Message from State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

With just a week before Christmas, I know all of you are preparing for the winter’s break. I know students, teachers and administrators all look forward to this time, and I hope you get some rest, catch up on some work or spend a little extra time with family or friends.

But before you slow down for the winter break, would you please take a few moments to review the Draft State Response to Intervention (RtI) Plan. The state RtI plan is to go into effect January 1, 2008, and we are still seeking comments on it.

RtI is “the practice of providing 1) high-quality instruction/intervention matched to student needs and 2) using learning rate over time and level of performance to 3) make important educational decisions” (Batsche, et al., 2005). This means using differentiated curriculum-based instructional strategies for all learners; providing all learners with scientific, research-based interventions; continuously measuring student performance using scientifically research-based progress monitoring instruments for all learners; and making educational decisions based on a student’s response to interventions.

Agency staff have developed the draft RtI plan in a collaborative effort with a number of stakeholder groups, and it has evolved from a basic RtI definition to its present conceptual framework. You can find a draft copy of the plan at http://www.isbe.net/rti.htm. We are accepting written comments at rti@isbe.net and a discussion will be held Friday, December 21, 2007, from 10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The call in number is 800-864-5102—passcode 8308702.

This plan provides a framework but by no means represents the last action from the state with regard to RtI planning. Instead, we view it as a first step. There will be continued opportunities to shape the RtI system in Illinois as we work together toward implementation.

During last week’s meeting, the Illinois State Board of Education approved several annual reports that must be submitted to the General Assembly in January. Some are complete, and others are in draft form because final information will not be available until the end of the year; however, all of these reports contain some very useful information and in many cases are overlooked.

Last week I highlighted some excerpts from the Educator Supply and Demand Report, but the Board also reviewed drafts of the Preschool for All Annual Report, the State Board Annual Report and the Charter Schools Annual Report.

We’ve compiled all of the reports into one location on our website that you can access by going to http://www.isbe.net/reports.htm. As I said before, these reports include some great trend information that will be helpful to you in analyzing your own district’s needs, for instance:

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In 1998-1999 charter schools served 209 students with disabilities; in 2006-2007 that number had risen to more than 1,900 students.

Seventy-eight preschool and six at-risk infant-toddler programs were approved for funding in 2007-2008 under the Preschool for All initiative, which will allow the program to reach about 4,000 new children.

From 1997-1998 to 2006-2007, the number of total pre-kindergarten through high school graduates has increased by 45,000 students. However, during that timeframe, public school enrollment has increased by more than 120,000 students, while non-public school enrollment has decreased by nearly 80,000 students.

The number of Basic Skills certification tests administered dropped by 20% from FY 2003 to FY 2007, while at the same time the number of certification tests administered for Special Education increased by nearly 40%.

Elementary and secondary education is the state’s second largest expenditure (25.3%) behind human services (47.6%).

I would encourage you to scan these reports when you have some time. They are not a difficult read and could prove very valuable as you look at trends for your own district.

Finally, staff have been working diligently on accommodations for English language learners (ELLs) who will be taking the ISAT and PSAE this year. We know that ELLs are a diverse group of students, varying in age and exposure to English, and even having different levels of literacy in their native languages. With that in mind, we are working to provide a variety of accommodations from which school district personnel may select. This will ensure that the accommodations used are the most appropriate for the students being tested.

Among the accommodation choices will be allowing extended time and more frequent breaks; administration of the exam in an alternate location, in a small group or individual setting; reader scripts and audio recordings in English for math and science; repetition of scripted directions; and verification of a student’s understanding by having the student repeat directions in English. We are also exploring the use of a glossary of terms and translation of directions in native languages.

We will be offering multiple trainings throughout the state beginning with the 31st Annual Statewide Conference for Teachers of Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students, which will be held Tuesday, January 8, 2008, through Friday, January 11, 2008. We will have more information about the trainings and possible additional accommodations after the first of the year.

We mandated bilingual education in Illinois more than 30 years ago and our commitment to these students is stronger than ever. While a few may see this as a setback, I believe this is another opportunity for Illinois to take the national lead and develop a stronger assessment that will allow us to more appropriately serve our students and put them in a better position for future success in their new country.

Thanks, and enjoy the holidays.

Chris

Upcoming Deadlines

- **Nonpublic Registration, Enrollment and Staff Report (87-01)** – December 31, 2007
- **Pre-charter Planning Grant applications** – December 31, 2007
- **Deadline for commenting on draft guidelines for Green Cleaning Schools Act** – January 8, 2008
- **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
Student applications for National Science Youth Camp – February 18, 2008
Non-Certified Staff Salary Study survey – February 29, 2008
Charter Planning Grant applications & Charter Implementation Grant applications – April 30, 2008

Fiscal & Procurement

Illinois Textbook Loan Program


This year, material orders are limited to grades K-6 and access to the ITLP order entry system is through IWAS (ISBE Web Application Security). You can access IWAS by clicking on the IWAS link at the top of the ISBE homepage. For those of you new to IWAS, you can create an IWAS account by clicking on the 'Sign Up Now' link on the IWAS homepage.

If you require assistance with your IWAS account or in gaining access to the ITLP system, please contact the ISBE Call Center at 217-558-3600. If you have questions regarding the ordering process please contact the ITLP staff at 217-782-0734.

A Note to Local IWAS Administrators: For the ITLP system in IWAS, it is very important that you assign the correct access level to staff who sign up for the ITLP system to represent your organization. When assigning access rights in IWAS, Public School Districts (except for Chicago 299) should assign staff 'District Doc Author' access. All other organizations (including Chicago 299) should assign staff 'School Admin' access.

Certification

Important Information Regarding Certification and Regionally Accredited Institutions of Higher Learning

In recent months the Illinois State Board of Education has received many questions about what “regional accreditation” of colleges and universities means and how it applies to certification applications. We have also had to reject transcripts from institutions that are not accredited at all or that are accredited by technical school organizations, national accreditation agencies, and online accreditation associations. Please note that only coursework completed at and degrees awarded by regionally accredited colleges or universities may be used for certification purposes (i.e. substitute certificates, paraprofessional approvals, endorsement of certificates, etc.). A college or university is regionally accredited if that institution is accredited by one of the following regional accreditation bodies:

- Middle States Association of Schools & Colleges Commission on Higher Education
- New England Association of Schools & Colleges Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
- New England Association of Schools & Colleges Commission on Technical & Career Institutions
- North Central Association of Schools & Colleges Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
- Southern Association of Colleges & Schools Commission on Colleges
- Western Association of Schools & Colleges Accrediting Commission for Community & Junior Colleges
- Western Association of Schools & Colleges Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges & Universities

If an applicant submits transcripts from an institution that is not accredited through one of the bodies listed above, those transcripts cannot be accepted or taken into consideration for any certification purpose. You may check the accreditation status of colleges and universities on the United States Department of Education Accreditation website at http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/Search.asp.

Please pass this information along to regional and district staff. We encourage school staff to alert students to check the accreditation status of the school they plan to attend if they want to become teachers.
Illinois Department of Public Health

Meningitis Prevention Update

Public Act 94-0769 requires the Illinois Department of Public Health to develop materials regarding meningitis and its prevention for distribution in elementary and secondary schools.

Please visit http://www.idph.state.il.us/public/hb/hbmening.htm for an overview of this disease and helpful tips for protection against a case spreading in your school or district. The website also lists the different strains of the virus and how to recognize the symptoms.

Accountability

FY08 Charter School RFP Released

The Illinois State Board of Education was again successful this past summer in receiving a Federal Charter School Start Up grant. Illinois was one of only ten successful candidates to receive the charter school funding. The FY08 Federal Charter School Start Up grant Request for Proposals has now been posted and is available online at http://www.isbe.net/grants/html/RFP.htm.

Three types of charter grants are available: Pre-charter Planning grant; Charter Planning grant; and a Charter School Implementation grant. Eligible applicants for a Pre-charter Planning grant are not-for-profit entities which have submitted a charter school application to a local educational agency (school district). Proof of the delivery must be provided to ISBE to receive the Pre-charter grant. Once the local educational agency approves the charter school application, the not-for-profit entity may receive a Charter Planning grant. After the charter school opens, a Charter School Implementation grant may be applied for.


Planning and Implementation grant applications must be received by April 30, 2008 – although an earlier submission is preferred.

Grant application forms may be obtained from Richard Loman in the Accountability Division. He can be reached at 217-782-2948 or rloman@isbe.net.

Funding & Disbursements

SB 140-PA 95-0338 Student’s with instruction permits and cell phone use

Please be advised that effective January 1, 2008, all persons under the age of 19 who hold an instruction permit may not drive a vehicle on a roadway while using a wireless phone. The new law modified Section 12-610.1 of the Vehicle Code and changed the student age from 18 to 19. The new law does not apply when the wireless phone is being used for emergency purposes, including, but not limited to, an emergency call to a law enforcement agency, health care provider, fire department, or other emergency services agency or entity.

Rules & Waivers

Green Cleaning Schools Act

The Illinois Green Government Coordinating Council has posted the draft guidelines for the Green Cleaning Schools Act, which requires all elementary and secondary schools in Illinois to purchase environmentally sensitive cleaning supplies.

Passed into law on August 13, 2007, the Green Cleaning Schools Act will protect Illinois students, teachers and school staff from polluted indoor air that may be five to 100 times more polluted than outdoor air. This pollution is due in part to the chemicals found in everyday cleaning supplies.

The guidelines and specifications for the act were created by the council in coordination with the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the Regional Offices of Education, Illinois State Board of Education and a panel of interested stakeholders.

The public comment period on the draft guidelines is now through January 8, 2008. Comments may be submitted in writing online at GreenSolutions.il.gov or in person at an upcoming public comment hearing:
• 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Tuesday, January 8 – James R. Thompson Center, Room 2-025, 100 W. Randolph St., Chicago

It is possible to join the meeting by teleconference or videoconference. Please visit GreenSolutions.il.gov or call Kate Tomford at 312-814-4083 for more information.

Nutrition

Summer Food Service Reminder

Public Act 095-0155, Summer Food Service Program, requires any public school with at least 50 percent of the children qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch AND conducting a summer school program to operate a summer meal program in 2008. If summer school is not offered, there is no requirement to offer the food service. To access a copy of the new legislation, go here: http://ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=095-0155&GA=095.

School districts required to implement a summer meals program need to be aware of the following critical dates:

To implement a summer meals program for the summer of 2008:
- February 15 – Develop and implement a plan to operate a summer meals program.
- March – May – Attend a training workshop for Summer Food Service Program or Seamless Summer Option (pre-register at www.isbe.net/nutrition).
- June 1 – Complete and submit a summer application to Nutrition Programs.

A district is allowed to opt out of the summer food program if the expense reimbursement would not fully cover the costs of implementing and operating the program. To opt out of implementing a summer meals program for the summer of 2008 due to program costs:
- January 15 – Petition the Regional Superintendent for an exemption.
- March 1 – Regional Superintendent to render a decision on exemption.
- April 1 – State Superintendent to render decision on any appeals.

If you have any questions, please contact the Nutrition Programs Division at 800-545-7892 or 217-782-2491.

Champions for Healthy Kids Grant Application due January 15

Entering its fifth year, the General Mills Foundation, in partnership with the American Dietetic Association Foundation and the President’s Council on Physical Fitness, announce the Champions for Healthy Kids grant program. Fifty $10,000 Champions for Healthy Kids grants will be awarded to community-based groups that develop creative ways to help youth adopt a balanced diet and physically active lifestyle. Grant applications are due January 15, 2008, and grants will be awarded in May 2008. Visit http://www.generalmills.com/corporate/commitment/champions.aspx for further information.

Make and Keep These New Year’s Resolutions

The Division of Child Nutrition suggests school food service professionals consider making and keeping these following resolutions in 2008.

- Celebrate National Nutrition Month® in March 2008
- Become a School Nutrition Association member at www.schoolnutrition.org.
- Exercise your brain and increase your brainpower by participating in a course, conference, or workshop.
- Apply for a grant, scholarship, and/or award.
- Participate in the implementation of your school’s wellness policy.
- Honor your child nutrition staff during National Child Nutrition Employee Week, May 5–9, 2008.

Happy New Year!

10 Top Common Citations on Administrative Reviews

Beginning in January 2008, Nutrition Programs staff will begin administrative reviews – Coordinated Review Effort (CRE) – that are scheduled for school year 2007-2008. Here are the top 10 citations in random order:
• Benefit Issuance – not updated for changes from verification or from the previous year’s application rolled over.
• Meal Count Edits – edits are not completed monthly. Problems noted are not followed up.
• Verification – process is not completed for every application chosen for review.
• On-site reviews – not completed by February 1st or three or more reviews are completed on the same day by the same individual.
• Local Wellness Policy – no policy in place. This year the local wellness plan is required to be evaluated based on the goals established in your policy.
• Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) plan – No functioning plan in place based on HACCP principles.
• Sanitation Reviews – less than two reviews are conducted per school year. No documentation requesting review to the local health department.
• Offer versus Serve under food based menu approaches – directing the student selections (entrée and milk).
• Production Records – not completed or did not list all food items available in a given day, including condiments.
• NuMenu Nutrient Based Approach – analysis not on file for each week or meals did not meet regulatory guidelines.

Please review our National School Lunch Program – Administrative Review Checklist to see if you have complied with all areas of the breakfast/lunch program. The checklist is available online at www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/requirements.htm under school based programs.

Professional Development

2008 Freida J. Riley Teacher

The Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation is now accepting nominations for the 2008 Freida J. Riley Teacher Award.

The annual award honors an American teacher who works with a physical disability, teaches in an especially challenging educational environment or has performed a heroic act by making an exceptional, personal or physical sacrifice on behalf of students.

Nomination forms, rules and guidelines are available online at www.columbusfdn.org/freidayrlife/default.asp. All nomination materials must be received by the Foundation no later than February 4, 2008. For questions or more information, contact Judi Shellenberger, Executive Director, at 315-258-0090 or by e-mail at judithmscolumbus@cs.com.

17th Annual Early Literacy and Illinois Reading Recovery Conference

The 17th Annual Early Literacy and Illinois Reading Recovery Conference is scheduled for January 17 – 18, 2008, at the Renaissance Schaumburg Hotel and Convention Center in Schaumburg.

The 2008 Early Literacy and Illinois Reading Recovery Conference is designed to provide excellent professional development opportunities for K-3 classroom teachers, reading specialists, school and district administrators, board members, special education professionals, and Reading Recovery staff. Reading Recovery is a successful short-term early intervention to enable the lowest achieving first-grade children to become independent readers and writers. The Conference will continue to focus on collaborating for change and will emphasize the critical importance of school-wide dialogue and the complimentary roles of all educators in supporting literacy learning for all children.

More conference information, including registration materials is available online at www.illinoisreadingrecovery.org. For additional information or questions, contact Ellen Swengel, conference coordinator, at eswengel@insightbb.com.

Student Opportunities

Entries now being accepted for ‘Poster, Poetry and Prose Contest’

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) is now accepting submissions from fifth and sixth grade writers and artists from around Illinois to compete in the Agency’s 2008 Poster, Poetry and Prose Contest.

This year’s study and contest focus on the importance of clean air and what individuals can do to help prevent global warming with the theme: “Global Warming – What Can We Do?” Special emphasis is given to air, land or water on a rotating basis.
Each school can enter up to 12 (six posters and six written) works. Entries must be postmarked and sent in to the Illinois EPA by **February 8, 2008**.

All finalists, together with their families and teachers, are invited to an awards ceremony and reception that will be held on Saturday, April 5 at the Hall of Flags in Springfield. Finalists receive a certificate and ribbon. In addition, the top twelve finalists will be given special recognition and will each receive a $50 U.S. savings bond and an environmental reference book for his or her school library.

For more information, contact **Kristi Morris-Richards**, environmental education coordinator for the Illinois EPA, at 217-558-7198, or by mail at 1021 North Grand Avenue E., P.O. Box 19276, Springfield, IL 62794-9276.

### Illinois high school seniors sought for National Youth Science Camp honors

Two of Illinois’ most promising high school seniors will receive a full scholarship to attend a three-week summer camp experience – June 29 – July 26, 2008 – that honors and challenges seniors from the Class of 2008 from each state. Scientists from across the nation who work on some of the most provocative topics in science today; present lectures; do hands-on research projects; and interact informally with student delegates. The delegates will participate in two overnight expeditions into the Monongahela National Forest and a visit Washington, D. C. The selected delegates must not only demonstrate academic achievement in science, but also show potential for thoughtful scientific leadership. The National Youth Science Camp is offered at no cost to its selected participants; the scholarship will cover all educational and recreational programming, meals, lodging, and round-trip air passage.

Application forms are available on the Science Camp website at [www.nysc.org/2008](http://www.nysc.org/2008) and must be submitted directly to the Illinois State Board of Education by **February 18, 2008**:

Gwen Pollock  
NYSC-Illinois state coordinator  
100 North First Street  
Springfield, IL  62777

For further information and assistance, contact Gwen Pollock, Curriculum & Instruction Division, at 217-557-7323 or gpollock@isbe.net and visit [www.nysc.org](http://www.nysc.org).