

JUNE 8, 2015

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## Greetings Race to the Top Friends!

As the 2014-2015 school year comes to a close, I wanted to take a moment to acknowledge all the hard work the districts have put into implementing the Race to the Top initiatives. It has not been easy tackling the vast array of reforms in the grant, yet you have been working diligently to close the achievement gap and increase student outcomes. We are extremely proud of the work you are doing, and if there is anything ISBE's Center for Performance can do to assist you, please do not hesitate to contact us.

The Center for Performance just finished sending out the end of school year performance metrics which will be due back to us on June 16, 2015. You should be familiar with this document from completing it in previous year, but if you have any questions or need help, please contact Jacob Thornton at [jathornt@isbe.net](mailto:jathornt@isbe.net).

### Update on accountability and upcoming audits

Note that as we head into the last six months of the grant, the ISBE federal grants will be conducting required monitoring and financial audits of the districts. The Center for Performance staff wants to ensure that all districts understand the need for **two separate expenditure accounts**: one for Race to the Top and one for Race to the Top Induction and Mentoring.

Basically, the two funding sources are separate grants, even though all the monies are coming from the same federal grant.

As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at (217) 785-1969.

### A Message from the Coaches by Barb Preston

Race to the Top has been an exciting grant for Illinois. Thirty-two leading districts received money to implement key reforms inside their districts, improving their schools and student performance. In the past several months, districts have had the opportunity to work with Race to the Top educational coaches. Coaching takes on many different meanings and avenues. Every district is unique in their needs, culture, and climate. Every Race to the Top coach is making sure that their districts are being supported and providing for their needs. Though it might look different from district to district, all Race to the Top coaches are dedicated to assisting

districts toward improvement.

The Mid-Year Progress Report has been a helpful tool. It allows districts to reflect and rate their progress, and it affords valuable data benchmarks for coaches working with Race to the Top districts. Coaches can help navigate through the twists and turns districts face in 2015. PERA, Induction and Mentoring, Assessments, and Sustainability have been a priority for the grant in the new year. Race to the Top coaches can look at the progress report and use it to form questions for team discussions. These questions, hopefully, will help lead to thinking outside of the box and trying new ways of doing business inside classrooms and schools. Coaches can use the report to make suggestions and lead districts to other Race to the Top districts who may have ideas and successes they can share.

Coaches can provide that objective eye. Sometimes districts are so emotionally invested in initiatives that another viewpoint can give a new perspective on the problem areas.

Celebrations are another part of coaching, and celebrating success is a necessary part of improvement. All districts need to stop and revel in the improvements that are happening.

Race to the Top coaches are provided to districts to help and support efforts of the grant. Use them. Together, we can make a difference.

### **Local Assessment Support**

The Local Assessment Support (LAS) project conducted the final assessment literacy workshops in April. The talented educators who participated in all of the LAS workshops developed high-quality classroom assessments in commonly non-tested grades and subject areas.

In addition, the LAS project developed assessment literacy training modules that build educators' capacity to select and develop quality classroom assessments. The modules are hosted on a Moodle platform and provide educators asynchronous online learning opportunities. Workshop materials, example assessments, and modules may be found on the Balanced Assessment webpage:

<http://www.isbe.net/assessment/htmls/balanced-asmt.htm>

The LAS project will continue posting educator created classroom assessments throughout the spring and summer. Please check the Balanced Assessment webpage regularly for updated information and assessment literacy resources.

### **Success Story: Freeport School District 145**

Freeport School District 145 has adopted an innovative approach in order to improve the education of students in their community. They faced these obstacles with an achievement gap and no SIG grant. To do this, they adopted a Personalized

Mastery approach. This approach puts the emphasis on proficiency-based education.

Using traditional education approaches, districts often treat the school year as the constant and learning as the variable. However, in Freeport, they have flipped this approach so that time is the variable and learning is the constant. If students learn at their own pace, they are more likely to pass the grade with a high level of achievement. Proficiency, therefore, becomes the expectation.

In Freeport, students have become partners in their learning, and understand what is expected of their educational progress. Instead of a traditional “one size fits all” attitude, this Personalized Mastery Approach encourages a more successful “one size fits one” approach, where each student is taught in the way that most benefits them.

Freeport also built and maintains an education coalition, where staff, students, parents, and the larger community have been kept frequently engaged in a consistent conversation on how they can improve schooling standards. By combining educational lessons that cater to the learner, along with standards-driven curriculum, a method of personalized mastery has been achieved in Freeport.

### **Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources STEM Learning Exchange: Professional Development for Teachers**

Striving to meet the needs of Agricultural Education students in an ever-changing industry, Illinois Agricultural Education Instructors are taking part in professional development events again this summer to increase content knowledge and student employability skills for the future. Summer opportunities include:

- All-day agricultural mechanics training with Midwest Technical Institute in East Peoria;
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) training with industry leaders from John Deere and production agriculturalists;
- Surveying workshops in conjunction with the Illinois Professional Land Surveyors Association;

Teachers will be able to earn their Commercial Public Pesticide Applicators License from the Illinois Department of Agriculture this summer. Job Interview Workshops will help teachers to prepare students not only for FFA Career Development Events, but also for an upcoming STEM Learning Event hosted by GROWMARK in cooperation with the Illinois Agricultural Leadership Program. All of these workshops are in addition to regional summer workshops, university sponsored workshops and the Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers Conference where teachers will be joined by representatives of the Illinois Principals Association and the Teachers Retirement System while taking part in a portion of the 39 workshops offered.

