There is no opening message this week from State Superintendent Dunn as he is attending the annual conference of the National Association of System Heads (NASH) and Education Trust groups.—Editor

Upcoming Deadlines

- Special Education Pupil Excess Cost Reimbursement Claim - August 1, 2006
- Intent to Apply for Technology Immersion Pilot Project – August 4, 2006
- Class Size Reduction Pilot Program Grant Application – August 4, 2006
- Waiver applications to be considered by General Assembly in November – August 11, 2006
- Submissions to CeRTS to be processed before September – August 14, 2006
- Special Education Private Facility Reimbursement Claim - August 15, 2006
- Special Education Personnel Reimbursement Claim - August 15, 2006
- Regular/Vocational/Special Education Transportation Reimbursement Claim - August 15, 2006
- Rules Public Comment Deadline, Part 65 and Part 365 – August 21, 2006
- Rules Public Comment, Part 265- September 5, 2006
- Rules Public Comment Deadline, Special Education– September 15, 2006

Legislation

Portability of background checks for substitutes and other concurrent employees

Public Act (PA) 94-875, the “Less Red Tape” bill included an amendment to Section 10-21.9 [105 ILCS 5/10-21.9] and Section 5/34-18.5 [105 ILCS 5/34-18.5] of the School Code. A link to the Public Act follows. This amendment applies only to substitutes, concurrent part-time employees and educational support personnel concurrently employed by more than one district and seeking employment in another district outside of the educational service region in which they are currently employed. For these individuals, a regional superintendent may now share the results of the individual’s background check with other regional superintendents or with a school board.

Prior to P.A. 94-875, regional superintendents were permitted to share this information only with districts within his or her educational service region. Many substitutes and other part-time or educational support employees are employed by multiple districts, often in different educational service regions and this led to the prospective employee submitting to numerous background checks. Now, for a substitute, concurrent part-time employee and educational support personnel concurrently employed by more than one district, upon request that a regional superintendent take his or her fingerprints for a background check, the school board or regional superintendent may instead request a copy of the individual’s background check from another regional superintendent in an educational service region in which the individual is currently employed. Thus, the background checks for these individuals are now portable across educational service region boundaries. A regional superintendent or a school board may still require a new background check at their discretion. School boards are encouraged to review this new law to see whether policies regarding background checks for these individuals should be revised.
Curriculum and Instruction

Technology Immersion Pilot Project Request for Proposal

The Curriculum and Instruction Division will release the Technology Immersion Pilot Project Request for Proposal (RFP) this week. Eligible applicants include school districts, public university laboratory schools approved by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), charter schools, area vocational centers and any public school operated by an agency of the State of Illinois that:

- serves students in some configuration of grades 6 through 8;
- has State-approved technology plans; and
- either:
  - has one or more schools in Academic Early Warning or Academic Watch status; or
  - serves a significant percentage of students whose identified needs would make the use of technology devices more necessary or effective in their education than is the case for the student population as a whole.

Grants will be provided to at least seven school districts or other eligible applicants in the following manner:

- at least three schools in the City of Chicago School District 299;
- at least one school in each of three districts/applicants located in the portion of Cook County outside of the city of Chicago and DuPage, Kane, Lake and Will counties; and
- at least one school in each of three districts/applicants located in the remainder of the state.

Districts will be asked to form a technology immersion committee. This committee will determine the grade served within the school, the curricular area on which the project will concentrate and the relevant teachers and administrators that will participate in the project. Successful applicants will not receive monetary awards but will receive laptops for all students, teachers and administrators involved in the project and if necessary, up to $15,000 worth of applicable software and hardware. In addition, teachers and administrators will participate in ISBE-sponsored professional development.

Those interested in applying will need to submit an “Intent to Apply” form found within the RFP no later than August 4, 2006 and must attend one of the following grant writing workshops:

- July 25, 2006, from 1 to 4:30 p.m. at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Conference Room C, Student Center West, 828 S. Wolcottin.
- July 26, 2006, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the University of Illinois at Springfield, Public Affairs Building, Conference Room C/D.

For more information about the Technology Immersion Pilot Project contact Jamey Baiter at 217-557-7323 or jbaiter@isbe.net. Contact Dan Persky at the Lieutenant Governor’s Office, 312-814-5220 if you have any questions about the workshops.

Deadline extended: Class Size Reduction Pilot Program

ISBE is pleased to announce that the deadline to submit Class Size Reduction Pilot Program proposals has been extended to August 4, 2006. This is the second extension being offered for this program in an attempt to fully disburse all available program funding. All eligible districts are encouraged to apply for this grant. The RFP is available online at www.isbe.net/curriculum/pdf/rfp_class_size_reduction.pdf for download and review.

On June 21, 2006 Governor Rod Blagojevich signed P.A. 094-0894 which authorized ISBE to administer the Class Size Reduction Grant Program. $10 million in state funding is available in FY07 for eligible school districts to hire additional kindergarten through third grade, certified teachers for the purpose of decreasing class size to 15 students or lower. It is the intention of the State Board of Education to approve funding for class size reduction projects for a three year period. Funding in years two and three, however, will be contingent upon a sufficient appropriation for the program and satisfactory progress in the preceding grant period. Eligible applicants are districts with schools serving kindergarten through grade 3 classrooms in which the applying school(s) are in Academic Early Warning or Academic Watch status under Section 2-3.25d of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/2-3.25d]. Public university laboratory schools approved by the State Board of Education or charter schools serving kindergarten through grade 3 classrooms and are in either status are also eligible to apply. A list of eligible districts and eligible schools within each district is contained in Appendix A of the RFP.

Superintendents of school districts that submitted proposals to meet the July 14 deadline will be contacted by ISBE personnel during the week of July 24 to discuss the status of their applications. These districts will be
offered the opportunity to submit a new or revised proposal or will be allowed to maintain the current proposal on file with ISBE.

For more information, you may contact Dana F. Kinley, Curriculum and Instruction Division, 217-557-7323.

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**Early Childhood**

**Special Project request for proposal**

Please note that the maximum amount of funding available for each of the Early Childhood Block Grant request for proposal (RFP) for Special Projects has been increased as follows:

- FY 07 Prevention Initiative Technical Assistance and Training RFP has been increased to $425,000
- FY 07 Prevention Initiative Mental Health Consultation and Training RFP has been increased to $200,000.

These RFPs are available on the Early Childhood Block Grant webpage at [http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/block_grant.htm](http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/block_grant.htm).

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

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**Certification**

**New Educator Certification System to Replace CeRTS**

The Illinois State Board of Education has set the implementation date of the new Educator Certification System (ECS) as Tuesday, September 5, 2006. ECS is designed to combine the Certificate Renewal Tracking System (CeRTS) and the Online Teacher Info System (OTIS) into one system, allowing end users (teachers and administrators) to conduct certification and certificate renewal matters in one system. The new system will also allow Regional Office of Education (ROE) staff to conduct certification and certificate renewal matters in a single system, the Teacher Certification Information System (TCIS).

In order to move user data from CeRTS to ECS in as efficient a manner as possible, certain end user actions in CeRTS need to be disabled for a period of time. Beginning Monday, August 14, teachers and administrators will be able to monitor their files in CeRTS but will be unable to record any professional development activities or submit any documents to their Local Professional Development Committee (LPDC) or their ROE. This will allow LPDCs who are still active, Roe’s and ISBE to process the documents already submitted before ECS is implemented on Tuesday, September 5.

Teachers, administrators and LPDC chairpersons should submit by August 14 any electronic exemption requests, Statements of Assurance or Requests for Verification they wish to be processed before September.

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**Data Analysis**

**Calculating Adequate Yearly Progress**

The Illinois State Board of Education intends to use the same process as last year for calculating school Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP will be calculated once the report card data are submitted and approved by local superintendents and all assessment scores are available to the school. The assessment data should be considered final unless errors are identified or rescoring is requested.

Since it takes two consecutive years of making AYP to be removed from a status, all Title I schools currently in federal improvement status that did not make AYP in 2005 will remain in improvement status and must offer choice options plus the services associated with that status, regardless of whether AYP is met. Those schools newly identified and those schools advancing in status should take all necessary action to implement the new status.

Beginning in 2006, there are several new conditions associated with making AYP. The conditions for making AYP are as follows:

- At least 95 percent of the students must be tested in reading and mathematics for the All group and subgroups. If the current year’s participation rate is less than 95 percent, the participation rate for AYP will be considered sufficient if the average of the current year and the preceding year is at least 95 percent or if the average of the current year and the two preceding years is at least 95 percent.
- Students in the All group and each subgroup must have performance levels of at least 47.5 percent Meeting/Exceeding standards for reading and mathematics. For any group (including the All group) with less than 47.5 percent Meeting/Exceeding standards, a 95 percent confidence interval will be applied, which may enable the group to meet AYP. Subgroups also may meet this condition through Safe Harbor provisions.
- For subgroups that do not meet their Safe Harbor targets, a 75 percent confidence interval will be
applied, which may enable the subgroup to meet AYP.

- For schools not making AYP solely because the IEP subgroup fails to have 47.5 percent Meeting/Exceeding standards, a specific percentage (to be determined later) based on a prescribed formula will be added to the percent Meeting/Exceeding in accordance with the federal 2 percent flexibility provision. In 2005, 14 percent was used.

- For 2006, non-high schools must achieve an attendance rate of at least 89 percent and high schools must achieve a graduation rate of at least 69 percent.

District AYP calculations will be made later and at that time an explanation of the use of grade spans and how it relates to district improvement status will be provided.

Questions regarding Adequate Yearly Progress should be directed to the Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division at 217-782-3950.

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**Nutrition**

**U.S. Department of Health announces wellness event**

This fall, Action for Healthy Kids, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and with the help of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Education will mobilize students, parents, school leaders, teachers and community members to highlight the implementation of Local Wellness Policies in the 2006-2007 school year.

They are working with states, communities and schools to create "Game On! The Ultimate Wellness Challenge" events across the country. The Game On! event integrates nutrition, physical activity and learning through a series of activity stations that will stimulate minds and bodies. Consider hosting a "Game On! The Ultimate Wellness Challenge" event at your school in August or September. Hosting a local Game On! event will provide your school the opportunity to:

- build local support for your wellness improvements
- celebrate back-to-school and/or integrate this customizable course into an already existing back-to-school event;
- encourage students to take charge by recruiting adults to participate;
- receive local and national recognition for your commitment to wellness practices; and
- provide ongoing educational programs for your students and their parents and caregivers by joining a national network of schools and local organizations working together for school wellness.

You can learn more about Action for Healthy Kids' resources and support available for your school(s) for the implementation of your Wellness Policy by visiting http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/.

Over 100 Educators Complete Online Training Program

Illinois NET Program debuted its first online training program in spring 2006 and over 100 educators have completed the program thus far. Congratulations to the first 55 Illinois school educators to complete the program. Each received two CPDU credits and a check for $100 to spend on nutrition education materials for their classroom.

The first web-based training program, Nutrition Education That Works: An Integrated Approach for Pre K-5 Educators, is helping Illinois teachers meet new wellness policy goals and Illinois learning standards by integrating nutrition education into core curricula. You can access this free course at Illinois NET Online Training and earn two CPDU credits.

**JCAR takes no action Part 305 Rules at July meeting**

Schools will have additional time to prepare to meet any state nutrition standards changes due to the recent “no action taken” during the Joint Commission on Administrative Rules (JCAR) meeting earlier this month. The Nutrition Programs Division will provide guidance and announcements on state nutrition standards via The Outlook newsletter, the State Board of Education’s Superintendent’s Weekly Message and online at http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/.

The Illinois School Wellness Policy Taskforce is also continuing its work on state nutrition standards. School districts must have their Local Wellness Policies approved by the first school day of this school year. Schools can find resources for Building a Healthier A la Carte Program at http://www.kidseatwell.org/whatsnew.html
Public Health

**Salmonella infections associated with owl pellets used in science classes**

Reports of gastrointestinal illness outbreaks from Salmonella infections have been associated with science activities involving owl pellets.

In 2005, an outbreak of 40 ill students was reported in Minnesota. In June 2006 a Massachusetts outbreak of more than 50 cases was linked to owl pellets. The pellets were confirmed as laboratory positive with matching enzyme patterns to the Salmonella found in specimens from ill students. The owl pellets were obtained through a commercial supplier that advertised heat treating of the pellets. It is unclear at this time whether contamination of the pellets occurs consistently or is uncommon. An investigation of the treatment process and the safety of the own pellets is continuing.

If a teacher is using owl pellets in the classroom, pellets should be dissected in an area where food is not served at a later time and those involved in the activities should wear gloves followed by careful hand washing when finished. The areas in contact with the owl pellets should be disinfected thoroughly after the activity.

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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](http://www.isbe.net/hr/Default.htm).

**In the News**

**Weekly news clips**