August 26, 2008

Message from State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

The results for the 2008 Illinois Standards Achievement Test are final and have been posted to the Student Information System in the assessment files. We are posting only the scores for your review at this time since demographic data was reviewed and confirmed earlier in the summer. Please do not make any changes to demographic information, as any such changes will not be reflected in Adequate Yearly Progress calculations or the report card results.

I appreciated your patience as we ensured the accuracy of this year’s test scores and am very sorry for the delay.

Last week, the Illinois State Board of Education held its annual retreat in Chicago and spent a considerable amount of time working on the agency’s strategic plan. As I discussed in my message last week, the current plan has remained essentially unchanged since 2005, and members of the Board believe that the Strategic Plan should be revisited frequently.

Board members agree that this five-year look into the future should contain the goals and initiatives that drive the actions of the agency each and every day. As such, the strategic plan must be flexible enough to evolve with the changing needs and demands of the agency and education in general.

Much of the focus of our time was spent on looking at the agency’s mission and vision statements, as well as the agency’s goals. The Board decided to eliminate the vision statement and focus solely on a mission statement as follows:

The Illinois State Board of Education will provide leadership, assistance, resources and advocacy so that every student is prepared to succeed in careers and postsecondary education and share accountability for doing so with districts and schools.

To support this mission statement, the Board crafted three broad goals that will provide focus to our work in the agency.

- Every student will demonstrate academic achievement and be prepared for success after high school.
- Every student will be supported by highly prepared and effective teachers and school leaders.
- Every school will offer a safe and healthy learning environment for all students.

Over the next several months, we will be working with agency staff and others committed to education to map out strategies to move the agency forward consistent with this mission and these goals. I think this is an exciting opportunity for the agency, and I look forward to your input as we continue to work together to prepare every Illinois student for success.

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Thanks and have a great week!

Chris

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**Upcoming Deadlines**

- Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program applications – August 29
- Differentiated Accountability Proposal comments – September 30
- Head Start reimbursement deadline to submit revised claims – September 30
- Annual Superintendents’ Conference online registration – October 1
- LEA Determinations district improvement plans – October 1
- Thomas Lay Burroughs award nominations – October 17
- Annual Superintendents’ Conference – October 23 – 24
- FY09 School Budget Form – October 31

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**All Kids Healthcare**

**Back to School Effort Underway**

As the new school year begins, All Kids healthcare is asking educators to assist them in reaching out to parents to enroll their children in the healthcare program. The program provides health insurance to many insured students.

The following websites offer information about the program and how schools and districts can become involved:

- [www.allkids.com](http://www.allkids.com)
- [www.allkids.com/backtoschool](http://www.allkids.com/backtoschool)
- [www.allkids.com/images.html](http://www.allkids.com/images.html)

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**No Child Left Behind**

**Differentiated Accountability Flexibility**

Illinois has been approved to participate in the U.S. Department of Education’s Differentiated Accountability pilot. Illinois is one of six states that received additional flexibility under the NCLB Act.

ISBE is phasing in portions of the Differentiated Accountability proposal in the 2008-09 school year. The proposal is posted at:

[http://www.isbe.net/nclb/htmls/accountability_proposal.htm](http://www.isbe.net/nclb/htmls/accountability_proposal.htm)

Two of the pieces that will be implemented this year include:

1) Optional reversal of the order of Public School Choice (PSC) and Supplemental Educational Services (SES) for schools newly identified for improvement:

   Schools that are entering their second consecutive year of not making AYP will be able to implement SES during the first year of School Improvement instead of PSC. Reversing the order of sanctions may provide a more effective intervention strategy for the first year of improvement by offering eligible students SES while planning for choice implementation in year two.

   For instructions on how to apply for the pilot, go to: [http://www.isbe.net/nclb/htmls/differentiated_flexibility_reverse.htm](http://www.isbe.net/nclb/htmls/differentiated_flexibility_reverse.htm).

2) Waiver of some of the PSC notification requirements under NCLB:

   In some instances, where there is limited space (or no space) available for students eligible to participate in public school choice, a district may choose to target notification letters to a segment of the eligible student population. For details on the required information needed to apply for the waiver, please see: [http://www.isbe.net/nclb/htmls/differentiated_flexibility_waiver.htm](http://www.isbe.net/nclb/htmls/differentiated_flexibility_waiver.htm).

