Good afternoon.

In the flurry of activity before tomorrow’s election and the upcoming fall veto session of the General Assembly, I want to share a couple of comments today about some related issues important to schools.

As you know, since the General Assembly passed the school construction legislation in 1997, ISBE and the Capital Development Board have administered the School Construction Grant Program. Designed to address the shortage of classroom space due to population growth and aging school buildings, the program has been very popular with local districts.

But as you are further aware, a lack of funding for this program has put it in limbo for the last four years. The situation has now reached a crisis point for several of the FY02 entitled districts, with some risking loss of their local revenue match by virtue of the pending expiration of their referendum authority. Please be assured that ISBE continues to be fully supportive of the School Construction Grant Program and we will continue to advocate for its funding with the members of the General Assembly. As the veto session nears, I encourage you to do the same with your local legislators—not just on behalf of the 24 districts on the FY 02 list, but also to restart momentum on this important work for the remaining 288 projects from FY03 to present.

Among other Agency activities in preparation for the convening of the 95th General Assembly, the various ISBE Divisions have been developing a number of legislative proposals to be introduced next spring. The members of the State Board will begin vetting each of these proposals at their November meeting—sitting as a Governmental Relations Committee of the Whole—so I encourage you to watch for further developments on these proposals in the coming months. If you have particular feelings, pro or con, regarding the Agency’s legislative agenda following our review process, please make those known. We are presently looking at upwards of 30 draft proposals running the gamut of the Agency functions and issues.

And finally, while your patience—like mine—is probably wearing thin given the incessant barrage of political ads and direct mailers, one of the most important duties we have as citizens is exercising our right to vote. As I shared in a message back in September, citizenship development is part of what public schools are called upon to do. When as educators we vote, we serve as role models for our students—whether they be preschoolers or graduate students. Because more than half of school-age children live in households where no one votes, we are often the primary motivator for children to learn the responsibilities of citizenship. Be a role model. Vote.

Have a great week.
Randy Dunn
Upcoming Deadlines

- Limitation of Administrative Costs Worksheet – November 15
- Unfilled Positions Survey – November 15
- Annual Financial Reports to ISBE – November 15
- Student Poster Contest – November 15
- NCLB Monitoring Instrument – November 15
- NCLB Title I Comparability – November 17
- NCLB Performance Report – November 17
- Online Ordering for ACCESS Testing Materials – November 17
- Educators to Saudi Arabia – November 27
- Public Comment on Rules Part 232 (Summer Bridges) and Part 270 (Advanced Placement) - November 27
- Annual Statement of Affairs in local newspapers – December 1
- Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Museum field trip grants – December 1
- Annual Statement of Affairs to ISBE – December 15
- Annual Immigrant Education Program (IEP) Data Report – December 15
- NCUST Excellence in Education Awards – December 18
- Certificate of Tax Levy – December 26
- Waiver applications to be considered by General Assembly in Spring 2007 – January 12, 2007

Special Message

Flags at State of Illinois buildings to fly at half staff on November 10

Governor Blagojevich has ordered flags at all State of Illinois buildings to fly at half staff on Friday, November 10, to honor Army Sgt. Kraig D. Foyteck, of Skokie. Sgt. Foyteck died October 30, 2006 in Baghdad, Iraq, from injuries suffered when his unit came in contact with enemy forces using small arms fire during combat operations. Foyteck was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

ISBE shares this information at the request of school districts and Regional Offices of Education. The decision to fly flags at half staff is left to the discretion of local school district administration.

Federal Grants and Programs

An Invitation to School Improvement Planning Audio Conferences

Access Info and materials now available

ISBE will host three audio conference sessions to talk about the requirements and timelines for revised school improvement plans. These audio conference sessions will be held November 15 from 1:30 to 3 p.m. and December 12 from 9:30 to 11 a.m. Please access School Improvement under Hot Topics on the ISBE home page for access information for these audio conferences and to download materials pertinent to the audio conference.

Schools currently in Academic Warning and Watch Status are encouraged to participate in one of these sessions. Schools with preliminary data indicating academic status should also participate.

Schools that have not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two consecutive years are required to revise their school improvement plans. Schools have three months to revise their plans following notification of academic status. Though not required to revise their plans at this time, schools in Academic Warning and Watch status with approved plans on file with ISBE for FY07 are welcome to participate in these sessions. ROE and RESPRO staff serving schools in status are encouraged to participate in these sessions.

