

ISBE'S WEEKLY MESSAGE

February 22, 2023

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Dear Colleagues:

I hope you're joining me in celebrating National FFA Week. If you are, please share your FFA Week celebrations with us by emailing press@isbe.net (mailto:press@isbe.net).


Historically, agricultural education courses have focused on farming. The FFA acronym originally stood for Future Farmers of America, but the national organization changed its official business name to "National FFA Organization" in 1989. This change, led by student members, reflects the growing number of career paths in agriculture, in addition to farming, while retaining the organization's history and identity.

FFA is a Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO), and today's teachers offer a wide variety of expertise to prepare students for careers in animal and plant sciences, food processing and marketing, agricultural business,

environmental sciences, mechanics, and much more. That's in part thanks to a governor-appointed advisory group – the Illinois Committee for Agricultural Education – which has focused on expanding curricular resources.

Most recently, ISBE released a solicitation for new resources to be developed in "Urban and Community Agriculture" focused on sustainability, food and nutrition access, and urban growing practices. These resources open the door for new communities to start programs. For example, District 214's Rolling Meadows High School in the northwest suburbs of Chicago started an agricultural education program that included establishing a local chapter of the FFA in 2019.

Schools offering Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (AFNR) programs received \$7 million (up from \$5 million in 2021) in grant-funded resources and support from ISBE in 2022. This increase in funding mirrors the growing number of Illinois schools offering AFNR and the rising number of AFNR teachers. The ever-widening scope of career opportunities in agriculture and related industries has driven this evolution.

Please reach out to the Local Program Support  (<https://ilaged.org/docs/FCAE%20Map/Ag%20Ed%20StateStaffMap%20Aug2022.pdf>) project, an ISBE grant-funded initiative to facilitate and coordinate agricultural education and related programs through field support staff located in every region of the state, if you are interested in starting an agricultural education program in your school or community. These program advisers help direct funding to schools for equipment, supplies, and teachers' extended time, and support the continued growth and improvement of AFNR programs.

We are proud to partner with all CTSOs, including Illinois Association FFA, to help students achieve their dreams. Student members – whether they aspire to farm or not – reap the benefits of broadening their career skills while growing both personally and professionally, and we reap the benefits of the better world they create.

Before I sign off, I'd like to thank all of you for allowing me to serve you these past three weeks as your interim state superintendent of education. Thank you to my wife, Erin, for allowing me the time and space to successfully serve in this role. It has been the honor of a lifetime! I will resume my position as deputy superintendent of operational instruction, and I look forward to continuing to serve Illinois' students and families alongside you. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Tony Sanders as our new state superintendent of education starting tomorrow.

Pictured: Adam Loker, 2021-22 State FFA President, observes as a High School District 214 student signs their official FFA chapter charter. Members who sign the charter mark their place in history as the first original members of their local chapter.

Sincerely,

Krish

DATES AND DEADLINES

Please note this is not a complete list of events, meetings, and deadlines. For more events and details, visit the ISBE Calendar page (<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/ISBE-Meetings.aspx>).

Feb. 18-25	National FFA Week
Feb. 20	ISBE offices closed
Feb. 23	School Partnership Webinar Series: Program Assessment and Evaluation (https://metrofamily.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMtf-2prjksGN0FISGtrA4mGVmRGYzEQ0cB)
Feb. 28	Deadline to apply for the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy CLASS Prize (https://www.herox.com/energy-class)
Mar. 1	Deadline to report the intent to move from half-day to full-day kindergarten instruction to sff@isbe.net (mailto:sff@isbe.net)
Mar. 6	Educators Rising State Conference (https://web.cvent.com/event/532b97c4-490d-40c3-9640-5ef359452b5c)
Mar. 6	Deadline to apply for the Federal Emergency Management Agency Youth Preparedness Council (https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/individuals-communities/youth-preparedness-council)
Mar. 8	Illinois Education and Career Success Network's 10th Annual Conference: Accelerating Equitable Success (https://ilsuccessnetwork.org/2023-conference/)
Mar. 13	Deadline to submit applications for the FY 2024 Refugee Services Notice of Funding Opportunity (https://juf-grants.smapply.org/prog/fy24_illinois_refugee_social_services_application/)
Mar. 13-17	Illinois Arts Education Week
Mar. 14-15	Ready, STEM, Go! - Virtual STEM Conference (https://www.readystemgoconference.com/)

Mar. 15	ISBE Board meeting
Mar. 17	ESSER Recipient Data Collection – Local Education Agency and Other Entities reports due
Mar. 22	Deadline to enter the National Center for State Courts Annual Civics Education Essay Contest (https://www.ncsc.org/education-and-careers/civics-education/contest)
Mar. 31	SY 2022-23 5Essentials/School Climate Survey administration window closes
Mar. 31	Illinois Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference (https://www.illinoiscss.net/2023-spring-conference.html)
Apr. 19	ISBE Board meeting
Apr. 20	Illinois Postsecondary and Career Expectations Symposium (https://www.isac.org/pace/Illinois-PaCE-Symposium/index)
Apr. 21	Deadline to submit full application for the U.S. Department of Energy’s Renew America’s Schools grant program (https://eere-exchange.energy.gov/Default.aspx#FoalId06985843-f32c-494e-880a-cb5db6d787a4)
Apr. 29	2023 Those Who Excel & Teacher of the Year Awards Banquet
Jun. 13-15	Illinois New Teacher Collaborative 2023 Summer Conference Series (https://emails.illinois.edu/newsletter/37/1612142237.html)

NEW

LEARNING RENEWAL

Each week this section will focus on the learning renewal that is taking place in Illinois schools. We invite you to share (<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=hv5kA8ZJ9Eq1LDNameV30Uf4KgH87ICv6FRRQI8cvIUNTdHWktDS1NJWjJZVDFaQ09RVINCUVdMRi4u>) how you are investing federal relief funds to help students recover.

AREA 1 SEL HUB: HELPING SCHOOLS DEVELOP SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

School leaders and educators are increasingly looking for more effective and positive approaches to discipline. Illinois’ seven Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Hubs are stepping in to help. The hubs are providing professional development to schools in their regions on wide-ranging topics related to social-emotional development. In January, the Area 1 SEL Hub (<https://www.dupageroe.org/professional-development/social-emotional-learning-sel>) in northeastern Illinois brought in speaker Nathan Maynard to talk about restorative and positive discipline practices that help to foster a sense of belonging and safety for students. Maynard provides tactics educators can use to keep “small situations small” and avoid ineffective fear- or shame-based approaches.

The hub covers over 1,700 schools, making it the largest of the seven SEL Hubs. With such a large and diverse area to cover, the hub has dedicated SEL staff in nine regional offices working to meet the needs of schools in their area.

The hub is using coaching and professional development to help move schools from addressing things on a day-to-day basis and putting out fires to developing long-term, sustainable plans to create supportive environments. “We try to approach districts by asking, ‘How can we help with your SEL goals?’ and, if they don’t have existing goals, ‘How can we help you create them?’” said SEL Hub Director Maureen McAbee.

Schools have a helping hand as they continue to navigate the social-emotional needs of students and staff in the wake of the pandemic through seven regional SEL Hubs (<http://isbe.net/selhubs>). Learn more about the Area 1 Hub here (<https://www.dupageroe.org/professional-development/social-emotional-learning-sel>).

NEW

ILLINOIS TEACHER OF THE YEAR

ISBE ANNOUNCES 2023 ILLINOIS TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

ISBE has announced the 2023 finalists for Illinois Teacher of the Year, as well as the 2023 Outstanding Early Career Educator. The annual Teacher of the Year program honors incredible classroom educators who have made lasting impacts on the students, families, and fellow educators in their school communities. ISBE will showcase several finalists in the Weekly Message each week leading up to the announcement of the 2023 Illinois Teacher of the Year. Congratulations to all this year’s extraordinary awardees!

AMBER JIRSA



***North Suburbs Regional Teacher of the Year
Batavia High School, Batavia PSD 101***

At Batavia High School, English teacher Amber Jirsa has a unique way of introducing herself on the first day of class. "I was born in Mississippi in a [Ford] Pinto on the way to the hospital on Leap Day. I am technically 9 years old."

Yet, as amazing as that story is, former student Adam Kennedy submitted one that’s even more incredible. Here’s an excerpt:

"I had never been good at English, so by my junior year, when I had Mrs. Jirsa, I figured I never would be. But she never gave up on teaching me. More importantly, I could always tell how much she cared about us. Over time, I started to espouse her love for the subject. By the end of the class, I was writing papers that made me proud, and reading books in my free time, which I had never done before. I still talk about the essays I wrote and the books that I read in her class."

Kennedy is now ranked at the top of his class in the U.S. Naval Academy. He is hoping to pursue a master’s degree in education “largely because of Mrs. Jirsa,” who was the first Black teacher Kennedy ever had.

Mrs. Jirsa is also the co-founder and sponsor of the Equity & Justice Club and co-sponsor of the Student Council. Her goal is to help students find their voice, understand the significant impact it can have, and use it to create change.

RICARDO KING JR.



***2023 Bilingual Teacher of the Year
Normal Community High School, McLean County Unit School District 5***

A high school teacher who believed in him inspired Ricardo King Jr. to enter the profession. He is an ESL teacher at Normal Community High School in McLean County Unit School District 5 who assisted in the creation of the Hispanic Heritage Club and the South Asian Performing Arts Club and co-sponsors the Music Technology Club and Mock Trial team. He developed creative strategies to engage English learner (EL) families, and his efforts resulted in more EL family participation in parent-

teacher conferences in 2022 than in the two previous years combined. He also led an initiative to place incoming ELs in Level 3 high school home-language courses to position them for Advanced Placement courses as upperclassmen. Mr. King promotes inclusive, responsive curricula via his district's ESL Course Selection Task Force.

"I wanted to not only be a teacher of content, but also be a teacher of cultural power," he says. "Equity is my educational philosophy."

NICOLE MCCORMICK



Special Education Teacher of the Year
Forest View Educational Center, Township High School District 214

Since 2010, Nicole McCormick has taught students ages 18-22 whose special needs could severely limit their future independence. To help prepare these young adults for life beyond the supportive school system, she helped develop a Life Transition Program at Forest View Educational Center in Township High School District 214. In the 2022-23 school year, her role expanded from teaching the daily course to leading a new construction project to enhance work-based learning.

"Some of my students do not have the voice to tell others how they learn best," Nicole says. "It's my role as an educator to discover each student's strengths and areas of need to accurately advocate for the student's future post-secondary goals as well as to help them take the steps necessary to achieve their goals."

She has also hosted several student teachers, and acted as assigned mentor to the newest teachers in her area.

2022 ILLINOIS TEACHER OF THE YEAR IN THE NEWS

Kim Radostits, our current Teacher of the Year, is featured in the latest edition of Education Week, explaining the program she helped build at Oregon High School in Oregon, Illinois, called Hawks Take Flight. The program provides mentoring to keep freshmen on-track for graduation. "Many of those students didn't really need homework help," said Radostits, who is now a finalist for the national award. "What they needed was just an adult who believed in them." You can read the full story here (<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/how-one-schools-mentorship-program-paid-off-big-in-academic-gains/2023/02>).

NEW

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Throughout Black History Month, ISBE will feature guest posts from Black educators who are leading the Illinois Affinity Groups (<https://teachplus.org/illinois-affinity-groups/>). They will share strategies for celebrating Black History Month with your students, ways to support Black educators, and what it means to be a Black educator in schools today.

BRANDON CARR ([HTTPS://TEACHPLUS.ORG/TEACHER/CARR-BRANDON/](https://teachplus.org/teacher/carr-brandon/)) - LEAD PE AND HEALTH TEACHER - CHARLES SUMNER MATH AND SCIENCE COMMUNITY ACADEMY

Black History is the true history of this country. Every year during the month of February we take the opportunity to go deeper into the exploration of this true history. Many times history is whitewashed and watered down to hide the many great and powerful contributions people of African descent have made in this country. Even though it is 2023, we can still feel the effects of slavery. That trauma wears on the mind, body, and soul. Educators of color have to navigate their own emotions and depth of knowledge on the matter while trying to enlighten their students without ruffling feathers. This can be triggering and make it hard to show up to work and be your authentic self -- especially if you are the only person of color or part of a very small population of the workplace. Self-care and knowledge act as catalysts to become more self-aware and take pride in celebrating this month.

List of self-care activities:

- Moisturize 100% of your skin before bed.
 - Your skin is your largest organ. Take care of it, and it will take care of you.
- Drink water.
- Practice yoga and meditation.
- Go for a walk.
- Watch a documentary that will teach you more about different Black experiences.
- Read literature that speaks to our stories.
- Hug your family or loved ones.
 - Not the “church hug.” I’m talking about a warm embrace with a slight sway.
- Journal your thoughts and feelings daily.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH RESOURCES

The Black History Month/Community Outreach Committee for Big Hollow School District 38’s elementary and primary schools plan activities for students throughout the school year. If you’re looking for new ideas to implement Black History Month into your lesson plans, check out its February agenda, which focuses instruction and learning on The Impact Prominent African Americans have on Society Today (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aOXAHVWnLHbTiiVQEcrRW39pW6-iJT48QyLShchuk_-U/edit).