ISBE will be collecting comments on the proposal until Tuesday, September 30. Please contact Melina
Wright, NCLB Liaison, at 217-782-0354 or by e-mail at mewright@isbe.net with comments on the proposal, questions or for additional information. She will forward your inquiry to the appropriate staff person.

**AYP Appeals Process**

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law and the State Accountability statute and rules allow schools and districts to appeal their AYP status if the district has questions regarding the accuracy of the determination. ISBE has developed materials regarding how a school or district appeals its designation. Each appeal will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by ISBE staff and by the Appeals Advisory Committee.

AYP appeals will be due 30 days from the re-release of the ISAT data. Please see: http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/appeals_status.pdf.

Please direct any questions or concerns to Melina Wright, NCLB Liaison, at 217-782-7362; fax: 217-782-5333; or e-mail at: mewright@isbe.net.

**IAA Score Reports Mailed**

The Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA) district, school or Chicago District 299 school score reports for the IAA Spring 2008 Operational Assessment for Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Writing are in the mail and should arrive by the end of this week.

These reports include district-level and school-level performance profiles, disaggregated reports and rosters, as well as Individual Student Reports for each student in the respective district and/or school.

If you have questions about these IAA score reports or are missing reports, contact Pearson’s Illinois Customer Support Center at 800-627-7990, state code 814, Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. CST.

Information to assist Illinois administrators, educators, and parents interpret score results is included in the Individual Student Report. If you have questions about scores or results, contact ISBE’s Student Assessment Division at 217-782-4823.

The Illinois State Board of Education is pleased to announce that the Annual Superintendents’ Conference will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield on **Thursday, October 23, and Friday, October 24**.

Superintendents and their staff are encouraged to participate in the conference, which will cover a variety of topics that will assist districts in preparing students for success. Topics include Response to Intervention (RtI), No Child Left Behind, English Language Learning and improving student achievement.

Please note that the registration process has changed this year. All registration will be done online through the ISBE website at: http://webapps.isbe.net/ISBEConference/

Complete registration information can be found at: http://www.isbe.net/sups_conf/Registration_08.pdf.

If you require an interpreter, other special accommodations or have further questions regarding the conference, please contact Leigh Ann Smith at ISBE, 217-782-5589 or e-mail at lsmith@isbe.net, by **Wednesday, October 1**.

**Special Education**

**District Improvement Plan Activities Due**

This is a reminder that district improvement plan activities relevant to LEA Determinations must be submitted to ISBE by **Wednesday, October 1**.

Identified district superintendents received a letter from Special Education Services dated **May 22, 2008**, specifying the determination and the necessary action.

On **June 6, 2008**, a teleconference was held to explain LEA Determinations. The audio and materials from the teleconference are available at: http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/lea_determinations.htm.

This webpage also has improvement plan checklists that identify the required sections of the improvement plan for each indicator. Some of the indicators have example activities.

For technical assistance questions regarding your LEA Determinations, please contact the ISBE consultant mentioned in your letter at 217-782-5589 or at the e-mail given.

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**Board Services**

**Annual Superintendents’ Conference Registration Open**
2008 Statewide Transition Conference Registration Available

The 2008 Statewide Transition Conference will be held at the Peoria Civic Center from **Monday, October 27**, through **Wednesday, October 29**. The conference is dedicated to encouraging the development and implementation of challenging, yet achievable, person-centered goals for young people living with disabilities.

The conference will be structured to include interactive workshops that address the topics of post secondary education/training, health care, community, and employment for youth with disabilities.


**School District Assistance for Youth Focus Day**:

On **Tuesday, October 28**, the conference will have a special youth focus. The Illinois State Board of Education has a limited amount of funding available to support school districts who would like to schedule a field trip to attend the youth focus conference day. A special per student fee of $50 will cover registration including meals, a conference bag and access to the Job Fair, College Fair, Internet Café and conference sessions on **October 28**.

School districts and/or special education cooperatives should contact **Sue Walter** by e-mail at smwalter@charter.net or swalter@isbe.net. You can also call 618-651-9028 for more information about registering students and accessing ISBE funding to support student attendance.

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**Curriculum & Instruction**

**ENTICE Offers Educational Opportunities**

**ENTICE Workshops**

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources’ (IDNR) Division of Education is offering a variety of ENTICE (Environment and Nature Training Institute for Conservation Education) workshops for the 2008-2009 school year.

ENTICE workshops provide background information on various environmental topics and offer educational activities to supplement curriculum. Educators receive Continuing Professional Development Units (CPDUs) for attending. IDNR also offers some online workshops.

For a list of ENTICE workshops and registration information visit: [https://www.enticeworkshops.com](https://www.enticeworkshops.com).

**Urban Fishing Programs**

If you teach in any of the following counties (Adams, Brown, Cass, Champaign, Christian, Clark, Coles, Cumberland, DeWitt, Douglas, Edgar, Ford, Hancock, Iroquois, Livingston, Logan, McLean, Menard, Morgan, Moultrie, Piatt, Pike, Sangamon, Schuyler, Scott, Shelby or Vermilion), IDNR will help establish an educational fishing program at your school.

Several school fishing programs are available. One is a physical education-based program for middle and high schools. Students are taught the basics of fishing at school and then fish during PE classes for the last two to three weeks of school. Other programs are for younger students and include field fishing trips and after-school trips.

For more information or to register for a program, contact **Herb Dreier**, Coordinator, Central Illinois Urban Fishing Program, 217-935-6860 ext. 238, or herb.dreier@illinois.gov.

In addition, IDNR offers statewide Urban Fishing Programs where coordinators come to schools and conduct programs aimed at getting students interested in fishing and the outdoors. The program involves taking students fishing during May and September if a nearby lake is accessible.

Contact the Urban Fishing Program in your area to find a fishing program appropriate for any grade level:
- Chicago: **Brenda McKinney** 847/294-4137
- Chicago Suburbs: IDNR Staff 847/294-4137
- Northwest Illinois: IDNR Staff 815/625-2968
- Central Illinois: **Herb Dreier** 217/782-6424
- Southern Illinois: **Mark Yehling** 618/462-1181

**Wild Illinois History**

IDNR is offering a “virtual” trip for late-elementary school teachers, students and parents to journey back to the Illinois Territory in the early 18th century.

In the program, _Wild Illinois History_, students in grades 3-5 can learn about early French exploration, how wildlife helped Native Americans and early settlers survive and how wildlife is part of our lives today. Teachers are offered storytelling slideshows, interactive activities, lesson plans, photos and posters that correlate with the Illinois Learning Standards.
Professional Development

John A. Logan College Holds Educator Training Conferences

Two educator conferences are scheduled at the John A. Logan College conference center.

Southern Illinois Cyber Crime Awareness – Computers Friend or Foe? is Wednesday, October 15, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Registration begins Monday, September 1. The conference is free and offers participants seven Continuing Professional Development Units (CPDUs). Sessions include: ID theft, cyber bullying, parental controls, social networking sites and awareness, and online exploitation of children – current and local trends.

6th Annual Southern Illinois Meth & Other Drugs – Community Solutions: One Team, One Fight is Tuesday, April 21, and Wednesday, April 22, 2009, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Registration begins Monday, February 23. The conference is free and offers participants 14 CPDUs. Sessions include: latest trends in drug abuse, prevention and educational strategies, affects of drugs on children and adolescents, family education, where to go for help, and the Illinois Meth Project.

For more information on these conferences, contact Lisa Nagle or Michelle Hamilton, JALC, 618-985-2828, ext. 8510 or by e-mail at cbi@jalc.edu.

Nutrition

Walk Across Illinois School Fitness Program

The Walk Across Illinois School Fitness Program offers schools and students a free and easy, standards-based fitness program that encourages daily physical activity, incorporates fitness into academics, and engages families and students in promoting good health.

The Healthy People 2010 national health objective lists physical activity as one of the 10 leading health indicators. The recommended amount of physical activity for youth is a minimum of 60 minutes daily. Statistics show that students benefit from programs like Walk Across Illinois.

• Nationwide only 8 percent of elementary schools and 6 percent of middle/junior high schools provide daily physical education.
• Six out of ten children between the ages of 9 through 13 do not participate in any kind of organized sports/physical activity program outside of school. Nearly 23 percent of children get no free-time physical activity at all.

The Walk Across Illinois School Fitness Program offers a 22-week curriculum to help elementary school teachers incorporate lessons about Illinois history and geography with fun and interactive physical activities. Participating students complete the Walk Across Illinois by earning “miles” through PE classes and extracurricular activities.

The Illinois Department of Transportation recently funded a grant for Walk Across Illinois to provide free curriculum materials, on-site trainings, and technical support to one school in each IDOT district. To register for program training, interested schools should contact Joanna Puchalski at Joanna@biketraffic.org or at 312-427-3325. Space is limited. For more information on the program to go: www.WalkAcrossIllinois.org.