Professional development doesn't only occur in the summer. This spring, our teachers explored food science with FONA International and Marcoot Jersey

Creamery and the green industry with Hummert International as part of the 212 Conference. Continued training was also provided for our first year teachers through graduate level university courses designed to help retain teachers in the profession.

Over 640 points of contact have been made with teachers who have voluntarily taken part in workshops, conferences, and programs to earn certifications for themselves and their students this past year. Providing well-trained teachers who are up-to-date on industry topics ensures that we are providing the best learning opportunities to our students through quality education.

### **Induction and Mentoring Networking Sessions are being held around the state!**

RTT Districts are taking advantage of the opportunity to attend these free half-day sessions in order to help grow their Induction and Mentoring programs. This is a way to effectively use RTT Induction and Mentoring funds and walk away with resources and artifacts to adapt or use. Those who wish to participate may attend any or all sessions.

Who should attend? Up to two people involved with the district IM program

What will districts take away?

- Opportunities to collaborate with other RTT districts;
- Individual support from induction and mentoring facilitators;
- Materials and support documents that provide immediate access to high quality district program development;

Team collaborate

What did previous district participants have to say?

- “I especially valued the small group time to bounce ideas off of each other and collaborate”
- “Also appreciated: the specific ideas that were shared”

Topics Covered:

- Session #1: Planning Forward: Supporting High-Quality Induction through an Interview and Selection Process
- Session #2: Planning Forward: Creating a Scope and Sequence and Mentor Professional Development Opportunities
- Session #3: Planning Forward: Designing New Teacher Professional Development
- Session #4: Tying it all Together and Sustaining the Program

For questions or to register, email your regional facilitator.

*Center for  
Performance Staff:*

*Julie Evans,  
Supervisor & Race  
to the Top Director*

*Jamey Baiter*

*Anna Bokun*

*Kari Broughton*

*David Hellwig*

*James Stites*

*Jacob Thornton*

*Emma Wilson*

**Face to Face Session Facilitators and Locations:**

**Northeast**

**June 4 online & June 16 Northfield Inn Springfield**

Amy Treadwell, NTC - [atreadwell@newteachercenter.org](mailto:atreadwell@newteachercenter.org)

Matteson IEA Office - 4747 Lincoln Mall Dr. Suite #501

**Northwest**

**June 4 online & June 16 Northfield Inn Springfield**

Mary Francis, INTC - [francis@comcast.net](mailto:francis@comcast.net)

Maria Owens, INTC - [mariaowens@comcast.net](mailto:mariaowens@comcast.net)

Sterling IEA Office - 3307 East Lincolnway Suite #3

**Central**

**June 4 online, June 10 & June 16 Northfield Inn Springfield**

Jodi Bouris, INTC - [jbouris@illinois.edu](mailto:jbouris@illinois.edu)

Jennifer Edmonds, I-KAN ROE - [jedmonds50@gmail.com](mailto:jedmonds50@gmail.com)

Bloomington IEA Office - 304 S. Eldorado Rd. Suite # 3

**South**

**June 4 online & June 16 Northfield Inn Springfield**

Mary Ellen Leonard, INTC - [mleonard@roe9.k12.il.us](mailto:mleonard@roe9.k12.il.us)

Mt. Vernon IEA Office - 1100 S. 41nd St.

**Important Upcoming Dates:**

- Fiscal Year 2016 School Technology Revolving Loan Program (STRLP) application period – June 1 to Dec. 1 ([www.isbe.net/ed-technology/html/revolving\\_loan.htm](http://www.isbe.net/ed-technology/html/revolving_loan.htm))
- Deadline to submit nomination forms for the 2016 Those Who Excel/Illinois Teacher of the Year program – June 8 ([www.isbe.net/those-who-excel/pdfs/those-who-excel-app.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/those-who-excel/pdfs/those-who-excel-app.pdf))
- Part 210 (Illinois Hope and Opportunity Pathways through Education Program), Part 232 (Summer Bridges Program); and Part 240 (Alternative Learning Opportunities Program) – Public comment period ends June 15
- 2015 National Family and Community Engagement Conference – June 22-24 ([www.cvent.com/D/S4QT7N](http://www.cvent.com/D/S4QT7N))
- “Lead ... Focus ... Connect: Every Student College and Career Ready” conference – June 23 ([www.eventbrite.com/e/lead-focus-connect-conference-tickets-15693652136](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/lead-focus-connect-conference-tickets-15693652136))
- Deadline to submit data in the Student Health Data –Vision system - June 30

- Postmark deadline for waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in Fall 2015 – Friday, Aug. 14, 2015 (See <http://www.isbe.net/isbewaivers/default.htm> for public notice requirements for all waiver requests.)
- Deadline to submit fiscal year 2016 School District Budget/Joint Agreement Forms to ISBE – Oct. 30

**We look forward to seeing you all on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June at the All-District Conference!**

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