Message from State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

This is an abbreviated version of the Weekly Message and we will not publish one next week. The Weekly Message will return during the first full week of January 2009, since we know schools are now taking their holiday breaks.

I did want to take this opportunity to let you know that the state has issued $1.4 billion in bonds. These funds will be used by the Comptroller to pay some of the more than $3 billion of the state’s outstanding bills. Currently, the state is more than 60 business days behind in paying bills; this funding will be used to reduce that backlog.

It is likely that some of this funding will be coming to schools in the near future, so you may want to check the status of the late payments during the break.

In addition, I wanted to also let you know that districts now have access to student-level data for ISAT and PSAE scores via the Illinois Interactive Report Card (IIRC). I know that many of you use this data for tracking and planning purposes and as such, it is important to remember that the IIRC is one more tool available to you. To access the IIRC, go to http://iirc.niu.edu.

I hope your holiday season is filled with joy.

Chris

Upcoming Dates & Deadlines

- Part 260 (Reading Improvement Block Grant): Public comment ends – December 22
- Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Worksheet submission – December 31
- The 2010 school year annual commodity order period – January 2 – February 1
- Waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly during Spring 2009 session – January 9
- Estimated Best Three Months Average Daily Attendance – January 15
- Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision) and Part 25 (Certification): Public comment ends – January 20
- Looking for Your Lincoln Hero submissions – March 1
- History Teacher of the Year Award first round nominations – March 2

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Funding & Disbursements

Estimated Best Three Months Average Daily Attendance Due

The annual "Estimated Best Three Months Average Daily Attendance" application is now available on IWAS. We request that districts submit the estimate to ISBE on or before Thursday, January 15, 2009. The figure you will report is the estimated best three months average daily attendance for the 2008-09 school year.

District estimates will be used as a resource by the General Assembly to determine the General State Aid (GSA) appropriation level for the 2008-09 claim year payable during Fiscal Year 2010. Accurate estimates are critical for district level budget purposes, as projected GSA entitlements will be based on these estimated figures.

For questions regarding this system, contact Toni Waggoner at 217-782-0249 or twaggone@isbe.net or Jim Mathes at 217-782-5256 jmathes@isbe.net.

Inaugural News

The Illinois Fatherhood Initiative (IFI) We Can Do It 2009 Raffle is giving away two tickets to the 2009 presidential inauguration. The tickets also include entry to the Illinois Ball, three nights accommodations, round trip airfare and a private driver to and from the inauguration and ball.

To purchase raffle tickets, go to http://www.acteva.com/booking.cfm?bevalID=172001

Nutrition

2010 Annual Commodity Order Period

The 2010 school year annual commodity order period is January 2 through February 1, 2009. The Illinois Commodity System (ICS) will begin accepting orders Friday, January 2, for next school year. Due to time constraints placed on states by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, ISBE must require districts to complete orders by Sunday, February 1.

Starting in February, schools choosing to divert commodities to processors should watch the ICS Message Board carefully for important news regarding processors receiving trucks of commodities. You may change your orders placed with processors that do not receive a truck to processors that are receiving trucks from February 6 through February 13. If you place an order with a processor that does not receive a truck and you do not change to a processor that is receiving a truck, ISBE will delete that order.

For questions regarding the annual order process, call Food Distribution Program staff at 800-545-7892 or 217-782-2491.

Excess USDA Commodity Inventory at Further Processors

USDA regulations require commodity inventories held at further processors to be monitored. Based on a processor's average monthly usage, regulations do not allow processors to maintain more than a six-month inventory level.

To help districts meet this requirement, ISBE implemented procedures to address the excess inventories at further processors. The procedures are on ISBE’s Food Distribution Program website at http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/pdf/FDP_Inventory_Level_Procedures.pdf.

If you have questions regarding these procedures or about processing USDA commodities, contact Food Distribution Program staff from the Nutrition Programs Division at 800-545-7892 or 217-782-2491.

Breakfast Survey

Pursuant to Public Act 94-0981, the Nutrition Programs Division is conducting a breakfast survey for which we are seeking your assistance. ISBE has two surveys, one for parents and one for administrators.

The goal is to gauge parental interest in school breakfast and the administrators’ perspective, which includes the advantages and barriers to operating the School Breakfast Program.

ISBE is requesting your assistance in completing this survey, whether or not you currently have a School Breakfast Program.

Please encourage parents to visit the survey site and complete the parent portion. The deadline is Friday, February 6. Please complete the survey online at
www.isbe.net/nutrition. ISBE will publish the survey results in a future edition of The Outlook newsletter.

If you have questions or need further assistance, please e-mail cnp@isbe.net or call ISBE at 800-545-7892.

Student Opportunities

Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Scholarship

Illinois high school students are encouraged to apply for the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange scholarships. This year, scholarships will be awarded to 50 high school students who wish to spend a year as an exchange student in Germany (July 2009 – July 2010).

Youth For Understanding USA is helping to spread the word about the Congress-Bundestag scholarships. This congressionally funded youth exchange program has been preparing young people to live in a global society since 1983. Recipients live with a host family, attend the local high school and receive a four-week orientation and language course before the start of school.

For applications and additional information, go to www.usagermanyscholarship.org, or www.yfu-usa.org. For additional information, call 1-800-TEENAGE to speak with an admission counselor.

All applications must be postmarked on or before Tuesday, January 13.

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: http://www.isbe.net/news/2008/newsclips/081219.htm