Officially winter doesn’t start until later this month, but I always think of Thanksgiving as the traditional kick-off to wintry weather. I hope you all made it safely through the icy and rainy Illinois weekend, and I know much of the state is either already receiving or preparing for another blast of wintry weather.

If you have not done so already, I would urge you to review your winter weather plans for school cancellations and early dismissals, as well as extra-curricular activities. A handy planning device that you can use if you’re traveling is www.gettingaroundillinois.com. It’s a website from the Illinois Department of Transportation that has a wealth of travel information, including up-to-date winter road conditions for major Illinois routes.

I know many of you are anxiously awaiting word on the Budget Implementation Act. As you know, it is a very complicated piece of legislation that affects many areas of state government. I have been in contact and will continue to work with the governor’s office on questions that may arise from this and will let you know when any action is taken.

We have received numerous questions recently regarding our capacity for continuing to fund General State Aid to districts at the gross Fiscal Year 2007 levels. While we can maintain the vast majority of districts at this level, it has become necessary to begin making modifications with a limited number of districts that have experienced considerable changes to Equalized Assessed Valuation and/or attendance to the extent that their General State Aid would have substantially decreased. Our plan is to work individually with districts in those circumstances during each payment period and modify individual district payments as necessary. Of course, all districts have had sizeable increases in Corporate Personal Property Replacement Taxes this year. Should you have any questions about your specific situation, please call Funding and Disbursements at 217-782-5256.

Finally, please note information about the assessment registration deadline, which follows in this weekly message.

I wish you all a great week.

Chris

Upcoming Deadlines


● **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


● **Deadline for schools and districts to apply for TECH 2008** – January 14, 2008

● **Non-Certified Staff Salary Study survey** – February 29, 2008

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**Student Assessment**

**Assessment Ordering Window to Close**

The ISAT and IAA ordering window for the 2008 assessment cycle will close on Friday of this week. You will need to order all of your materials for ISAT and IAA by December 7, 2007, in order to ensure that you will have them in time for next spring’s assessments.

Students who would have taken IMAGE in 2008 in grades 3-8 will participate in ISAT reading and mathematics. Those in grades 4 and 7 will, additionally, participate in ISAT science. The ISAT Writing Test will NOT be expected of these ELL students because their participation in the ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State writing assessment) satisfies that requirement. Grade 11 ELLs, who would have taken IMAGE in 2008, will participate in both days of the PSAE.

From now through the end of the ordering window, ISAT materials for ELLs in grades 3-8 should be ordered online through the Questar Service Point system to avoid the unnecessary consumption of ISAT Writing materials. Districts that have already ordered ISAT materials for their ELLs through the Pearson website do NOT have to retract those orders, but should be aware that Pearson will include ISAT Writing materials with those orders that ELLs will NOT use if they participate in ACCESS in January of 2008.

PSAE materials for grade 11 students who would have taken IMAGE must be added to the regular PSAE orders. ACT, unfortunately, will not accept any grade 11 materials orders submitted through Questar. Dates for ordering are November 1, 2007 through January 31, 2008.

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**Data Analysis & Progress Reporting**

**2007-2008 Non-Certified Staff Salary Study**

The **Non-Certified Staff Salary Study survey** will be available in IWAS for submission of 2007-2008 school year data from November 15, 2007.

Two useful documents can be found online at:


The deadline date for submission is February 29, 2008. Districts with student enrollment (as of the last school day in September 2006) of less than 1000 may ignore this message.

If you have questions please call the Helpdesk at 217-558-3600.

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**Legal**

**Missing Children Records Act—Important Update for You to Note**

Public Act 95-0439 ([http://ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=095-0439&GA=095](http://ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=095-0439&GA=095)) amends the Missing Children Records Act (325 ILCS 50/5) to require, effective January 1, 2008, all preschool educational programs, child care facilities, and day care homes or group day care homes licensed under the Child Care Act of 1969 to collect a certified copy of a child’s birth certificate or other reliable proof of the child’s identity and age, such as a passport, visa, or other governmental documentation,
when a child is enrolled for the first time. The new Public Act describes specifically how this documentation is to be collected and the steps to follow when the documentation is not provided to the center.

It is our understanding that additional information will be provided to you by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). DCFS is currently drafting changes to the rules for licensing standards and will provide further guidance.


Curriculum & Instruction

2007 Illinois Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results Released

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in collaboration with representatives from state and local departments of education and health, other federal agencies, and national education and health organizations. The YRBS was designed to focus on behaviors among youth related to the leading causes of mortality and morbidity among both youth and adults and to assess how these risk behaviors change over time. The YRBS measures behaviors that fall into six categories:

- Behaviors that result in unintentional injuries and violence
- Tobacco use
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Sexual behaviors that result in HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases, and unintended pregnancies
- Dietary behaviors
- Physical activity

The YRBS also measures self-reported height and weight to allow calculation of body mass index and asthma. The Illinois YRBS was completed by 1,319 students in 28 public high schools in Illinois (excluding Chicago Public Schools) during the spring of 2007. The school response rate was 74%, the student response rate was 87%, and the overall response rate was 64%. The results are representative of all students in grades 9-12. Students completed a self-administered, anonymous, 87-item questionnaire. Survey procedures were designed to protect the privacy of students by allowing for anonymous and voluntary participation. Local parental permission procedures were followed before survey administration.


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.

Nutrition

Summer Mandate

Do not miss your opportunity to “Get the Scoop” on the Summer Mandate, Public Act 095-0155, signed by Governor Blagojevich on August 14, 2007. Workshops are scheduled to clarify the details of this amendment. The legislation along with questions and answers are accessible at www.isbe.net/nutrition on either the National School Lunch Program or Summer Food Service Program webpage under Summer Mandate. Time is running out; visit our website today at www.isbe.net/nutrition to register for a workshop in your
area. Pre-registration is required. If you have any questions, contact our office at 1-800-545-7892.

Go for the Bronze, Silver or Gold - HealthierUS School Challenge

With nutrition standards, wellness policies, and increased emphasis on physical education and activity; we know more schools are approaching the HealthierUS School Challenge criteria. New to this special recognition is a bronze level. Schools with a percent average daily participation (ADP) of school lunch of 62 percent or greater and meeting the silver level criteria are eligible for the bronze level consideration. Illinois has yet to recognize a HealthierUS School Challenge school. Be the first one and apply for the HealthierUS School Challenge today! Visit http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/HealthierUS/index.html for the application packet.

Governor’s Award

Governor’s Green Youth Award

Illinois students are encouraged to apply for the annual Governor’s Green Youth Award. The award recognizes outstanding and inventive efforts of Illinois youth who are working on environmental protection and conservation projects.

Students currently enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade at an Illinois public, private, or home school, who have participated in an environmental project started no earlier than January 2006, are eligible to submit their project for the Green Youth Award. Clubs and other organizations such as Scouts and 4-H are also encouraged to apply.

This spring, awards will be presented at a special ceremony in Springfield hosted by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Winners will also receive tickets to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield.

Applications are due by March 17, 2008. More information, including application materials, is available online at www.epa.state.il.us/green-youth/ or by calling 217-557-7826.

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 school buses over 10,000 pounds. 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.

Student Opportunities

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.htm 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.

In the News

Weekly news clips

ISBE has posted highlights from last week’s education news clips at: