

MARCH 10, 2015

In this Newsletter:

Introduction/Greeting

PARCC

Success Story

*Illinois Learning
Standards*

"Lessons Learned"

*IL New Teacher
Conference*

Technical Assistance

*Upcoming Events &
Important Dates*

Greetings Race to the Top Friends!

The first round of regional networking meetings just wrapped up in February. For those of you who were not able to attend one of the meetings, this newsletter will provide a brief summary of the topics and issues covered.

We are asking all of the districts to look ahead to the next school year. As some of you may recall, the RttT grant ends on December 22nd, 2015, and we are hoping to gather some success stories and lessons learned during the remainder of the grant. If you have your own RttT success story, please share by emailing Jacob Thornton at jathorn@isbe.net.

To assist in the continuation of programming as the grant concludes, ISBE will offer sustainability training. This training will be provided through the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center at Edvance Research, INC. The first module of the training was offered at the regional networking meetings. To access the first module, click [here](#). Subsequent modules will be offered via webinar and at the RT3 End of Year Conference in June. These resources and more will soon be available through the RttT [website](#), so make sure to add it to your favorites and check it often for important information.

PARCC

To support districts in their PARCC preparations, ISBE will continue to hold regularly scheduled webinars every Tuesday at 1:30pm and Friday at 10:00am. The webinars will cover the most recent updates, although the majority of time will be focused on Q&A from district attendees.

Registration for the Tuesday webinars can be found [here](#) and the next two Friday webinars can be found [here](#) and [here](#). Furthermore, ISBE has created a communication plan to address additional needs including various topics and contact information. You can find this [here](#).

Success Story: Bensenville Elementary School District 2

Bensenville Elementary School District 2, a Race to the Top district, includes 62 percent low-income families and 33 percent of students with limited English proficiency. Having a diverse student body presents its own unique challenges, and Bensenville, like all districts, has been working diligently to improve their educational experience for all students. One of the ways the district has done this is by adopting the Peer Assistant and Review Program (PAR), which, they've found, has gone hand in hand with creating an effective educational environment. Bensenville has utilized communication to successfully implement peer evaluation. They've cultivated a culture of communication by keeping everyone, from the superintendent to consulting teachers to principals, informed and involved to foster

a culture of collaboration for their PAR program. Using a detailed plan that encourages support first and evaluation second has proved fruitful for Bensenville. For further information this topic, click [here](#).



Again, if you have your own success story you'd like to share, please don't hesitate to email Jacob Thornton at jathorn@isbe.net.

The New Illinois Learning Standards

The New Illinois Learning Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy are meant to build upon, not replace, existing standards. The goal is to prepare students to thrive not only in college, but in their careers as well. This involves teaching texts that increase in complexity and thereby providing the student the reading comprehension needed to succeed in their college and career lives. The New Illinois Learning Standards are not an attempt to rid the writing and reading curriculum of narrative, creative work, and fiction texts. Narrative writing is still expected to be in the curriculum; furthermore, literary texts and informational, non-fiction work should be taught with equal emphasis. The standards are also not about prescribing a reading list to schools; in fact, required reading lists are not a part of the standards intentionally. The New Illinois Learning Standards offer only a shared destination; the roadmap used to get there, however, remains up to each district's discretion.

To learn more about The New Illinois Learning Standards, please visit the following:

[Common Core: Myth vs. Fact](#)

[Key Shifts in English Language Arts](#)

[Common Core Professional Learning Series](#)

[Capture the Core Newsletters](#)

http://www.isbe.net/common_core/pdf/ccs_faq.pdf

Lessons Learned

Mid-Year Progress Reports went out in January; we'd like to extend a hearty thank-you for getting the reports completed and returned. The responses you provided give the Center for Performance insight into the achievements, short-comings, and the challenges each districts faces. While reviewing the reports, several quotes expressed the sentiment of the RttT Grant. Graciously, we wanted to share a few of those with you:

"We are proud of our leading in many areas in regards to the RttT initiatives. It has definitely helped us in regards to leverage and energy in ongoing progress. The most important element in all of our work has been a culture of trust with our staff to take some risks, trust one another, and really move forward." – Zion ESD #6

"Matteson SD 162 continues to engage all stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels. The Revised Report Card allows the district administrators and staff to have deeper conversations about how community leaders and organizations can support learning. District administration has regular conversations with municipal and civic leaders about district priorities. The district has hosted several lawmaker

community forum events, for example.” – Matteson SD #162

“The district teachers and administrators have researched what is working and what is not in the adoption of the CCSS standards by reviewing a number of resources from other states. This has been helpful in developing our own aligned curriculum.”
– Matteson SD #162

Race to the Top Districts Attend the Illinois New Teacher Collaborative (INTC) Conference

Thirteen RttT districts attended INTC's 10th Annual Induction and Mentoring (IM) Conference in Springfield the last week in February in order to gain new ideas for their New Teacher IM Programs. The day and a half of informational breakout sessions, powerful networking opportunities, and productive team work time resulted in a positive and beneficial experience for RttT district teams and afforded them the opportunity to begin moving their programs into the next level of implementation. The RttT session on February 25 offered districts the opportunity to share and discuss strengths and areas for growth around the nine IM Program Standards, collaborate in order to maximize resources, and ask questions pertaining to the RttT expectation for Induction and Mentoring. To top it off, several RttT districts attendees won some terrific prizes such as books, free conference registration for next year, and an iPad at the closing luncheon.

INTC will also hold a New Teacher Conference in June and a STEM Conference for new teachers in July. Check their [website](#) for details about these popular conferences.

Technical Assistance for New Teacher Induction and Mentoring – Available Now!

As you know, technical assistance and networking is available through the CEC/NTC/INTC project for RttT districts. TA providers across the state are available to assist you with your program needs. Networking meetings are being planned for this summer. Mentor training, as well as information for Program Leaders, is being discussed as content for these meetings. The first networking meeting is scheduled for June 10 in Bloomington. Other dates and locations are to be determined. Please contact Amy Treadwell at atreadwell@newteachercenter.org for more information or with any suggestions or feedback on these sessions.

Upcoming Dates & Events

- Doug Fisher: Collaborative Conversations and the Speaking and Listening Standards – March 17, 2015 (www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org)
- The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of the Danielson Framework – March 18, 2015 Regional Office of Education #11, 730 7th Street, Charleston (<http://www.iarss.org/>)
- IARSS Connecting Conference-Mar. 19, 2015 Northfield Inn, Springfield (<http://www.iarss.org/>)
- Foundational Services: Academic Vocabulary-One of the Shifts in the New Illinois Learning Standards & Common Core – Mar. 24, 2015 Regional Office of Education #11 730 7th Street, Charleston (<http://www.iarss.org/>)
- Changing School Culture Through the Danielson Framework for Teaching – April

10, 2015 Double Tree Hotel, 1000 Eastport Plaza Dr., Collinsville
(<http://www.ilprincipals.org>)

- Math Foundational Services – Apr. 14, 2015 I-Kane Regional Instructional Center (<http://www.iarss.org/>)
- Local Assessment Support (LAS) workshop – April 15 & 16 – IEA Springfield, IL – Click [here](#) to register
- Matt Copeland: Facilitating Student Discussion with Socratic Circles – April 15, 2015 (www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org)
- Performance Evaluation and Student growth Measurement April 23, 2015 – I-Kan Instructional Center, 50 West Industrial Park Dr., Kankakee (<http://www.iarss.org/>)
- Rising Star Networking Meeting – May 20, 2015 The PROE Center, 10112 W. Dubois Rd., Edwards I-Kan Regional Instructional Center, 50 W. Industrial Park Dr., Kankakee (http://www.iarss.org)
- Race to the Top All District End of Year Conference – June 16th, 2015 Springfield, IL

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