Weekly Message from State Superintendent Randy Dunn

Good afternoon.

As always, it was a pleasure to see many superintendents at last week’s IASA Conference here in Springfield. As I mentioned in my address on Friday morning, my only regret was that I did not have more time to spend with you—having been in Washington for the spring meeting of the state education chiefs during most of that week.

A key item of discussion by the chiefs—and one of the agenda items reviewed with the State Board of Education at their April meeting—is the work we are doing (as is virtually every other state) with the U. S. Department of Education on changes to the Illinois Accountability Workbook, the state’s NCLB “plan” we file with the feds. The general approach we have taken with our accountability amendments is to first have dialogue with USED staff and enter into an informal negotiation on the changes we’ve proposed (and indeed, that conversation will be taking place soon). Once our amendments are finalized with the Department, the State Board will then take final action to adopt the changes to the Accountability Workbook.

You may recall that in 2005, we made a strong run to get the “low-hanging fruit” to make our Illinois plan for NCLB more workable. We were able to get changes approved for 2005 that dealt with

- subgroup size and the use of Confidence Intervals (CI)
- grade span review regarding district improvement status
- the special education “proxy”
- new definition of a full academic year

Going forward, Secretary Margaret Spellings has made it clear that she wants to support state flexibility, as long as the “bright lines” of NCLB remain clear. We have proposed a package of amendments for 2006 that would be tremendously helpful for Illinois schools while showing fidelity to the core components of the law.

Changes we have requested in Illinois for 2006 are as follows:

- **Backmapping** - This will allow us to utilize Grade 3 adequate yearly progress to apply to Grade 2 for feeder schools that end with Grade 2.
  - Continue with the “2 percent proxy” for scores of students with disabilities - Illinois first used the USED-allowed 2 percent proxy in 2005.
  - Expand use of Confidence Intervals (CI) - Extend the use of a CI from 95 percent to 99 percent to make the assessment system more valid and reliable. Use a CI with safe harbor, as other states have done recently, at a 75 percent level.
  - Apply a CI to the “all group” measure as well as to subgroups.

Public school choice/supplemental education services (SES) per USED flexibility agreement - Only 9 percent of districts in Illinois have
schools or grades across all schools that have the ability to offer choice. Among the states, Illinois has limited choice offerings because we have a large number of single-school districts with only one building with established grade levels, as well as many schools in need of improvement within certain districts. On behalf of students who do not have a real choice option, Illinois has proposed a statewide flexibility agreement that would allow LEAs (Local Education Agencies, in the federal parlance) with schools in need of improvement or an LEA in need of improvement, to offer SES with the LEA serving as provider. (This is the flexibility that USED had previously granted to the Chicago Public Schools.)

Subgroup size. Illinois currently uses a subgroup size of 45, which you may recall we had increased with last year’s amendments. As such, that number had been used with our 2005 tested population (Grades 3, 5 and 8 in reading and mathematics plus Grade 11 in reading and mathematics). As of 2006, with tested grades having been expanded and now including Grades 3 through 8 (and Grade 11) in reading and mathematics, we feel it appropriate to request use of 90 as the state’s subgroup number. We want to maintain a common-sense approach with schools and believe using a subgroup size of 90 is best for our schools, now that we are testing six elementary grades.

Again, this will be a process that we work through step-by-step in consultation with the Department of Education, prior to final action by the State Board. We will keep you posted on interaction with USED and the final outcome of these requested changes.

Have a great week.

Randy Dunn

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**Upcoming Deadlines**

- Bilingual Parent Summit Registration Deadline – May 5, 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
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs Art Contest – May 31, 2006
- Call for Workshop Proposals - Partners in Success for New Americans Family – June 1, 2006
- High School Challenge: Rigor and Relevance Meet Reality registration deadline – June 12, 2006
- Proposed Public School Calendar – June 15, 2006
- Midwest Clean Diesel Initiative Grant Deadlines – June 16, 2006
- Rules Public Comment Deadline – June 19, 2006
- National High School Journalism Teacher Awards applications due – July 1, 2006
- Public Comment on Special Education Rulemaking – September 15, 2006

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**Professional Development**

**High school conference dates set**

Make plans now to attend High School Challenge: Rigor and Relevance Meet Reality Jun 19 and 20 in Bloomington, Illinois. The conference is designed to create awareness of the changing global economy and the need to prepare Illinois students for the world in which they will live and work.

Featured speakers will include:

- **Willard Daggett**, President, International Center for Leadership in Education
- **Kati Haycock**, Director, The Education Trust
The conference registration form is available at: http://www.ilprincipals.org/PDF/High_School_Challenge_for_web.pdf
Registration deadline is June 12, 2006.


**CASEL offering two-day training**

As districts and schools work to help their students meet the new Social Emotional Learning Standards, many are looking for professional development supports. CASEL—the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, based at the University of Illinois at Chicago—is offering a two-day training for school teams on how to implement and sustain school wide SEL. The training is grounded in solid research and requires school teams of at least four, including the principal or another senior administrator, a student support person (e.g., counselor, social worker, school psychologist) and a curriculum person (e.g., teacher or area head). For more information, go to http://www.casel.org/home/index.php.

**Nutrition**

**School-Based Child Nutrition Program Workshops set**

Annual Administrative Workshops
Windows of Wellness (WOW) will be the theme of this year’s annual school-based Child Nutrition Programs administrative workshops scheduled throughout Illinois during June 2006. Workshop topics will include Local Wellness Policies, the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, recent changes in USDA Civil Rights requirements, food safety and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP), what to expect during an Administrative Review and much more. For agenda, dates, times, locations and to pre-register (required), go to http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/workshops.htm and select NSLP Administrative Workshop – Windows of Wellness (WOW).

**Basic Training on School-Based Child Nutrition Programs**

ISBE will once again offer half-day introductory workshops this fall targeted to new sponsors/new staff of school-based Child Nutrition Programs. Although designed for new sponsors/new staff, the workshops serve as an excellent overview of the program regulations for anyone with these responsibilities. Both the manual and the workshops cover the following topics: processing household applications, verification, completing the annual application process and required reports, menu planning, food commodities and much more. Pre-registration is required. Go to: http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/workshops.htm and select NSLP Basic Training.

**Important Reminders**

May 1–5 National Child Nutrition Employee Appreciation Week
June 4–10 Summer Food Service Program Week
June 6 National Hunger Awareness Day

**Nutrition Programs’ Electronic Calendar**

If you are looking for the date of an event such as Illinois School Breakfast Week, a food service workshop or an advisory council meeting, then visit Nutrition Programs’ electronic calendar at http://webprod1.isbe.net/EventCalendar/eventcal.aspx to see events, workshops and more on a month-to-month basis! Important notices related to school meals are posted regularly.

**Rules**

**Invitation to Comment on Rules**

Three 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 http://www.isbe.net/rules; choose “Proposed Rules and Amendments”. Please submit any comments or suggestions you may have to rules@isbe.net.

**Part 130 (Determining Special Education Per Capita Tuition Charge)**

Updating and streamlining as part of comprehensive review of ISBE’s rules. Includes change in definition of “program” and more flexibility in allocation of several categories of expenditures.
Part 228 (Transitional Bilingual Education)
Updating and streamlining as part of comprehensive review of ISBE’s rules. Includes new requirement for qualifications of program administrators.

Part 560 (Parental Participation Pilot Project)
New rules in response to P.A. 94-507; provisions for grants to four “lowest-performing” districts.

Deadline for Public Comment: June 19, 2006

Notice of Completed Rulemaking
Please be advised that three other rulemaking items recently adopted by the State Board of Education are now in effect. These sets of rules have been posted on the agency’s web site at http://www.isbe.net/rules; choose “Rules Currently in Effect” and scroll to the relevant Part number.

Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision)
Revisions to timeframe for appeals; criteria for “writing-intensive” courses.
Affected Sections: 1.95, 1.440 and 1.445
Effective Date: April 21, 2006

Part 25 (Certification)
Revisions to process for accreditation of educational units and approval of programs that prepare educators; miscellaneous additional changes.
Effective Date: April 21, 2006

Part 1110 (Education Purchasing Program)
New rule to implement this program, enacted via P.A. 93-1036.
Affected Sections: All
Effective Date: April 21, 2006

Curriculum and Instruction
Technology Needs Assessment Surveys
The Illinois State Board of Education needs to collect technology information from you, your technology staff and your classroom teachers. This information is vital to ISBE to ensure we have the data needed to support the Comprehensive Strategic Plan for Elementary and Secondary Education.

Please share this information with as many school personnel as possible. The more surveys we receive, the more accurate our data and the more likely we are to attract the attention of legislators to provide the assistance you need to acquire the latest in technology for your schools.

Each survey will be available until Wednesday, May 17, 2006 and will take less than ten minutes to complete.

Administrators (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Business Manager, Curriculum Director, Principal or Assistant Principal): http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB22572UNEQ3N

Technology Staff (Network Specialist, Network Analyst, District Technology Director, Building Technology Director or Library Media Specialist/Director): http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB22577XZHTT4

Classroom Teachers http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB2257852HWVE

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

English Language Learning
Bilingual Parent Summit
The First Annual Statewide Summit for Bilingual Parents will be held on Saturday, May 20, 2006 at the Oakbrook Marriot Resort, Oak Brook, Illinois from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The registration deadline is Friday, May 5. Topics of focus will include:
• the role and responsibilities of PAC members,
• the educational opportunities and programs provided by districts for bilingual students and their families,
• strategies for effective communication,
• leadership and advocacy for PAC members and
• how schools districts are organized and how they function.

Student Assessment
Testing schedule
The 2007 ACCESS for ELLs™ testing dates are now posted on www.isbe.net/assessment. Dates, information and waivers for schedule adjustments are posted there as well. This is the state required English proficiency test for all English Language Learners (ELL) in kindergarten through grade 12. For more information, go to www.isbe.net/assessment and click on ACCESS.
The registration form is online at http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/pdfs/summit_bilingual_parents.pdf

To register and receive reimbursement for up to five participants, please download, send the completed registration form along with payment to the Illinois Resource Center by this Friday, May 5.

If you have questions please call Paula McDaniel at 847-803-3535. Districts may use State bilingual and Federal Title III funds to pay for additional participants at the Parent Summit.

Student Opportunities and Recognition

Presidential Scholars Program

The United States Department of Education (USED) has named the 550 semifinalists in the 2006 Presidential Scholars Program. The Illinois semifinalists are:

- Alice L. Baumgartner – Latin School of Chicago
- Sarah E. Carden – Naperville North High School
- Katherine L. Carmody – U of I Lab High School
- Lawrence L. Chan – William Fremd High School
- Alan H. Cherney – Niles North High School
- Michael L. Foley – Glenbard East High School
- Evan M. Greulich – Glenbrook North High School
- *Jacob R. Hoffman – Francis W. Parker School
- Tyler T. Kerr – Auburn High School, Rockford
- David J. Luedtke – Glenbard East High School
- Jason R. Prestinario – St. Ignatius College Prep
- Nanditha K. Ramachandran – Naperville North High School
- Andrew J. Stafman – Deerfield High School
- Samuel J. Stone – New Trier Township High School
- *Hanah E. Stuart – Libertyville High School
- Michele D. Trickey – Adlai E. Stevenson High School
- Irvin D. Wang – Libertyville High School

*Recommended for Scholar in the Arts

From nearly 2.8 million graduating high school seniors, only 550 semifinalists were selected from across the country. The scholars are chosen on the basis of their accomplishments in academic and artistic success, leadership and involvement in school and community. Congratulations to Illinois’ semifinalists!

McHenry High School student wins National First Freedom Student Competition

Michael Nitz of McHenry High School West Campus in McHenry has won the First Place Award in the 2005-2006 First Freedom Student Competition. This national essay contest offers ninth through 12th grade students nationwide an opportunity to explore their individual and civic rights to and responsibilities for religious freedom. The competition also engages high school teachers and students in the study of American history and the First Amendment. A panel of judges selected the winning essay from 2,500 entries from high school students in public and private schools and home-schooling regions throughout the United States, District of Columbia and American schools in Germany and Mexico.

Congratulations to Michael Nitz, who will receive a $3,000 cash award and to his teacher Cary Waxler.

Educator Recognition

National High School Journalism Teacher Awards

The Dow Jones Newspaper Fund will select a National High School Journalism Teacher of the Year, four Distinguished Advisers and several Special Recognition Advisers in the 2006 competition.

The winning teacher receives expense-paid travel to the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, a newsroom laptop computer, the Wall Street Journal Classroom Edition, a column in Adviser Update, a substitute teacher per diem for the district and sponsorship of a student writing contest at the school with a $1000 scholarship to the winning student.

Applications must be postmarked by July 1, 2006 and are available at: http://djnewspaperfund.dowjones.com/fund/hst_teachers.asp

Support Services

Support to children of military personnel

The Illinois Chapter of the National Military Family Association in Illinois is concerned with the well-being of the children of deployed military personnel who face pressures and may require special attention by school staff. The organization would be pleased to assist
schools to help students in this situation. A number of resources for students are listed on the web site at:
http://www.nmfa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=home_education

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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.

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**In the News**

**Weekly news clips**

Highlights from last week’s education news clips are posted at: