October 12, 2006

Note: A number of items have arisen that need timely attention prior to the October 16 Weekly Message. We have included those items here—Editor

Teaching and Learning

Test scores
While we are doing our best to get AYP to schools and districts as soon as possible, we are not certain when we will be able to tell schools and districts their status.

ISAT, IAA, and IMAGE scores were posted in late July and early August. Schools have seen preliminary data and made necessary corrections, however, final AYP has not been calculated and school and student reports have not gone to print as of today.

PSAE scores have not arrived at ISBE. When they do, schools will have 10 days to make corrections. These scores will be finalized once they are ready to print; about 2 weeks following corrections.

School report cards will be produced once final data for all state assessments are received at ISBE from Harcourt. It is possible that we will not be able to provide districts with report cards prior to the October 31st deadline for making report card information available to the public. Unfortunately, we do not have the authority to extend the October 31st deadline and can only encourage you to disseminate report cards as soon as you receive the information from us. As always, after the school report card data is available, it will be embargoed from the media for a period of time.

School Improvement Plans
The delay in reporting 2006 state assessment results is hampering a complete review of data necessary for School Improvement Plans that are due to ISBE. Schools that have not made adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years are required to revise their school improvement plans. Schools have three months to revise their plans following notification of academic status.

Notification of status related to state assessment results will start the clock ticking for revising School Improvement Plans. As soon as final notification occurs, schools will have the full three months for planning, followed by a 45 day peer review process and local board approval. At the end of that period, district superintendents must post the approved plans using the Illinois e-Plan School Improvement Template at the Interactive Illinois Report Card website http://iirc.niu.edu/.

In the meantime, ISBE will host three call-in sessions to talk about the requirements and timelines for the revised plans. These call-in sessions will be held November 1 and 15 and December 12. Further information about these call-in sessions will be provided via the Superintendent’s Bulletin in the coming weeks.

ISBE advises administrators of schools in academic status to review student progress from other available local data, to identify the degree to which instruction is aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards, and to measure the progress of strategies and activities in their existing school plans. This information will assist in determining priorities for the required plan once state assessment data are finalized. It is imperative that schools continue to work toward eliminating achievement gaps in school.

School Business and Support

District Budgets due October 16
This is a final reminder that all school district adopted budgets are due electronically at Illinois State Board of Education no later than October 16, 2006. Many school districts have not filed their budgets. Beginning next week our office will send notifications to school districts that are not in compliance with PA 94-0234. If you have questions you may call School Business and Support Services at 217-785-8779.

For requirement information and submission of the school district’s budget, please see the following link: http://www.isbe.net/sfms/budget/2007/budget.htm. Follow the submission instructions at the bottom of the webpage.
Special Message from Governor’s Office

Flags at State Buildings to fly at half staff on Friday, October 13

Governor Rod R. Blagojevich has ordered flags at all State of Illinois buildings to fly at half staff on Friday, October 13, 2006, to honor Army Spc. Kristofer C. Walker, who was killed while supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Spc. Walker, 20, of Creve Coeur, died in Taji, Iraq, on Oct. 2, 2006 of injuries sustained when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. He was assigned to the 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

The lowering of flags at school facilities is at the discretion of the local administration. This information is shared at the request of Regional Superintendents of Education and local school districts.

Federal Grants and Programs

Title I Poverty Counts revised for states

The United States Department of Education (USED) has notified ISBE that the Census Bureau used incorrect numbers when calculating state and district Title I poverty counts. This caused one district to become ineligible for Title I funds and this district has been notified by ISBE. The incorrect numbers will cause most Title I and associated grants to change for the FY06-07 school year.

Since districts have already started Title I programs, ISBE has decided not to make a change to current year funds. One option the Department of Education gave us was to make the adjustments in the FY07-08 grants and we are going to use this option. Thus, there will be no change to the current year Title I grant and all money awarded will be paid.

Many districts will not notice this change as it is very small. The average change was 0.11 percent. However, the larger the grant the more money this involved. As soon as we have all of the numbers available we will post the new allotments for Title I on the internet for all to review. The change for the entire state was a negative $618,000. Districts will be notified when this is posted on the ISBE web-site.

This is a difficult situation and we appreciate your understanding. This was an honest error by the Census Bureau and ISBE will correct it with the least possible disruption to district programs.

Budget Hearings set

The Illinois State Board of Education Finance and Audit Committee has set its FY 08 Budget Hearings. Those wishing to participate in these hearings may sign-in upon arrival at each location. Please provide 15 copies of written testimony.

For further information, please call the State Board of Education at 217-782-2223.

Tuesday, October 17, 2006 – 6 to 8 p.m. - Algonquin
Board Room, Consolidated School District #158, 650 Academic Drive, Algonquin

Wednesday, October 18, 2006 – 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. - Lockport
Maroon Room, Lockport Township H.S. East, 1333 East Seventh Street, Lockport

Wednesday, November 8, 2006 – 6 to 8 p.m. - Moline
Central Office, Allendale, 1619 11th Avenue, Moline

Tuesday, November 14, 2006 – 6 to 8 p.m. - Danville
Room 306 Vermilion Hall, Danville Area Community College, 2000 East Main Street, Danville

Wednesday, November 15, 2006, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. - Springfield
Board Room, ISBE Office, 100 North First Street, Springfield

Wednesday, November 29, 2006 – 2 to 4 p.m. - Chicago
James R. Thompson Center, 9th Floor-031, 100 West Randolph Street, Chicago

Wednesday, December 6, 2006 – 6 to 8 p.m. - Marion
Marion High School Auditorium, 1501 South Carbon Street, Marion

Thursday, December 7, 2006 – 6 to 8 p.m. - Belleville
Gallery Conference Room, St. Clair Regional Office of Education, 500 Wilshire Drive, Belleville

*All State Board of Education meetings listed on the agenda will be accessible to persons with disabilities. Persons planning to attend who need special accommodations should contact the Board office no later than the date prior to the meeting. Contact the Superintendent's office at the State Board of Education, 100 North First Street, Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001. Phone: 217-782-2221 TTY/TDD: 217-782-1900; Fax: 217-785-3972.

State Board