Know the Common Food Allergens

This article is the first in a series on Taking Action to Prevent an Allergic Reaction to prepare for National Food Safety Education Month in September.

The most common allergens include milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, wheat, soy, peanuts and other nuts. These eight foods account for 90 percent of all food-allergic reactions.

Food allergies should be taken seriously. Symptoms may include loss of consciousness; wheezing and hoarseness; shortness of breath; difficulty swallowing; or face, eyelids, lips, hands or feet swelling.

Additional information on food allergies is available at: www.foodallergy.org.

Posters identifying the most common allergens can be downloaded at Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network at: www.foodallergy.org/downloads/faaposter.pdf.

Food allergy posters can be downloaded in English and Spanish at: www.ific.org/publications/other/upload/FoodAllergyPoster.pdf.
**UPDATE: Disclosure of a Student’s Free and Reduced-Price Eligibility**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which funds the National School Lunch Program, has received inquiries about disclosing individual children’s eligibility status and sharing applications with auditors conducting reviews on behalf of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). The FCC, through USAC, administers the E-Rate Program and in turn, contracts with private firms to actually conduct the audits.

To support the discount rate for telecommunications and internet access to schools through the E-Rate grant, auditors are requesting documentation of the discount calculation. Specifically, auditors have asked for a list of eligible students for selected schools along with the applications for those students.

The USDA has determined that release of information is permitted under section 9(b)(6) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA), as long as the following audit protocols are followed:

- compare aggregate enrollment data with aggregate free and reduced price eligibility data;
- request the applications for a small sample of eligible students, which could include direct certification records;
- confirm that an application or other documentation exists for each selected student;
- prohibit auditors from retaining personal student information;
- auditors cannot verify the accuracy of the LEA’s determinations for free or reduced-price meal eligibility and cannot contact the household; and
- auditors cannot share or otherwise release individual information.

School-wide eligibility data is always readily available for auditors on the State Board of Education’s website at: [http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/eligibility_listings.htm](http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/eligibility_listings.htm).

**Reprocessed Commodity Taste Tests**

Be sure to mark your calendars and come hungry for the annual taste test sponsored by the Illinois School Nutrition Association (ILSNA) on **Wednesday, November 5**, in Bloomington at the Interstate Center.

Taste tests are a great place to try different commodities that will be offered for the 2010 school year. There is no cost to participants and you do not have to divert commodities to a processor to attend. ISBE staff will give a brief presentation before the taste tests begin to explain the commodity divert process. Please plan on attending this information-filled taste test.

More information can be found on the ILSNA’s website in the near future at: [http://www.ilsna.net/](http://www.ilsna.net/).

**Funding & Disbursements**

**General State Aid Changes to 22 Payments**

House Bill 4522 (P.A. 95-835) was signed into law by Governor Blagojevich on **Friday, August 15**. The new law amends Section 18-11 of the School Code and changes the payment cycle for General State Aid (GSA) from 24 payments a year to 22.

Beginning with fiscal year 2009, General State Aid will be divided by 22 payments and scheduled to be vouchered bi-monthly beginning August through June of each year. Payments will be released by the Office of the Comptroller on the 10th and the 20th of each month. Changes per the new law will be reflected beginning with the GSA payment that was released on **Wednesday, August 20**.

If you have questions regarding the General State Aid program, contact **Jim Mathes** at jimmathes@isbe.net or 217-782-5256.

**2008-09 School Bus Safety Reminders**

With the beginning of the 2008-09 school year, the safe transportation of all students to school is a primary concern. Of particular importance is both student and motorist awareness of the potential dangers of getting on and off school buses. Most tragedies occur while students are waiting at assigned bus stops.

Most students injured or killed in bus-related crashes are 5- to 7-year-old pedestrians who are accidentally hit by the school bus or by motorists illegally passing a stopped bus. Drivers need to take special care in neighborhoods, near schools and bus stops. Always slow down near
Key points for motorists to remember:

1. **When a school bus is traveling on a two-lane roadway and is stopped to pick up or drop off students, the vehicles in all lanes of traffic must stop.** Vehicles should stop at least 20 feet before reaching the school bus to allow students to cross the roadway safely.

2. **When a school bus is traveling on a four-lane roadway with at least two lanes of traffic traveling in the opposite direction, only those lanes of traffic traveling in the same direction as the school bus must stop.** Students shall not be required to cross four or more lanes of traffic to reach their residence.

3. **When a school bus is traveling on a one-way roadway and is stopped to pick up or drop off students, all lanes of traffic must stop, regardless of the number of lanes of traffic.**

Parents and school bus personnel should discuss the following tips with children:

1. Be on time at the designated school bus stop.
2. Stay off the road at all times while waiting for the bus.
3. Be careful in approaching the place where the bus stops. Do not move toward the bus until the bus has been brought to a complete stop.
4. Do not leave your seat while the bus is in motion.
5. Be alert to a danger signal from the driver.
6. Remain in the bus in the event of a road emergency until instructions are given by the driver.
7. Keep hands and head inside the bus at all times after entering and until leaving the bus. Do not throw anything out the bus windows.
8. Remember that loud talking and laughing or unnecessary confusion divert the driver’s attention and could result in a serious accident.
9. Be absolutely quiet when approaching and crossing railroad crossings.
10. Treat bus equipment as you would valuable furniture in your own home. Never tamper with the bus or any of its equipment.
11. Assist in keeping the bus safe and sanitary at all times. Avoid bringing food or drink on the bus.
12. Do not bring animals on the bus (except with special permission of the district).
13. Keep books, packages, coats, and all other objects out of the aisles and away from emergency exits.

These items should be placed under the school bus seat while in transit.
14. Do not leave books, lunches or other articles on the bus.
15. Be courteous to fellow students and the bus driver. To earn respect, you must first show respect.
16. Help look after the safety and comfort of smaller children. Keeping distractions to a minimum will help the bus driver ensure your safety.
17. Do not ask the driver to stop at places other than the regular bus stop. He or she is not permitted to do this except by proper authorization from a school official.
18. Observe safety precautions at exit points. Know and observe the rules. When it is necessary to cross the highway, proceed to a point at least 10 feet in front of the bus on the right shoulder of the highway where traffic may be observed in both directions. Wait for the signal from the school bus driver permitting you to cross.
19. Observe the same rules and regulations on other trips under school sponsorship as you observe between home and school. Respect the wishes of the chaperone appointed by the school.

### Additional Requirements for School Bus Drivers Approaching RR Crossings

Senate Bill 2182 (P.A. 95-0756) was signed into law on **Friday, July 25**, by Governor Blagojevich. This law amends Section 11-1202 of the Illinois Vehicle Code, which requires all school bus drivers who approach a railroad crossing to stop within 50 feet but not less than 15 feet from the nearest rail. Drivers are then required to listen and look for the approach of a train and in addition to turning off all noise producing accessories, including heater blowers, defroster fans, auxiliary fans and radios, to also “open the service door and driver’s window” before crossing. The amended language is effective **January 1, 2009.**

### Legal

#### Registration Guidance: Residency, Immigrant Pupils, Homeless Pupils and School Fees & Waivers

The summer is once again drawing to a close and as we prepare to register pupils for a new school year, we want to identify four areas that traditionally have generated confusion: residency, immigrant pupils, homeless pupils and school fees and waivers.
Below are brief introductions to the four topics. To access the complete document, click here: Residency, Immigrant Pupils, Homeless Pupils and School Fees & Waivers.

I. Residency (for non-special education pupils)
School districts are concerned about registering or enrolling pupils that cannot produce documented proof of residency in the school district. ISBE encourages districts to “enroll first, ask questions later.”

II. Immigrant Pupils
Please review your district’s enrollment policy to ensure it is consistent with applicable laws, including the guidance outlined here.

III. Homeless Pupils
ISBE considers the school enrollment, attendance and success of homeless children and youth throughout Illinois to be a high priority.

IV. School Fees and Fee Waivers
During registration and throughout the school year, school districts must be aware of families who believe they are unable to afford school fees.

Student Opportunities

Missing Children’s Day Poster Contest
Each year, the U.S. Department of Justice sponsors the “Bring Our Missing Children Home” national poster contest. This year, the event is directed to students in the 5th grade.

The Missing Children Clearinghouse will coordinate the contest in each state, with each school conducting its own competition. For 2009 contest information, go to the Missing Children’s Clearinghouse website at: http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/programs/postercontest.

A national competition will be held in April 2009 to select the poster contest winner. This student will be brought to Washington, D.C. with his or her teacher and parents to participate in the annual ceremony and receive an award. The national winning poster will be used in 2010 as the pictorial theme for Missing Children’s Day.

The goal of the poster contest is to raise public awareness across the country about missing children and to recognize the importance of working together to respond to this national problem.

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/080822.htm