Notification of status related to the state assessment results will start the clock ticking for revising school improvement plans. As soon as final notification occurs, schools will have the full three months for planning, followed by a 45 day peer review process and local board approval. At the end of that period, district superintendents must post the approved plans using the Illinois e-Plan School Improvement Template at the Interactive Illinois Report Card website http://iirc.niu.edu/. Please contact Federal Grants and Programs at 217-524-4832 with any questions about these audio conferences.
Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities needs assessment online

In an effort to provide the best prevention program information and quality statewide, ISBE has developed an online questionnaire that addresses different facets of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) programs:

The questionnaire focuses on district needs related to prevention in the areas of school safety, substance abuse/addiction topics, cultural competence, policy, curricular, prevention research and evaluation. ISBE will use the information to develop improved prevention education.

Answers will be confidential and reported by region. While completing the questionnaire is strictly voluntary, ISBE encourages districts to participate. ISBE will share the results during the Illinois Statewide 2007 NCLB Conference, February 14-16, 2007.

If you have questions, please contact Albert Holmes at 312-814-3618 or aholmes@isbe.net.

Research and Resources

Congressional Medal of Honor teaching resource

The Medal of Honor Foundation recently donated a copy of the hardcover book, *Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty* to each of more than 800 Illinois schools. The Foundation inadvertently sent the wrong talking paper with the book. ISBE has posted the correct talking paper online at:

International Education Week

The United States Department of Education and the United States Department of State encourage schools to promote international education throughout the school year and especially during International Education Week, November 13 through 17, 2006.

This year’s theme is *International Education: Engaging in Global Partnerships and Opportunities*. For more information on how schools can get involved, visit [http://iew.state.gov](http://iew.state.gov).

Student Honors

William Randolph Hearst United States Senate Youth Program student semi-finalists selected

Committees at Regional Offices of Education have selected 18 high school seniors and juniors from six regions of the state as semi-finalists in the William Randolph Hearst/United States Senate Youth Program. These semi-finalists will appear before a panel of three judges in Springfield on November 13 and 14, 2006.

The panel will select two finalists who will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., this March and a $5000 Hearst Scholarship for college next fall. The semi-finalists are:

- **Nicholas Hanson**, United High School, Monmouth
- **Anna Czapar**, Rochester High School, Rochester
- **Morgan Compton**, Nokomis High School, Nokomis
- **Marcus Huels**, Altamont Community High School, Altamont
- **Catherine Joseph**, East Richland High School, Olney
- **Lian States**, Fairfield Community High School, Geff
- **Adam Foster**, St. Charles North High School, St. Charles
- **Jasmine Valdez**, Reavis High School, Burbank
- **Sherrie Forton**, North Chicago Community High School, North Chicago
- **Blair Baldwin**, Whitney M. Young Magnet High School, Chicago
- **Parker Happ**, Woodstock High School, Woodstock
- **Andrew Schroeder**, Warren Township High School, Gurnee
- **Samantha Michaels**, Oak Park and River Forest High School, River Forest
- **Katarzyna Komperda**, Reavis High School, Burbank
- **Troy Abney**, Annawan High School, Annawan
- **Keeley Haag**, Leland High School, Leland
- **Katie Bauler**, Eisenhower High School, Decatur
- **Ebene Libscomb**, Danville High School, Danville

Nutrition

Celebrate Illinois School Breakfast Week and American Education Week November 13–19, 2006

Stressing the academic connection between good nutrition, such as eating breakfast and learning, schools across Illinois will celebrate both Illinois School Breakfast Week AND American Education Week November 13–19, 2006. Over 3,000 schools in Illinois offer school breakfast. For information on the Learning
Connection, visit the Action for Healthy Kids website at http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/. You may also download the American Education Week tool kit at http://www.nea.org/aew/toolkit.html. Celebrate the week by recognizing the following groups and activities described below.

- Sunday, November 12—Student Leaders Day
- Monday, November 13—Nationwide Kick-Off Celebration
- Tuesday, November 14—Invite Parents to School Day
- Wednesday, November 15—Education Support Professionals Day
- Thursday, November 16—Educator for a Day
- Friday, November 17—Substitute Educators Day

**Illinois Department of Public Health**

**Healthy habits important in influenza season**

The Illinois Department of Public Health alerts schools to remind students to practice healthy habits, including:

- Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw the tissue away
- Clean hands often
- Get plenty of sleep and physical activity
- Drink plenty of water
- Eat good food to help stay healthy

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides materials for educators to help spread prevention messages. The materials are available online at the CDC Flu Gallery at: http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/patiented.htm

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**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: