Message from State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

It was great to see so many of you at the Triple-I conference in Chicago last week. I was impressed by the number of board members attending with their superintendents and other administrators. This is encouraging and I believe it creates a wonderful opportunity for these individuals to have a dialogue about important issues between boards and their administrations.

I joined State Representatives Roger Eddy and Lisa Dugan on the legislative panel. We each spoke and then took questions from the audience. As you can imagine, the hot topic was the budget and many of you expressed concern about the financial outlook, not only for Fiscal Year 2010 but also for our current fiscal year.

Many of you are looking for answers to help in your planning processes. In particular, you want to know what, if any, cuts will be made in this year’s education budget. I wish I had a crystal ball that would reveal the answers; however, the simple truth is, I don’t know, nor at this point, does anyone else. There are many factors that will drive budget decisions, including but not limited to tax receipts and actions of the General Assembly and federal government.

As we have said before, the current economic slowdown is affecting all areas of federal, state and local government. The Comptroller’s office has more vouchers than funds to pay them, and is currently running more than 60 days behind in paying bills.

As many of you have heard, there was recently a proposal to hold back up to 8 percent of General Revenue Funds from all state agencies. While the sponsor of this bill has pulled it to work out additional details, the idea of absorbing a decrease of this magnitude certainly has our attention. If this 8 percent reduction were applied to ISBE, then $600 million would have to be identified to cut. I should note that if this were to occur, there is no way we could find $600 million without a proration of the larger line items, such as mandated categoricals.

I know that the budget crunch at the state level creates additional uncertainty for your budget-making decisions. The best advice I can give you now is to exercise caution as you administer your district’s funds for the remainder of the school year. Once we receive information and can verify its impact on the education budget, we will let you know. I would also encourage you to maintain close contact with the various professional organizations to which you and your districts belong.

I also wanted to remind folks that when planning for the implementation of scientific interventions, such as response to intervention (RtI), it is not expected that you would be hiring "RtI teachers" or establishing "RtI classrooms". To do so would not only add costs to the district’s budget, but these actions also would incorrectly imply that these interventions are a "program" isolated from day-to-day teaching and learning. RtI implementation is not a defined program but rather the practice of good teaching and learning: first
assessing the level at which students are currently performing and then ensuring interventions are in place to raise them to a higher level after a short period of time when you, again, assess for achievement. Please avoid the temptation to hand this off to one or two individuals for implementation. If you feel pressed for time, then use the RtI Blueprints, available at http://www.isbe.net/RtI_plan/default.htm, to lay out the steps you need to take this year to put such a system in place.

Finally, I want to wish each of you and your families a wonderful and safe Thanksgiving.

Chris

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**Upcoming Dates & Deadlines**

- School District Library grant applications – November 26
- NCLB Monitoring Instrument & NCLB Title I Comparability submissions – November 30
- Looking for Your Lincoln Hero submissions – December 1
- Part 260 (Reading Improvement Block Grant): Public comment ends – December 22
- Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Worksheet submission – December 31
- Waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly during Spring 2009 session – January 9

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**Grants & Programs**

**FY09 Federal Charter School Start Up Grants RFP Released**  
(All awards are 100% federally funded)

Not for profit educational entities and recently authorized charter schools are eligible to apply for a Federal Charter School Start Up Grant. A not for profit entity may apply for a pre-charter grant upon proof of delivery to ISBE of a charter school proposal to an Illinois public school district. If the charter school proposal is approved by a local school board the charter school then becomes available to apply for a charter planning grant.

Upon initial operation of the charter school the charter is available to apply for an implementation grant. Contact Richard Loman, division of Educator and School Development for more information at 217-782-2948 or rloman@isbe.net for more information or access the rfp at http://www.isbe.net/charter/Default.htm.

**FY 2009 Education of Homeless Children and Youth State Grant**

The Division of Grants and Programs is pleased to announce a new competitive Request for Proposal (RFP), the Education of Homeless Children and Youth State Grant Program, that will assist eligible school districts with the opportunity to provide services to homeless children and youth.

Approximately $3 million will be available and it is anticipated that approximately 75 to 100 programs will be funded. The RFP and attachments are located at http://www.isbe.net/homeless. The deadline for submission is 5:00 p.m. Monday, December 15, 2008. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Peggy Dunn 217/524-4832 or e-mail at madunn@isbe.net

**Illinois Association for Gifted Children Convention**

The Fourteenth IAGC Convention is scheduled for February 1-3, 2009. It returns to the Chicago Marriott Downtown for a full three days of local and national presenters who will focus on program development and social and emotional issues of the gifted/talented population.

All of the specifics are available on the IAGC website (http://www.iagcgifted.org/conventions/2009/Brochure
PageOne.shtml), including the registration flyer and a listing of session titles. Sunday will have parent and educator sessions; Monday and Tuesday will have a full slate of offerings. Early registration and a reduced rate are available through November 28, 2008.

