application and instructions, locate contact information for NBCT Regional and Local Coordinators, and locate available candidate support in each Illinois region. Please contact **Lynn Gaddis**, NBCT, by e-mail at nbrc@IllinoisState.edu or call 309-454-4980 for any questions.

**Attention NBCTs**

**Mentoring** – According to the Illinois Teaching Excellence Program, Section 21-27 of the Illinois School Code, NBCTs must hold a master teaching certificate and be employed 50 percent of the school year to be eligible for the annual stipend and mentoring incentives.

NBCTs who have or will complete the [Statement of Intent to Provide Mentoring/Professional Development form (77-25A)](http://www.coe.ilstu.edu/ilnbpts) should submit their mentoring/professional development documentation immediately after completing the initial 30 hours of
service and the remaining 30 hours should be submitted no later than **Monday, June 30, 2008**.

For more information on the Annual Stipend, Statement of Intent, and Mentoring/Professional Development opportunities, visit the Iroquois-Kankakee Regional Office of Education (I-KAN) website at [www.ilnbpts.org](http://www.ilnbpts.org) or contact *Vicki Hensley*, Assistant Regional Superintendent, I-KAN Regional Office of Education, via e-mail at *VHensley@i-kan.org* or *Michelle ZumMallen*, I-KAN State Support Site Coordinator, at *mzummallen@i-kan.org*.

**Master Certificates** – NBCTs may also check the status of their Illinois Master Certificate(s) in the Educator Certification System (ECS). For more information on how to check the status or apply for and register your Illinois master certificate, please review the **2007-2008 Frequently Asked Questions** document on ISBE’s National Board website, at [http://www.isbe.net/profprep/nbpts.htm](http://www.isbe.net/profprep/nbpts.htm). You can also contact your Regional Office of Education or *Angela McDermott*, Educator Preparation & Recertification, by e-mail at *amcdermo@isbe.net*.

**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](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*.

**Professional Development**

**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 Spring Symposium will take place on **Wednesday, May 28** at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn. The Fall Symposium will take place on **Tuesday, September 23** at the Illinois State Fairgrounds in Springfield.

More information, including a registration form is available online at: [http://www.isbe.net/pdf/criminal_hstry_symposium.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/pdf/criminal_hstry_symposium.pdf).

If you have any questions, contact *Assistant Bureau Chief Tammi Kestel* at *kesteta@isp.state.il.us* or

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 **Friday, May 16**. The full details may be accessed at the following link: [http://www.illinoisbiz.biz/dceo/](http://www.illinoisbiz.biz/dceo/).

**Grant Opportunities**

**Grant Announcement: Illinois Innovation Talent Pilot Project**
Teacher Resources

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.

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/080425.htm.