Weekly Message from State Superintendent Randy Dunn

Good afternoon, writing today from the Chicago office.

Some readers may have been aware that—along with all of the other states and territories—Illinois has recently undergone an NCLB-required “peer review” of its standards and assessment system. Based largely upon the results of this review, the United States Department of Education (USED) then issued designations to each state. (The peer reviewers are chosen by USED as experts in the field of accountability and assessment.)

Education Week posted a story on this process last Wednesday and showed Illinois receiving a designation of Approval Pending, a designation we share with 34 other states. These 35 states face mandatory oversight from the feds—and Illinois is one of 8 states in this group that additionally faces the withholding of up to 10 percent of our Title I, Part A state administrative funds.

Like many other states, we have serious misgivings about USED’s characterization of Illinois’s assessment system. We believe that, overall, our standards and assessment system should be viewed as a success. We’ve made great progress and are working diligently to make sure that all Illinois assessments are technically appropriate.

Of course, this view is independent of the Harcourt mess we all lived through this spring. Rather, here, we’re talking about our plan/system/model for how we are doing student assessment in Illinois—whatever testing companies may be utilized.

For us here in Illinois, the timing of the peer review itself led to difficulty. While USED approved our peer review for May 2006—since we were debuting our new assessment system earlier this spring and that was the basis for the review—they claim in their notification to us that we failed to provide required materials when requested in April. Those materials, which could greatly affect our designation, were made available to USED as soon as we could upon completion of testing and are in the feds’ possession at this time, to be reviewed in July as we understand. And because of the timing of our peer review, we did not have the opportunity to respond to USED’s concerns before they made their designation as it seems some states were able to do.

Some of the areas in which USED claims Illinois is not meeting NCLB requirements relate to assessment for English Language Learners and students with disabilities. As many states struggle to hammer out an effective way of assessing these students, Illinois has made considerable progress in this area and has plans in place to further these improvements. It is not surprising that so many states continue to wrangle with this issue as experts and researchers still disagree on many large aspects of the process. Perhaps this is the reason why no clear guidelines have been set forth by the feds in these areas; however, such only adds to the confusion as states work to comply with an unclear set of NCLB requirements for ELLs and SWDs.

Overall, we have made tremendous progress with our standards and assessment system, even while dealing with the Harcourt issues. In the short time that NCLB has been in effect, we have worked hard to bring our system into alignment NCLB’s many requirements. And we are continuing to work closely with USED and to take part in collective work with other states and their chiefs advocating for improvements and transparency in this process.
I will likely not be writing my Monday missive for the next couple of weeks. Next Monday, I will be convening with all of the other state chiefs at the summer meeting of the Council of Chief State School Officers. Then, the following week, I will be involved with State Board of Education member Joyce Karon in the annual conference of the NASH (National Association of System Heads)/Education Trust groups.

Have a great few weeks!

Randy Dunn

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**Upcoming Deadlines**

- Application for Food Service Mini-Grant – **July 14, 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**

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**Nutrition**

**School Food Service Mini-Grant Opportunity and Healthy a la Carte Program Resources**

A mini-grant of up to $1,000 is available to school food service authorities to use in delivering or participating in training directly related to development, implementation or evaluation of local wellness policy initiatives. Information is available online at:

http://www.kidseatwell.org/SFS%20mini%20grant.doc

Applications must be postmarked by **July 14, 2006**. The Building a Healthier a La Carte Program training program provides skills-based training and marketing resources to school food service staff to enable them to shape nutritionally and fiscally sound a la carte programs. Contact Illinois NET staff at 800-466-7998 to arrange for this training. For more information, go to:

http://www.kidseatwell.org/A%20La%20Carte%20Program%20Assessment
doc

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**Rules**

**Opportunity for Public Comment**

Three additional 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 to rules@isbe.net. The deadline for public comment is **August 21, 2006**.

Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision) Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) for districts serving students with limited English proficiency with federal funding provided under Title III.

Part 65 (New Teacher Induction and Mentoring) Establishes a new competitive grant program under Article 21A of the School Code.

Part 365 (Technology Immersion Pilot Program) Establishes a new competitive grant program that will provide wireless laptops, associated hardware and software, maintenance, support and professional development.

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**Special Education**

**Task force for parent accessible special education materials**

ISBE is forming a task force to review informational and guidance materials for parents from Illinois and other states, to determine the most appropriate materials for parents of students who receive special education services in Illinois. Particular focus will be placed on A Parents’ Guide: The Educational Rights of Students with Disabilities and other regulatory changes. The task force will be convened by Christopher Koch, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Deb Kunz, ISBE Parent Liaison.

A group of 20-30 parents are being sought for this task force. Only parents of students with disabilities with current IEPs may participate. An effort will be made to seek parents of students among all disability categories and who represent all regions of the state. Parents will be reimbursed for travel in accordance with state travel regulations.

The task force will meet three times: July 20, August 24 and September 8, 2006 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The
meetings will be held in Springfield at the ISBE office, 100 N. First Street.

Persons who meet the above qualifications are encouraged to submit the application to Deb Kunz at dkunz@isbe.net or 217-782-0372 (fax). The form is available online at http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/word/task_force_app.doc (no user name or password required; press “OK” until form appears). For more information, call Deb Kunz at 217-782-4870.

Legal

School personnel and board member obligations under ANCRA (PA 94-0888)

Public Act (PA) 94-0888 makes significant changes to reporting requirements under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (ANCRA), which imposes mandatory reporting obligations on individuals whose work involves the care and welfare of children. A link to the Public Act follows.

First, the definition of “school personnel” in the law has been clarified to specifically include “administrators and both certified and non-certified school employees” as mandated reporters. Thus, almost any individual who is employed by a school or school district is required to report suspected child abuse to the DCFS Hotline. There may have been a misperception in the past that “school personnel” meant only teachers were mandated to report suspected child abuse; however, P.A. 94-0888 makes clear that the “school personnel” is defined more broadly. ISBE suggests that all schools review their mandated reporter policies to ensure that all school employees are aware of their obligations under ANCRA.

Second, PA 94-0888 imposes a new obligation on school board members. If during either an open or closed session of a board meeting a board member hears an allegation of suspected child abuse of an enrolled student, that board member is now obligated to direct the superintendent of the district (or another school administrator equivalent to the superintendent) to report the suspected abuse to the DCFS Hotline. Thus, while a board member may report suspected abuse to DCFS but is not obligated to do so, the board member must now direct a district superintendent to report the suspected abuse. School districts and school boards are encouraged to revise any pertinent board policies to ensure that current and future board members are aware of their new obligations under ANCRA.


Student Assessment

ISAT and IAA scores posted

Beginning Monday, July 10, ISAT and IAA scores will be posted for a limited number of districts on both Spectrum and on SIS that can be accessed via IWAS.

Not all districts’ scores will be ready for posting at the same time; therefore, ISBE will alert districts when their scores are posted (via IWAS alerts for SIS districts and via email for non-SIS districts). ISBE expects all districts’ scores to be posted within the next two weeks.

For SIS districts, Spectrum will be view only and corrections are to be made through the SIS uploading process. In order to view the scores on SIS, click on the 2006 Assessment Score link. In order to correct student demographic information, use the 2006 Assessment Correction file. For any assistance you may need with this process, please email help@isbe.net.

For SIS Districts, the student demographic information on spectrum and service point (for IMAGE) is not current. For SIS Districts, student demographic information in the SIS assessment correction file will be used for AYP purposes. Please make sure these date are accurate.

For non-SIS Districts, only ISAT scores will be posted on Spectrum and corrections are to be made online on Spectrum. Go to http://spectrum.harcourt.com and contact Harcourt at 800-763-2306 for any assistance you may need using Spectrum.

ISBE expects IMAGE scores to be posted on Questar’s ServicePoint Web site and from the SIS 2006 Assessment Score link by Friday, July 14. Non-SIS districts need to go to ServicePoint to make data corrections. For assistance using on ServicePoint, contact Questar via email at techsupport@questared.com or by phone at 800-931-6309.

Districts will be alerted when Grade 11 PSAE, IAA and IMAGE scores are posted later in July.

The last month has been completing important quality assurance checks prior to posting.

Remember that these data are preliminary and are not intended for public distribution. Districts take a risk if they go public with this information before final AYP calculations have been completed. The state will not be releasing statewide data until all tests have been scored and posted.
**Correction Window**
The assessment data correction window will be extended for all grades until August 23, 2006.

At that time, ISBE will close the entire process so our contractors can print and ship district, school and individual student reports. The data correction window allows districts and schools to review and correct student demographic information and to review test scores to see if any individual student scores need verification.

**Rescoring**
To request rescoring of any test, visit http://www.isbe.net/assessment/ for procedures and request form.

**AYP Calculations**
An announcement on AYP will be forthcoming.

**Help**
For more help or information, please call 217-558-3600 or email help@isbe.net. For Non-SIS districts, please call Harcourt’s helpdesk at 800-763-2306.

ISBE will continue to update this information as it becomes available. ISBE thanks districts for their time, dedication and patience.

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**Legislation**

**Bills Signed into Law**
As of Friday, June 30, 2006, the following bills have been signed into law by the Governor.

- **HB 1463 (PA 94-0916)** provides for the cancellation of the drivers' license or permit of any person under 18 who is certified as a chronic or habitual truant and prohibits the issuance of a driver's license or permit to an unmarried person under 18 years of age who fails to maintain school attendance. The bill provides that each school district shall establish written criteria for the school superintendent to use in determining whether a pupil's failure to attend school is the result of extraordinary circumstances of economic or medical necessity or family hardship and provides for quarterly notice by every local school district to the Secretary of State of the names of students no longer enrolled. Requires ISBE to provide drop-out comparison data if requested. Effective July 1, 2007.

- **HB 2734 (PA 94-0874)** provides that the minimum rate shall be 20 cents per column line for each insertion of a document by an official body or board in a newspaper. The maximum rate for each insertion of a document by a public body or board in a newspaper shall not exceed the newspaper's annually published rate for comparable local advertising space. Effective January 1, 2007.

- **HB 4193 (PA 94-0945)** creates the Child Murder and Violent Offender Against Youth Registration Act. Provides that in addition, the school district or regional superintendent shall perform a check of the Statewide Child Murderer and Violent Offender Against Youth Database for each applicant. Effective immediately.

- **HB 4308 (PA 94-0901)** requires ISBE's annual budget to set out by separate line item the appropriation for the Illinois Teaching Excellence Program. Effective immediately.

- **HB 4310 (PA 94-0881)** requires that newly elected school board members take an oath of office. Also adds duties with respect to the Superintendent by stating that the school board shall make all employment decisions pertaining to the Superintendent and shall direct, through policy and without limitation to, the superintendents administration of the district in such matters concerning budget, building plans, retention, dismissal of employees, selection of textbooks, instructional materials and courses of study. Provides that the school board shall evaluate the superintendent in his or her administration of the school board policies and stewardship of the assets of the district. Effective immediately.

- **HB 4365 (PA 94-0902)** allows cooperative high schools to receive some of the same supplementary State aid that new districts receive. Cooperative high schools would be eligible to receive two of the four incentives: the salary differential calculation and the $4,000 payment per full time, certified staff person. Effective immediately.

- **HB 4768 (PA 94-0897)** 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. Effective immediately.

- **HB 4782 (PA 94-0845)** prohibits a vehicle using diesel fuel with a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating of more than 8,000 pounds (including a school bus) from idling its engine for more than five minutes within any 60 minute period in the counties of Cook, DuPage, Lake, Kane, McHenry, Will, Madison, St. Clair, Monroe and townships in Grundy and Kendall.
Provides for certain exemptions to these requirements. Effective July 1, 2006.

- **HB 4832 (PA 94-0904)** creates the Community Education Program to be administered by the State Board of Education. Participation in the program is voluntary. The legislation lays out the best practices of a community service education program and requires the program to include local input and a Director of Community Education. Provides authority to the State Board to make grants to school districts if specific funds become available. Effective immediately.

- **HB 4986 (PA 94-0855)** provides that a school district that offers a secondary agricultural education program approved for State and federal funds must have an instructional sequence of courses approved by ISBE, a state and nationally affiliated FFA program integral to instruction and is not treated as an extracurricular activity and a mechanism to involve students in agricultural education programs in formal, supervised agricultural-experience activities and programs. Effective January 1, 2007.

- **HB 4987 (PA 94-0948)** would allow reimbursement of "behavior analysts" certified by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board under the Special Education Personnel Line. Effective January 1, 2007.

- **HB 5375 (PA 94-0888)** see School Personnel and Board Member Obligations under ANCRA in the Legal section above.

- **HB 5550 (PA 0927)** (ISBE Initiative) provides that certain bonding requirements do not apply to textbook loans through the Illinois Textbook Loan Program. Effective January 1, 2007.

- **SB 857 (PA 94-0952)** provides that bonds issued by a community consolidated school district maintaining grades K through 8 shall not be considered indebtedness for purposes of any statutory limitation and may be issued (subject to referendum) in an amount or amounts, including existing indebtedness, in excess of any heretofore or hereafter imposed statutory limitation as to indebtedness, if, among other conditions, (i) residential and farm property comprises more than 80% of the equalized assessed valuation of the district for each of the 4 most recent years, (ii) the bond proceeds are to be used to acquire and improve school sites and build and equip a school building, (iii) the school sites and building additions are needed because of an increase in enrollment and (iv) the principal amount of the bonds, including existing indebtedness, does not exceed 20% of the equalized assessed value of the taxable property in the district. Effective immediately.

- **SB 2191 (PA 94-0929)** expands consumer education to provide that the instruction must include an understanding of the basic concepts of financial literacy, including installment purchasing, budgeting, savings and investing, banking, understanding simple contracts, State and federal income taxes, personal insurance policies and the comparison of prices (now, the instruction must include installment purchasing, budgeting and the comparison of prices). Provides for a Financial Literacy Fund, for which funds can be used to award grants for purposes of increasing financial literacy. The legislation also urges ISBE, on the next comprehensive review of the Illinois Learning Standards, to include the basic principals of personal insurance and understanding simple contracts. Effective immediately.

- **SB 2455 (PA 94-0933)** 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 provisions for Comprehensive Health Education. Effective immediately.

- **SB 2546 (PA 94-0935)** requires ISBE to collect information on all higher education institutions that have teacher preparation programs on the number of individuals taking and passing the basic skills test and the number of subject-matter tests attempted and passed under section 21-1a of the School Code. ISBE must file a report with the General Assembly and Governor by August 1, 2007 listing pertinent higher education institutions and the data for the basic skills test. On or before August 1, 2009 and every three years thereafter, ISBE must file a report to the General Assembly and Governor listing pertinent higher education institutions and the data for basic skills and subject-matter tests. These reports must also be made available to the public. Effective immediately.

- **SB 2829 (PA 94-0875)** (ISBE Less Red Tape Initiative) began as a solicitation of feedback from parents and educators on ways to reduce rules and bureaucracy for school districts. Makes a number of changes, some of which include changes concerning the school building code, school and district improvement plans, the waiver and modification of mandates, staff development plans, statements of affairs, criminal history records checks of school district employees and transportation reimbursement claims. Repeals a Section concerning latch key reports and a Section concerning school and district improvement panels. Effective July 1, 2006.

- **SB 2882 (PA 94-0894)** creates a pilot K-3 class size reduction grant program, to be implemented and administered by the State Board of Education. Grants shall be awarded to schools to defray the costs and expenses of operating and maintaining classes of no more than 15 pupils per teacher per class. Effective July 1, 2006.

- **SB 2898 (PA 94-0792)** in provisions that require a public or nonpublic school to permit the self-administration of medication by a pupil with asthma, adds the requirement that the school permit a pupil to
use an epinephrine auto-injector for immediate self-administration by a person at risk of anaphylaxis. Effective immediately.

To view a bill, you must access the General Assembly website at www.ilga.gov. On the left hand side of the page, type in the bill number [ex: HB 1463] (HB for a House Bill, SB for a Senate Bill) and click on “full text”. Make sure you look at the enrolled version to see the actual correct version that was signed into law.

For additional information, contact Nicole Wills or Josh Jacobs in the Governmental Relations Division at 217-782-6510.

Teacher Resources

Department of Natural Resources

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has developed websites which can be used as resources for teachers. “Wild Illinois History,” an interactive website, helps students in grades three through five focus on early exploration, geography and wildlife conservation. The improved site contains new lesson plans, streaming video, free photos, classroom materials and grant information. Visit http://www.wildillinois.org/.

The “Fur Hunting and Trapping in Illinois” web site promotes the benefits of fur hunting and trapping at http://dnr.state.il.us/orc/wildlife/.

Public Health

Infectious disease reporting and outbreak investigation

Local public health departments (LHDs) are responsible for investigating outbreaks of infectious diseases and all foodborne and waterborne outbreaks within their jurisdiction. Illinois Department of Public Health rules mandate that school, college and university personnel are required to report individuals with a reportable communicable disease and are required to promptly (within 24 hours) report any outbreaks to their LHD.

Some of the most common types of outbreaks that are identified in Illinois are outbreaks transmitted by food or through person-to-person transmission. Other types of outbreaks reported less commonly are waterborne outbreaks. Pathogens involved in previous outbreaks in the state include Salmonella, Shigella, norovirus, bacterial toxins, histoplasmosis, Legionnaires disease and multi drug resistant Staphylococcal aureus. However, all infectious disease outbreaks are reportable.

Once reported, the LHD will then investigate the outbreak to identify the organism responsible for the outbreak, the source of the outbreak and to put into place any measures which will prevent further illnesses. The summary of the investigation can be provided to the school, college or university personnel to aid in prevention of future outbreaks. Depending on the type of outbreak, LHDs doing the investigation may:

1) interview ill and well persons involved in the outbreak,

2) perform an environmental or food service evaluation,

3) collect human specimens or environmental samples for laboratory testing for pathogens

If an investigation is not completed, additional individuals may be affected because prevention measures were not identified and put into place to prevent additional cases. The best resolution to an outbreak is a prompt investigation and evaluation by the LHD. The LHD can assist the school, college or university by providing helpful prevention and control documents developed and used in other outbreak settings.

IDPH encourages schools, colleges and universities to work closely with their LHD in reporting communicable diseases and outbreaks. A poster containing a list of reportable communicable diseases and a document containing the rules and regulations for communicable disease control in the state are available from your LHD and should contain the phone number you can use to contact the LHD. Public health and school, college and university personnel have a common goal of preventing communicable diseases and outbreaks in students and staff at their institutions. Please assist public health in keeping your community safe by prompt reporting and cooperation with the LHD investigation.

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/060707.htm