For the Registration brochure, go to http://www.iagcgifted.org/conventions/2009/9Con%20Brochure%20PDF.pdf

For the Schedule of sessions, go to http://www.iagcgifted.org/conventions/2009/Schedule.pdf

**Updates & ePlan Resources**

The **Illinois Interactive Report Card (IIRC)** ePlans system update is nearly complete. The website has been redesigned to offer improved access and ease of use. The site includes:

- The results of the spring 2008 assessments for all schools and districts.
- Enhancements to many of the resources, including new navigation and editing capabilities for the ePlans. These include the District and School Improvement, Restructuring, Title I District, and Technology Integration plans.
- The 2006 and 2007 Improvement Plans have been archived and are available for printing. The new 2008 plans have the new editing capabilities and navigation improvements.

The navigation improvements provide plan developers with direct access to the State Board of Education ePlan guides and resources. District and school planners can access IIRC ePlans and the individual plan components using a simplified “tab” format.

The ePlans have new editing capabilities, which include font options and bullets, as well as the ability to create tables. Planners may choose to type directly into the ePlan templates or cut and paste documents that have been created in MS-Word. However, planners should create tables in the IIRC plan templates because attempts to cut and paste from an MS-Excel file have proven unreliable. The ePlan print option for the .pdf format is being fine tuned and the data tables in Section I of the district and school plans (Data & Analysis) will print in the .pdf format beginning the week of November 17.

To access district ePlans and links, planners should go to [http://irc.niu.edu](http://irc.niu.edu); to search for and click on the district’s name to open the district’s profile page. In the banner at the top of the district profile page, click on the link: “Login to ePlans for this district.” The login screen and list of guidance documents will open. Accessing school ePlans requires a search for and click on the school’s name. The login process is the same as for the district.

Plan developers who need the user name and password to access the district and school IIRC templates, should e-mail Gail Buoy at gbuoy@isbe.net. Provide the district’s full name, region-county-district-type code (RCDT), as well as your name and position in the e-mail request. If technical assistance is needed with the IIRC system, such as using the ePlan screens, contact Valerie Lorusso at IIRC at 815-753-0978 or vlorusso@niu.edu.

A **Frequently Asked Questions** about the ePlans, including submission dates, is available at [http://www.isbe.net/sos/pdf/imp_plans_faq.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/sos/pdf/imp_plans_faq.pdf); and technical assistance with the development and refinement of the e-Plans is provided by the following ISBE consultants.

**e-Plan – ISBE Resources:**

District Improvement Plan/School Improvement Plans – [http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/district.htm](http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/district.htm)

Restructuring Plans – [http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/restructuring.htm](http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/restructuring.htm)

ISBE Consultants – Carol Diedrichsen - cdiedric@isbe.net; Martha (Marti) Woelfle - mwoelfle@isbe.net

Title I District Plan – [http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/title1.htm](http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/title1.htm)

ISBE Consultant – Martha (Marti) Woelfle - mwoelfle@isbe.net

Response to Intervention – [http://www.isbe.net/RtI_plan/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/RtI_plan/default.htm)

ISBE Consultant – Faith Bishop - fbishop@isbe.net

If you have questions concerning this submission deadline notice, please contact Debbie Hemberger in School Business Services at 217/785-8779, or by e-mail dhemberg@isbe.net.
Nutrition

Summer Mandate

Public Act 095-0155, signed by Governor Blagojevich on August 14, 2007, amends the Childhood Hunger Relief Act (105 ILCS 126/20). This amendment requires that a school district must, in all schools in which 50 percent or more of the student population is eligible for free or reduced-price meals AND that have a summer school program, implement a summer breakfast and/or lunch program for the duration of the summer school program. This amendment applies to all schools which meet the above criteria, including those schools that do not currently participate in any of the Federal Nutrition Programs. The legislation along with question and answers are accessible at www.isbe.net/nutrition on either the National School Lunch Program or Summer Food Service Program web page under Summer Mandate.

The Illinois State Board of Education administers two federal nutrition programs, the National School Lunch Program’s Seamless Summer Option or Summer Food Service Program to assist in implementing a successful program and to supplement the cost of providing the program.

Staff from our Nutrition Programs Division is available at 800/545-7892 or 217/782-2491 to offer technical assistance with this new legislation.

Important Dates for Public Act 095-0155

January 15
Petition is due to regional superintendent to opt out of the summer mandate Public Act 095-0155.

February 15
School district must declare a plan to have a summer meals program for each school that meets the requirements of Public Act 095-0155.

March 1
Regional superintendent shall inform the School district in writing if an exemption for the summer mandate Public Act 095-0155 was granted or denied.

Regional superintendent shall report to the Nutrition Programs Division of the Illinois State Board of Education a listing of all districts that applied to opt out of either summer meal programs, the decision of the regional superintendent, and the reason for the action.

April 1
The State Superintendent of Education shall inform the school district in writing if an exemption for the summer mandate Public Act 095-0155 was granted or denied. (This situation only occurs if the original exemption was appealed to the State Superintendent of Education.)

No Child Left Behind

Differentiated Accountability Pilot

On July 1st, Illinois was 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. In the 2008-09 school year, ISBE phased in two pieces of flexibility for districts:

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

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

Eleven schools are implementing SES the first year of improvement status instead of PSC. Specifically, the following schools are participating: Stevenson School in District 89 Maywood-Melrose Park-Broadview; McKinley Elementary in Chicago Heights School District 170; Noble Street Charter High School; Ace Technical Charter High School; Chicago Academy High School; New Millennium Health High School; North-Grand High School; Raby High School; Uplift Community High School, Douglass Academy High School, and Tarkington Elementary in Chicago Public Schools District 299 (CPS).

In order to participate, the districts had to make several assurances to ISBE, such as offering continuous or multiple SES enrollment periods. CPS was the only eligible district that applied for the waiver flexibility and the districts’ use of a targeted approach of
selecting students for public school choice was approved. CPS’s participation in the waiver does not alter the district’s obligation to provide parents timely information about the status of the schools within the district.

The proposal and additional information on the flexibility can be found at: http://www.isbe.net/nclb/htmls/accountability_proposal.htm.

**School Business Services**

**FY08 AFR Deadline Reminder**

The Annual Financial Report (AFR) (ISBE Form 50-35) submission deadline has now past. This notice is to remind those who have not submitted AFRs to the State Board of Education must do so immediately. This excludes those with approved extensions until Monday, December 15.

Many AFRs remain outstanding. The district superintendent or auditor must request an extension of time from their regional superintendent or submit the AFR immediately. Late submissions can result in being placed on the upcoming Watch List of the FY09 School District Financial Profile. If you have already completed this requirement, please ignore this message.

For more details and instructions concerning the AFR, please go to http://www.isbe.net/sfms/afr/afr.htm.

**Data Analysis & Progress Reporting**

**Data Quality Campaign: Review Your State’s Results**

The Data Quality Campaign (DQC) will mark its third anniversary and the conclusion of its first phase of work by releasing a progress report highlighting states’ successes in building longitudinal data systems. DQC wants to ensure that every Chief State School Officer and the State Education Agency’s Data Director have a chance to review the survey analysis results submitted by their state prior to public release. Chiefs and their staffs who attended the CCSSO Annual Policy Forum received a folder with all of the updated DQC documents. These materials are also available online for public access as of 9 a.m. CST on Monday, November 17.

Contact the DQC to discuss the materials and/or your state survey results by calling Aimee R. Guidera, 703-303-6912, or Aimee@DataQualityCampaign.org.

To access all of the campaign’s materials/tools, including the press release highlighting the progress of the campaign and the updated DQC brochure, visit www.DataQualityCampaign.org.

**Curriculum & Instruction**

**TECH 2009 Applications Being Accepted**

All schools and districts in Illinois are invited to apply to participate in TECH 2009, scheduled for spring 2009 at the State Capitol Building in Springfield, Illinois.

TECH 2009 is a not-for-profit initiative supported by a broad range of education and business organizations. Its purpose is two-fold: 1) to raise awareness of the critical role technology plays in preparing students to succeed in today's world; and 2) to show the need for increased funding for classroom technology.

Selected school teams will demonstrate a school project to legislators, business leaders and the general public in the State Capitol Building Rotunda. Each team of four (one teacher and three students, or one teacher, one administrator and two students) will demonstrate their project either during a morning or afternoon time slot (9 a.m. to noon or noon to 3 p.m.)

School teams will be selected to represent a balanced distribution between legislative districts, grade levels and curricular areas. Preference will be given to projects that demonstrate improved teaching and learning through technology. The goal is to select one team from every legislative district (representative & senatorial) in the state. Schools will be notified of their selection status in mid-January 2009.

Applications are now being accepted online at http://www.springfieldtech2000.org. The deadline to apply is January 12, 2009.

**Earth Gauge Kids Website Launched**

The new Earth Gauge Kids website is here. Designed for students in grades 5–8, the website focuses on a
different weather-environment theme each month. November’s theme is on Migratory Birds. For more information, visit www.earthgauge.net/kids/.

**National Geographic’s Operation: Resilient Planet Game**

The game Resilient Planet transports students along on real-life science expeditions. Students will need to use the correct tools, find the right data, and be prepared to argue their case through 3D graphics, stereo sound and fun-to-use controls. The game is correlated to National Science Education standards for grades 5–8. Visit http://www.jason.org/Public/Curriculum/ORPGame.aspx?pos=1.

**The Volvo Adventure**

The Volvo Adventure is an educational program that rewards environmental activities and decision-makers of the future. Teams of students ages 13–16 perform environmental projects locally and submit them online. The best entries are asked to join an international conference in Sweden to present their ideas and compete for the final prize. A companion program is available for students ages 10–12. Submissions are due by January 31, 2009. For more information, go to http://www.volvoadventure.org/home/aspix.

**Climate Ambassadors**

The Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Children’s Health Protection and Environmental Education is launching a campaign to educate middle and high school students about climate change, its effects on children’s health, and actions teens can take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Encourage your students to join with other teens to green the energy scene and make a difference. Visit http://www.epa.gov/climateforaction/.

**Earthwatch Fellowships for Teachers and Students**

How would you like to get out of the classroom and head into the field to learn about cutting edge research and conservation efforts, develop professional skills and make a difference in our environment? You can bring the world back to your classroom and students through Earthwatch Expedition. Earthwatch awards 500 plus fellowships annually to K–12 teachers and high school students. For more information, go to http://www.earthwatch.org/aboutus/education.

**Target Field Trip Grants**

Target stores are helping teachers bring learning to life for students through its Target Field Trip Grants program. In 2008, Target will award 5,000 field trip grants across the country, which equates to 1 grant in every 25 K–12 schools. For more information, visit http://sites.target.com/site/en/corporate/page.jsp?contentld=PRD03-002537.

**Captain Planet Foundation Grants**

The Captain Planet Foundation is accepting applications for funding projects that help students better understand environmental issues. Projects must promote understanding of environmental issues, focus on hands-on activities, involve students ages 6–18, promote interaction and cooperation within a group, and help young people develop planning and problem-solving skills. Proposals are due December 31. Visit http://www.captainplanetfd.org/grants.html.

**NEA Student Achievement Grants**

The National Education Association Foundation provides grants to improve the academic achievement of students in all public schools and public institutions of higher education in any subject areas. The work should engage students in critical thinking and problem solving that deepen their knowledge of standards-based subject matter. The work should also improve students’ habits of inquiry, self-directed learning and critical reflection. Educators of students from Pre-K through college are encouraged to apply. Applications may be submitted at any time. Visit http://www.neafoundation.org/programs/StudentAchievement_Guidelines.htm.

**Toyota Tapestry Science Teacher Grants**

Toyota Motor Sales, USA, Inc., and the National Science Teachers Association have announced the 19th Toyota TAPESTRY Grants for Science Teachers program. This year, 50 large grants of up to $10,000 each and 20-32 mini-grants of up to $2,500 will be awarded to K–12 science teachers. The categories are Physical Science Application, Environmental Science Education, and Integrating Literacy and Science. Proposals are due by January 21, 2009. For more information, go to http://tapestry.nsta.org/

**Student Assessment**

**PSAE Illinois State Goals Reports**
Looking to improve future PSAE reporting? ISBE is considering redesigning how some Illinois State Goals information could be reported simultaneously within the current PSAE reports. ISBE is requesting input about this redesign. The link to the redesign description is [www.isbe.net/assessment/htmls/PSAE_Goal_Survey.htm](http://www.isbe.net/assessment/htmls/PSAE_Goal_Survey.htm).

Please read the redesign description and respond to PSAE@isbe.net on or before Friday, December 19.

**Lincoln Bicentennial**

**Looking for Your Lincoln Hero – Contest Extension Deadline**

To allow more students to submit essays for the Looking for Your Lincoln Hero contest, the deadline has been extended to **March 1, 2009**.

The contest encourages those interested in writing about a Lincoln-like hero they admire to enter the Looking for Your Lincoln Hero contest. Participants should tell why this person inspires them in an online essay or they can also create a piece of artwork to illustrate how their hero is like Lincoln.

Essay and artwork categories include elementary, middle or high school students, college and graduate students and adults and professionals. For complete details on the contest, go to [www.MyHero.com](http://www.MyHero.com) and click on “Looking for the Lincolns of Today.”

The contest is sponsored by Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition and the My Hero Project.

**Awards & Grants**

**Illinois Alliance for the Arts Education Outstanding Service Award**

Each year the Illinois Alliance for the Arts Education recognizes outstanding service in the field of arts education. The Annual IAAE Service Recognition Awards Ceremony will be hosted by the Quad City Arts in Rock Island, IL on March 19, 2009 during Illinois Arts Education Week (March 16-22, 2009).

If you know an individual or organization that has advanced the cause of arts education in Illinois during the past year please consider nominating them. Awards are presented in the following categories:

**Employment Opportunities**

**ISBE External Vacancy List**


**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/081114.htm](http://www.isbe.net/news/2008/newsclips/081114.htm)