Message from State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

I hope everyone enjoyed his or her long holiday weekend and got a chance to spend time with family and friends, maybe even taking in one of the holiday tournaments. Thanksgiving is always a welcome break for students, teachers and administrators as we head into the final stretch of the calendar year.

I know many of you were at the Triple-I conference, which I hope you found both enjoyable and informative. The keynote speaker for the Triple-I conference’s Second General Session was Jonah Edelman, Executive Director of Stand for Children.

Edelman challenged all of us in the room during his presentation to work together to solve the problems facing our education systems, and also our world. He illustrated the need to work together on solving problems facing our education systems, by also looking at problems facing our world that can only be solved collaboratively: climate crisis, spiraling health care costs and globalization.

Edelman suggested that a responsible reaction as stewards of our environment is to assess the energy efficiency of your district’s buildings and direct the savings to teaching and learning, while also educating our children to be better stewards of our natural resources. He indicated that a district can have an energy service company provide recommendations for energy efficiency efforts at no charge. You can get more information about these efforts at the National Association of Energy Service Companies website at www.naesco.org.

Next spring schools in Illinois will be required to use environmentally sensitive cleaning and maintenance products as part of Illinois’ Green Cleaning Schools Act. The Illinois Green Government Coordinating Council is currently developing guidelines for the specific types of green cleaning products to be used in schools. Those guidelines are to be established by February of 2008, and schools will be required to adhere to them, via locally adopted policies, within 90 days of their adoption. Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn is the chair of the Illinois Green Government Coordinating Council and his office has a number of resources and programs to assist you in making your schools more environmentally friendly. You can access his website at www.greensolutions.il.gov.

Edelman also argues that schools can have an impact on reducing the cost of health care by teaching healthy lifestyles to our students. He points to the obesity epidemic of America’s youth, noting that the cost of treating obesity is estimated to be $117 billion per year. Here in Illinois, we’re leading the nation in working to decrease obesity by banning junk foods in our schools. I know this was a very contentious issue last year, but it is one that in the long run will benefit our society in the future and our children today.

Finally, Edelman discussed the globalization of the world’s economy and the need for the United States to be able to compete. He pointed out that what used to be highly skilled careers for U.S. students is work that is now being done for less than half the cost by people from around the world. He says that we need to re-examine how we teach our students of today, because we’re preparing them in high school for careers that

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don’t even exist yet. This is a topic that our Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has recognized and that is why it has taken on high school reform as one of its main areas of focus. We’re currently working with our partners in the Illinois College and Workforce Partnership to examine our standards and how we teach our students so that we can better prepare them for success after graduation. We’re engaging multiple partners and the public and private sectors, working together not only to meet the future needs of our students, but the future needs of our country and our world.

Have a great week.

Chris

Upcoming Deadlines

- **NCLB FY08 Title I Comparability analysis** – November 30, 2007
- **NCLB FY08 Monitoring Instrument** – November 30, 2007
- **Nonpublic Registration, Enrollment and Staff Report (87-01)** – December 31, 2007
- **Waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in Spring 2008** – January 11, 2008

Curriculum & Instruction

**TECH 2008**

While Illinois schools continue to struggle with the growing costs of technology and limited outside funding, TECH 2008 gives our teachers and students a voice to influence their future and increase awareness of the importance of technology in schools. On May 7, 2008, students and teachers will set up demonstration tables in Springfield at the Capitol building. Selected schools will send teams of four (comprised of two or three students accompanied by one teacher or administrator) to give evidence to elected officials, business leaders and the general public on how technology is being used in Illinois schools.

All Illinois schools and districts are invited to apply by January 14, 2008. Preference will be given to projects that demonstrate improved teaching and diversity in student learning styles. Selected teams will represent a balanced distribution between legislative districts, grade levels and curricular areas. Our goal is to select at least one team from every legislative district (representative & senatorial) in the state.

If you would like your school and/or district to participate in TECH 2008, applications are now being accepted online at [http://www.springfieldtech2000.org](http://www.springfieldtech2000.org).

Funding & Disbursements

**NHTSA Announces Proposed Rules on Seat Belts in School Buses**

On November 19, U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters announced a notice of proposed rule making from
the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Department of Transportation (DOT) that upgrades the school bus occupant protection requirements of the Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

The most significant proposed changes involve:

- Increase the minimum seat back height requirement from 20 inches from the seat’s seating reference point to 24 inches for all school buses (Illinois already meets this requirement as 28 inch seat backs are required);
- Requiring all school buses with seat bottom cushions that are designed to flip-up, typically for easy cleaning, to have a self-latching mechanism;
- Requiring small school buses (i.e. 10,000 pounds or less) to have a lap/shoulder belt at each passenger seating position (the buses are currently required to have lap belts);
- Establish performance requirements for voluntarily installed seat belts on large buses (i.e. over 10,000 pounds). For large school buses with voluntarily installed lap/shoulder belts, the vehicle would be subject to the requirements for lap/shoulder belts on small school buses, except that applied test forces and performance limits would be adjusted so as to be representative of those imposed on large school buses. Large school buses with voluntarily-installed lap belts would be required to meet anchorage strength requirements. The proposed rule does not require seat belts to be installed on large school buses. The proposed performance requirements for seat belts on large school buses affect large school buses only if purchasers choose to order seat belts on their vehicles.

If the proposed rules are made final, NHTSA proposes that the new standards will apply to buses at the time of manufacture. NHTSA proposes a one year lead time for meeting requirements for voluntarily installed seat belts in large school buses and a three year lead time for meeting mandatory installation in small school buses. The NHTSA believes that three years are necessary for small school buses since some design, testing, and development will be necessary to certify compliance to the new requirements.


Comments can also be mailed to:
Docket Management Facility, M-30,
U.S. Department of Transportation, West Building,
Ground Floor, Rm. W12-140
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE.
Washington, DC 20590

Regardless of how you submit your comments, you should mention the docket number: NHTSA-2007-0014. You may call the Docket at 202-366-9324.

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**Nutrition**

**November 30 – due date to submit application for Dairy Council’s 2007 Breakfast Award**

The November 30 due date to apply for the 2007 Breakfast Awards, sponsored by the Midwest Dairy Council and the St. Louis District Dairy Council is approaching. The award recognizes Illinois schools that are bringing breakfast to students in creative ways with great results. Contact your local Dairy Council representative: in Northern Illinois visit the Midwest Dairy Council’s website at www.midwestdairy.com, or in Central and Southern Illinois visit the St. Louis District Dairy Council’s website at www.stldairyCouncil.org.

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**Teacher Resources**

**Jane Addams Day – December 10**

Public Act 94-796, effective January 1, 2007, designates December 10 of each year as **Jane Addams Day**. The day is to be observed throughout the State as a day to remember her and her great accomplishments, compassion and social conscience.

**Minerals Education Awards**

The Interstate Mining Compact Commission (IMCC) is accepting applications for two annual national minerals education awards. The awards recognize the efforts of those who educate others about minerals and the issues associated with mining.
The two awards are:

- Mining Awareness Educator Award – This is presented to an individual school teacher or school. The winner will be presented a framed award certificate and a $500 gift certificate for classroom resource materials.
- Public Outreach Award – This is presented to an industry, environmental, citizen or other group, a state government body or to an individual. The winner will receive an engraved plaque.

The application deadline is **February 1, 2008**. For more information, including application materials, contact Beth Botsis, Director of Programs, Interstate Mining Compact Commission, at 703-709-8654 or by e-mail at bbotsis@imcc.isa.us.

**National Excellence in Urban Education Award**

The National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) is still accepting nomination applications for the National Excellence in Urban Education Award. The NCUST Excellence in Urban Education Award program was established exclusively to recognize public schools or public charter schools serving urban communities.

The goals of the NCUST Excellence in Urban Education awards program are to:

- Recognize the hard work, dedication, and talent of urban school educators and students;
- Educate the public about the accomplishments and potential of urban schools;
- Provide a concrete benchmark of excellence that motivates reform efforts; and
- Deepen the knowledge base of best practices for promoting urban school transformation.

More information, including criteria and the 2008 application, is available online at [http://edweb.sdsu.edu/ncust](http://edweb.sdsu.edu/ncust). Applications are due Friday, November 30, 2007.

**Student Opportunities**

**2008 United States Young Aviation Artist Contest**

The American Society of Aviation Artists (ASAA) and the Brewer Trophy Aviation Education Association (BTAEA) are now accepting entries for the 2008 United States Youth Aviation Artist Contest.

The theme of the 2008 program, “Design an Aviation Stamp,” focuses on all forms of sporting and recreational aviation, including:

- ballooning, gliding and parachuting;
- aerobatics;
- hang-gliding and paragliding;
- microlight and ultralight flying;
- model aircraft; and
- light aircraft and helicopter flying.

The deadline for entries is **February 29, 2008**. More information, including contest rules, can be found online at [www.brewertrophy.org](http://www.brewertrophy.org).

**Third Annual Illinois Work Zone Safety Calendar Contest**

In an effort to reduce work zone-related crashes in Illinois, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the Illinois State Board of Education, the American Traffic Safety Services Foundation (ATSSF) and the Illinois Chapter of the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) are sponsoring the 3rd Annual Illinois Work Zone Safety Calendar Contest for elementary students.

This year’s theme is “*Keep Us Alive. Stay Alive. Drive 45.*” Poster entries should reflect the student’s view of a work zone and what he or she may find in a work zone. The contest categories are K-1st Grade, 2nd-3rd Grade and 4th-6th Grade.

Each school must select the top four posters from each category (12 posters total) and submit them to IDOT by **December 14, 2007**.

For more information on the contest, please visit the contest website at [http://www.dot.il.gov/trafficsafety/WZS/WZScontest.html](http://www.dot.il.gov/trafficsafety/WZS/WZScontest.html) or contact Jessica Baker, IDOT’s contest coordinator, at 217-782-6518 or Jessica.baker@illinois.gov.

**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](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: