Good afternoon.

My first board meeting last week proved to be eventful and I was pleased that we had such rich discussion and public involvement as part of that meeting. I was most impressed with the participation and testimony of general and special educators, principals and directors from Valley View and Indian Prairie. These individuals provided compelling testimony for how interventions for students who are struggling can be provided within existing frameworks and how student gains are evident within weeks of meaningful implementation of such interventions. The commitment from the personnel in these districts was evident as they provided an overview and answered questions from the board.

I am pleased that the State Board of Education approved the proposed state special education regulations, with some modifications. Scientific based interventions will have to be used if a discrepancy model for identifying students with a disability is employed, beginning in the 2008-2009 school year. This will allow additional time for districts to prepare their staff. Provisions for class size were also adopted however lower class limits would take effect if and when a 100 percent increase in reimbursement for special education teachers is provided. The regulation states this reimbursement must be new money and not a rearrangement of existing line items. Additionally, each local school district shall, in cooperation with its affected employees or their representative, as applicable, adopt and place into effect, no later than the beginning of the 2007-08 school year, a policy stating how staffing decisions will be made so that all services required under students’ IEPs, as well as all needed ancillary and support services, can be provided at the requisite level of intensity.

I want to take this opportunity to wish everyone a safe, healthy and happy holiday. Unless there is urgent news next week, there will be no December 26 edition of the Weekly Message.

Chris Koch

Upcoming Deadlines

- NCUST Excellence in Education Awards – December 18
- Certificate of Tax Levy – December 26
- AYP Appeals, Elementary, Middle, Junior High – January 10
- Waiver applications to be considered by General Assembly in Spring 2007 – January 12, 2007
- Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Assistance Planning Grant – February 1, 2007
- Non-Certified Staff Salary Study - March 31, 2007
Curriculum and Instruction

School Technology Revolving Loan Program

The 2007 award decisions for the School Technology Revolving Loan Program (STRLP) were made on December 15, 2006 with $2.7 million available for grade 9 through 12 loans. Funds are awarded on first come first served basis as long as funds are available. ISBE has posted recipient names online at: http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/elearning/html/revolving_loan.htm

ISBE has mailed a packet with an award letter, promissory note and other items to all districts receiving the loan. ISBE asks districts to sign and return the promissory note no later than January 5, 2007.

If districts have any questions about the STRLP, please contact Jamey Baiter at 217-557-7323 or jbaiter@isbe.net.

English Language Learning

Online self-monitoring checklist for TBE/TPI funds

As part of a new comprehensive effort to monitor state Transitional Bilingual Education/Transitional Program of Instruction (TBE/TPI) and Federal Title III (LIPEPS and Immigrant Education) grant programs, the ISBE Division of English Language Learning (DELL) is providing an on-line self-monitoring checklist for the school districts that receive these funds. The checklist includes program requirements specified in the applicable State and Federal legislation or rules and is part of the State monitoring process.

Therefore, consistent with 105 ILCS 5/14C and NCLB Title III PL 107-110, all school districts that receive TBE/TPI funding must download, complete, sign and return the self-monitoring report to the Division of English Language Learning at the address listed below no later than January 31, 2006.

Illinois State Board of Education
Division of English Language Learning
100 W Randolph, Suite 14-300
Chicago, Illinois 60601
ATTN: Monitoring

The self-monitoring checklist is available at http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/. A paper copy of the document will also be mailed to district superintendents. Districts seeking additional guidance may call Greg Davenport or Bill Garcia at 312-814-3850.

Early Childhood

Preschool Social and Emotional Consultation Services: 3- to 5-year-olds RFP released

The Preschool Social and Emotional Consultation Services: 3- to 5-Year-Olds – 07 Request for Proposals (RFP) for new funds has been released. Applicants eligible to submit a proposal for these preschool social and emotional consultation services are state-funded preschool education programs (i.e., Pre-Kindergarten Programs for Children at Risk of Academic Failure or Preschool for All Children programs) funded in FY 2007 either as continuation or new programs. Individual grant awards will average between $10,000 and $15,000, depending on the needs addressed in the approved proposals and the total appropriation for the program. Proposals are due at ISBE by 4 p.m. on January 25, 2007.

The RFP is available online at http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/block_grant.htm . The RFP can also be obtained by contacting the Early Childhood Division at 217-524-4835.

A bidders’ conference for this RFP will be held by conference call on January 4, 2007 at 1 p.m. To participate in the bidders’ conference, call the following toll-free number and then enter the confirmation number.

Toll-Free Phone Number: 1-800-559-2403
Confirmation Number: 1 6 5 7 9 0 0
Host Name: Kay Henderson
Company: State of Illinois

Should the conditions of this RFP change as a result of the bidders’ conference, the State Board of Education will notify all recipients of the RFP of the changes.

Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Assistance Planning Grant RFP Released

The Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Assistance Planning Grant-07 Request for Proposals (RFP) has been released. An eligible applicant for the Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Assistance Grant shall be a partnership consisting of: 1) One or more educational entities serving elementary and secondary schools (e.g., school districts, private schools, Regional Offices of Education) and/or one or more community-based organizations that provide early childhood education programs or related services, such as technical assistance or professional development, to early childhood programs and practitioners; and 2) One or more four-year institutions of higher education with an accredited teacher education program for early childhood education. The partnership shall designate one entity to serve as the administrative agent for the grant. Individual grant awards will average $100,000, depending on the needs
addressed in the approved proposals and the total appropriation for the program. Proposals are due by 4 p.m. on February 1, 2007.

The RFP is available online at: http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/block_grant.htm. The RFP can also be obtained by contacting the Early Childhood Division at 217/524-4835.

A bidders’ conference for this RFP will be held by conference call on Tuesday, January 9, 2007 at 10 a.m. To participate in the bidders’ conference, call the following toll-free number and then enter the confirmation number.
Toll-Free Number: 1-866-297-6315
Confirmation Number: 16577905
Host Name: Kay Henderson
Company: State of Illinois

Should the conditions of this RFP change as a result of the bidders’ conference, the State Board of Education will notify all recipients of the RFP of the changes.

Special Education
Identification of Districts with Significant Disproportionality in Special Education Eligibility

Under the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004), the U.S. Department of Education placed an increased emphasis on addressing the challenge of disproportionate representation of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in special education. A variety of causes, such as flawed assessment practices or inadequate instruction, may contribute to such disproportionality. Under 34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §300.646 of IDEA 2004, each state education agency (SEA) is now required to determine if there is significant disproportionality based on race and ethnicity that is the result of inappropriate identification in the state and within local school districts. Further, if such disproportionality is found at the district level, the SEA must notify the affected school districts and support them in carrying out improvement activities.

Each SEA must fulfill these requirements by implementing activities delineated in its IDEA Part B State Performance Plan (SPP) for Special Education. Indicators 9 and 10 of the SPP address the issue of significant disproportionality resulting from inappropriate identification. Specifically, Indicator 9 addresses the overall disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education, while Indicator 10 addresses the disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories. The entire text of these indicators is contained in the Illinois SPP, which may be viewed at http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/state_performance.pdf.

As detailed in the Illinois SPP, ISBE is using a weighted or an alternate risk ratio method to calculate possible significant disproportionality for each non-white racial or ethnic group (Asian, Black, Hispanic or Native American) in special education overall and by disability category. A weighted risk ratio method is used for districts in which there are at least 10 students in the specific racial/ethnic group in question and at least 10 students in the comparison group enrolled in the district. An alternate risk ratio method is used for districts in which there are at least 10 students in the specific racial/ethnic group in question but fewer than 10 students in the comparison group enrolled in the district. Further details of weighted and alternate risk ratios and a definition of the term “comparison group” are provided in this linked document: http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/risk_ratio.pdf. A district is determined by ISBE to have possible significant disproportionality based on race or ethnicity as a result of inappropriate identification if the calculated weighted or alternate risk ratio for a particular racial or ethnic group is 3.0 or higher for three consecutive years.

ISBE has begun a multi-step process to identify districts with significant disproportionality based on race and ethnicity that is the result of inappropriate identification. The first step of this process involves ISBE’s analysis of December 2003, 2004 and 2005 special education Child Count data and 2003, 2004 and 2005 Fall Housing data and the subsequent calculation of a weighted or alternate risk ratio for each school district, as discussed above.

Next, by January 2007 ISBE will notify those districts that have possible significant disproportionality based on a calculated weighted or alternate risk ratio of 3.0 or higher for three consecutive years. We use the term “possible” at this step in the process because data alone are not sufficient to determine whether or not the disproportionality is actually the result of inappropriate identification. Therefore, the next step requires that the identified districts conduct self-assessment activities, including data verification and a review of policies, procedures and practices and submit the results of those activities to ISBE. Upon receipt, ISBE will then review the district documentation and, combined with the district data, will verify whether the significant disproportionality is the result of inappropriate identification of students.

Finally, ISBE will follow up with those districts in which, based on the combined results of ISBE’s analysis
of district data and review of district self-assessment documentation, significant disproportionality based on race or ethnicity is verified to be the result of inappropriate identification. These districts will then begin the process of developing and subsequently implementing an improvement plan, with support from ISBE. Depending on the extent of the verified disproportionality, a district’s improvement activities may range from reviewing district processes and identifying areas where practices need to be improved to intensive state technical assistance. These districts will also be required to set aside 15 percent of their FY08 IDEA Part B flow-through funds to provide comprehensive, coordinated early intervening services, as required in 34 CFR § 300.646(b)(2).

Projected timelines for the process discussed above are provided in the chart below. In the interim, we encourage districts to begin reviewing district- and school-level data, as well as policies and procedures, with regard to possible disproportionality based on race or ethnicity in the identification of students as eligible for special education overall and/or in specific disability categories. Questions regarding special education disproportionality may be directed to the Special Education Services Division at 217-782-5589.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calculation of risk ratios</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District notification of possible significant disproportionality (SD)</td>
<td>January 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District response submitted to ISBE</td>
<td>March 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISBE verification that significant disproportionality is the result of inappropriate identification</td>
<td>April 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>District notification of verified significant disproportionality</td>
<td>May 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>District improvement plans completed</td>
<td>July 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>District improvement plan initial implementation</td>
<td>No later than September 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISBE monitoring of improvement plan implementation and provision of tiered technical assistance</td>
<td>Will vary by district</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Staffing changes**

Charles Seybold, Residential Placement Coordinator for the Illinois State Board of Education is retiring December 31, 2006. **Boyd Fergurson**, Principal Education Consultant with the Division of Special Education Services will become the Residential Placement Coordinator at that time. Please direct all questions and correspondence regarding residential placements to Mr. Fergurson using the contact information below.

**Boyd Fergurson**  
Principal Education Consultant  
Division of Special Education Services  
100 North First Street  
Springfield, IL 62777-0001  
Phone: 217-782-5589  
FAX: 217-782-0372  
bfergurs@isbe.net

**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:  