Weekly Message from State Superintendent Randy Dunn

Good afternoon.

I’m dictating this week’s message from the road as I head back to Springfield from Erie, Illinois where I attended the groundbreaking ceremony for a wind turbine project at Erie Community School District.

Erie will have the first single wind turbine in the state that will power the multiple buildings for the entire school district. The 1.2 megawatt wind turbine, tower and electrical distribution system will provide energy to the elementary, middle and high schools and the high school annex facility. The wind-generated energy will decrease the school district’s purchased electrical consumption by 87 percent, saving an estimated $5.5 million in energy costs over 30 years. With construction beginning next month, the Erie District has set a goal of having the turbine operational on December 15, 2006.

Today’s event at Erie gives me a chance to again encourage schools to do all they can to support eco-friendly, “green” facilities. As you may know from an earlier announcement in this space, ISBE has partnered with the Capital Development Board and the Healthy Schools Campaign to develop a resource guide to help school officials, community leaders and concerned parents use state-of-the-art strategies to build schools with lower-cost, high-efficiency systems and healthy environments. The Illinois Resource Guide for Healthy, High-Performing School Buildings is designed to introduce school districts to the latest ideas and strategies aimed at improving the health and efficiency of new and old schools. The guide is available online at: http://www.healthyschoolscampaign.org/ilhhpsb/

This move toward wind-generated electricity took leadership and courage on the part of the Erie school board, staff, and community. As always with this kind of project—and sometimes especially in small towns such as where I’ve worked as an educator—there can be a good deal of skepticism and second-guessing about a project such as this. But given the energy realities we all face today, as school leaders and communities make decisions about school design and construction, it’s important to maintain a strong commitment to healthy, high-performance facilities.

Have a great week.

Randy Dunn

Upcoming Deadlines

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs Art Contest – May 31, 2006
- Call for Workshop Proposals - Partners in Success for New Americans Family – June 1, 2006
- One Percent Cap Applications – June 1, 2006
- NBPTS Applications – June 5, 2006
- Student Advisory Council Applications – June 7, 2006
- High School Challenge: Rigor and Relevance Meet Reality registration – June 12, 2006
- Proposed Public School Calendar – June 15, 2006
- Aramco Teachers to Saudi Arabia application – June 15, 2006
- Midwest Clean Diesel Initiative Grant applications – June 16, 2006
- Rules Public Comment – June 19, 2006
• National High School Journalism Teacher Awards applications – July 1, 2006
• Rules Public Comment Deadline, Part 1 and Part 565 – July 17, 2006
• Waiver applications to be considered by General Assembly in November – August 11, 2006
• Public Comment on Special Education Rulemaking – September 15, 2006

Message from Governor’s Office

Flags to fly at half staff June 2

Governor Blagojevich has ordered that flags at all State of Illinois building be flown at half staff this Friday, June 2, to honor Army PFC Caleb A. Lufkin, 24, of Knoxville. Private Lufkin died on May 25, 2006 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center of injuries sustained on May 4, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his RG-31 Mine Protected Vehicle during combat operations in Baghdad, Iraq. Lufkin was assigned to the 5th Engineer Battalion, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

Flying flags at half staff is optional for Illinois schools. This information is shared at the request of Regional Superintendents and local school districts.

Early Childhood

Preschool for All Children RFP for 3 to 5 released

The Preschool for All Children Ages 3 to 5 Years – 07 Request for Proposals (RFP) for new funds has been released. Applicants eligible to submit a proposal for this preschool education program serving 3 and 4 year olds include public school districts, community-based agencies, child care centers and others. Applicants other than public school districts must provide evidence of existing competencies to provide early childhood education programs. Continuing providers will find the application process for this year’s expansion similar to the process nts in years past.

The RFP is available at: http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/block_grant.htm or by calling the Early Childhood Division at 217-524-4835.

Preschool for All Children Bidders’ conferences will be held for this RFP. Attendance at a bidders’ conference is recommended but is not required. Registration is not required. Security procedures require photo identification for entry at each location.

Chicago Heights

Prairie State College – Auditorium
202 South Halsted
Wednesday, June 14, 2006, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

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.

Early Childhood Block Grant

Continuation Applications on IWAS due now

Entities completing e grant applications for Early Childhood Block Grant continuing funds were sent a message that they would not be penalized for submitting ECBG applications after the May 19th deadline due to maintenance on the e grant system. The e grant system is now available. Please complete and submit your application immediately.

If you have questions, please contact the Early Childhood Division at 217-524-4835.

Rules

Invitation to Comment on Rules

Please be advised that two sets of proposed rules recently reviewed by the State Board of Education are currently available for public comment. These items have been posted on the agency’s web site at www.isbe.net/rules; choose “Proposed Rules and Amendments”. Please submit any comments or suggestions you may have to rules@isbe.net.

Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision)

Electronic reporting of teachers’ qualifications; due process for exclusion of high school students who fail to maintain academic or attendance standards; technical updates/corrections in requirements related to daily physical education and qualifications of middle-grades teachers.

-Deadline for Public Comment: July 17, 2006

New Part 565 (Class Size Reduction Grants)

Establishes grant program for class sizes no greater than 15.

-Deadline for Public Comment: July 17, 2006
NCLB

AYP Appeals Process

School districts may appeal their district or school status to the Illinois State Board of Education. A letter from the district superintendent to the State Superintendent of Education for consideration by the Appeals Advisory Committee, listing the issue and rationale for the appeal, begins the process.

The details of the appeals process are available online at: http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/appeals_status.pdf

Data Analysis

School Report Card Data Form now online

The report card data collection form is now available on IWAS. The deadline for data submission is June 15, 2006. You are advised to print a copy of the data form before you exit the verification process. Among the statistics generated during the verification process are attendance rates and graduation rates which will be used in the AYP computations for schools and districts. The targets for making AYP in 2006 are: 89 percent for attendance rate; and 69 percent for graduation rate.

Please call 217-558-3600 with IWAS access questions and 217-782-3950 for other report card issues.

Curriculum and Instruction

Sustainable Schoolwide Social and Emotional Learning


CASEL is pleased to announce the release in June 2006 of its new document for educators, Sustainable Schoolwide Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): Implementation Guide and Toolkit, along with a professional development event on its use. The Guide consists of 160 pages of SEL research and practice information and case studies. The Toolkit (280 pages) includes 40 tools you can use and adapt to help your school every step of the way in its SEL journey, including tools for creating a planning team, developing a shared vision, conducting needs and resources assessments, communicating with families, developing funding and much more. The two-day workshop will equip school administrators and their teams with tools and skills to implement high-quality, sustainable, evidence-based social and emotional learning programming that is integrated into all aspects of a school's functioning. By the end of the two days, school teams will:

- Understand the theory, rationale and research base of SEL as a framework for school change and positive student development
- Learn about the important role the school leader must play in high quality and sustainable SEL implementation.
- Explore the key steps of SEL implementation and strategies for sustaining programming.
- Create a plan of action to advance SEL programming at their schools.

Throughout the two days, participants will use Sustainable Schoolwide Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): Implementation Guide and Toolkit to learn about the CASEL framework for implementing and sustaining SEL. In addition, school teams will learn about the newest research on SEL impacts, receive individual consultation from CASEL staff, interact with other schools that are implementing SEL programming and leave the training with a comprehensive plan of action.

CASEL will offer this event in Summer 2006 on June 26 – 27 (other dates may be added; please watch CASEL’s website for further news).

To receive the registration form, visit CASEL’s website at http://www.casel.org/home/index.php.

If you want more information about the book, Sustainable Schoolwide Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): Implementation Guide and Toolkit, watch CASEL’s website for more on its content and news of its release.

Special Education

One percent exception application reminder

If more than one percent of students in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11 are identified as significantly cognitively disabled, districts must prepare a request for an exception to the one percent cap. If the conditions for the exception are approved, then all progressing and attaining scores earned by students taking the Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA) will be counted as proficient in making determinations for school, district and state AYP.
Applications are due Thursday, June 1, 2006. The form may be mailed or FAXED to 217-782-0372, attention, Pearl Schneider.


For additional information please contact Pearl Schneider at 217/782-5589 or via email at pschneid@isbe.net.

Teacher Certification

NBPTS applications

The deadline for submitting a sealed proposal for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) program has been extended two weeks and is now due at ISBE by 4 p.m. on June 5, 2006. The Request for Sealed Proposal (RFSP) #22010076 may be accessed online at: http://www.purchase.state.il.us/ipb/IllinoisBID.nsf/frmBidViewFrameset?ReadForm&view=viewSolicitationsOpenByDate?OpenView&Start=1&Count=250

English Language Learning

English Language Proficiency Assessment

Prior to FY 06, Illinois used four state-approved nationally normed English language proficiency tests (LAS, MAC II, IPT and LPTS). A student who scored at or above the 50th percentile on the nationally normed test used by its district was eligible to exit the program as English language proficient.

In FY06, Illinois instituted the use of ACCESS for ELLs™, a criterion-based assessment aligned to Illinois Learning Standards as its new, statewide test of English language proficiency. The state has determined that a score of 4.0 is English language proficient. At this level, English language learners can process, understand, produce or use:

- specific and some technical language of the content areas;
- a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple, related paragraphs; and
- oral or written language with minimal phonological, syntactic or semantic errors that do not impede the overall meaning of the communication when presented with oral or written connected discourse with occasional visual and graphic support.

Any student scoring below 4.0 is deemed to be an English language learner and is eligible for placement in a Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) or Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI). It is recommended that districts use this assessment along with other multiple indicators of English language learning to determine placement.

For more information about ACCESS for ELLs™, see http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/htmls/access.htm.

For more information about the rules governing transitional bilingual education, see http://www.isbe.net/rules/proposed/default.htm.

Nutrition

Save the Date for a Free Field Trip to KidsFest Chicago 2006!

Get ready for three days of non-stop fun and entertainment at KidsFest Chicago 2006, October 12-14 at the DuPage Expo in St. Charles. This exciting event, coordinated by the Illinois NET (Nutrition Education and Training) Program, offers free field trips to grade K through eight schools and extra-curricular groups to promote healthier lifestyles for kids in an effort to address childhood overweight. This year two field trip days (Thursday and Friday) are planned due to the overwhelming response to the event last year.

Children can expand their knowledge of fitness and nutrition through activities that include the Junior Chef Challenge, interactive fitness demonstrations, a rock climbing wall, aerobic and dance routines and healthful food sampling. Don’t miss out on the largest event of its type in the Midwest! For more information, call Illinois NET at 800-466-7998.

Resources Available

Success in the Middle - National Middle School Association

The National Middle School Association has published Success in the Middle: A Policymaker’s Guide to Achieving Quality Middle Level Education. The guide and related information are available online at: http://www.nmsa.org/Advocacy/PolicyGuide/tabid/784/Default.aspx.
Student Opportunities and Honors

State Student Advisory Council seeks members

The Illinois State Board of Education is currently seeking applications for the Student Advisory Council (SAC) to the Illinois State Board of Education for the 2006-07 school year. The SAC is made up of students representing all regions of the state. Members are invited to attend Board meetings, sessions of the General Assembly and applicable education-related conferences. They may review and critique ISBE’s existing or proposed programs, policies and regulations, sponsor cooperatively with the ISBE conferences, seminars, etc., pertaining to student-related, education issues, inform Illinois students of SAC activities and provide testimony at legislative or board hearings.

Eligibility to apply for the 2006-2007 SAC is limited to public school students. Given the need to hear from students on some of the more complicated issues faced by our state, special consideration will be given to applicants from low-performing schools or districts. An application form, due June 7, 2006 is now available at: http://www.isbe.net/pdf/sac_application.pdf. Activities of the Student Advisory Council in 2006-2007 are contingent upon final State Board budget allocations.

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.

In the News

Weekly news clips

Highlights from last week’s education news clips are posted at: http://www.isbe.net/news/2006/newsclips/060526.htm