NEW

ILLINOIS STUDENT ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

PACE FRAMEWORK FEEDBACK NEEDED

Per Public Act 102-0917 (<https://ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=102-0917>), the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), in collaboration with ISBE, Illinois Board of Higher Education, and Illinois Community College Board, is to revise the Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) framework for Grades 6-8. The proposed revised PaCE Framework can be found on our website (</Pages/College-and-Career.aspx>). Please provide your feedback regarding the revised PaCE Framework by filling out the feedback form (<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=hv5kA8ZJ9Eq1LDNameV30T2yZON1wqNHh3zWoNc65K5UMDAzUkdYT0haSE5RTkITMkk3R0tOUVhRMC4u>) by **March 21**.

PACE SYMPOSIUM

In addition to online offerings, mark your calendar for ISAC’s second annual PaCE Symposium taking place **in person** on **Thursday, April 20**, in Springfield. The PaCE Symposium brings together professionals from across Illinois to share and learn about how schools and districts are collaborating and advancing postsecondary and career readiness efforts through the Illinois PaCE Framework. To learn more about the event, visit the Illinois PaCE Symposium page (<https://www.isac.org/pace/Illinois-PaCE-Symposium/index.html>).

Questions? Contact 847-831-8634 or isac.initiatives@illinois.gov (<mailto:isac.initiatives@illinois.gov>).

STAY CURRENT ON FINANCIAL AID TOPICS FOR YOUR STUDENTS WITH FREE PD

ISAC offers comprehensive professional development webinars for school staff to assist you in helping students with the financial aid process and staying current on state and federal programs. All sessions are offered at **no cost**, but registration (<https://www.isac.org/pd/webinars.html>) is required. Continuing education credits and professional development hours are offered to participants. For more information about upcoming webinars, visit the ISAC website (<https://www.isac.org/pd/webinars.html>).

SAFE & HEALTHY CLIMATE

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY SUBMISSION

As per 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7, each school district; charter school; and nonpublic, nonsectarian elementary or secondary school shall create, maintain, and implement a policy on bullying, which must be filed with ISBE. Furthermore, entities must conduct a review and reevaluation of the policy every two years. If an entity fails to file a policy on bullying within 14 days of receipt of a written request to file such a policy, ISBE shall publish notice of the noncompliance on the agency website. The list of noncompliant entities can be found on the Bullying Prevention webpage (/Pages/Bullying-Prevention.aspx). The list, which is updated weekly, includes any entity that is currently not in compliance with this mandate. If you have questions about this mandate or you are in need of technical assistance, please contact bullyingpolicy@isbe.net (mailto:bullyingpolicy@isbe.net).

HELP ENSURE YOUR FAMILIES DON'T LOSE THEIR HEALTH INSURANCE

Congress made changes to Medicaid to help people and states deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. One change gave states extra federal funding to keep customers enrolled, even if they might no longer be eligible. This "continuous coverage" made sure customers would not lose coverage during the pandemic unless they moved out of state, requested cancellation, or passed away.

As a result of continuous coverage, Medicaid customers have not been asked to update their information for three years. Now, Congress has set an end to continuous coverage.

To help as many people as possible keep their Medicaid coverage, the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services needs updated addresses to send people their renewal forms.

Please help us share this critical information with your families and communities by utilizing this messaging toolkit (<https://www2.illinois.gov/hfs/Pages/AddressUpdateMessagingToolkit.aspx>).

CTE & INNOVATION

NATIONAL FFA WEEK 2023: FEB. 18-25

Schools from Chicago to Carbondale are celebrating National FFA Week (<https://www.ffa.org/national-ffa-week/>). It's a time to share what FFA is and the impact it has on members every day. FFA is a Career and Technical Student Organization for students enrolled in agricultural education courses. Students will celebrate in many ways, including community service programs, school activities, theme-days, and other public-awareness events. What better way to show your support of FFA than to get involved in FFA Week? Whether it's in person, on the phone, or via social media, be sure to share your FFA stories during #FFAweek and tag @ISBEnews on Twitter so we can share!

FINANCE

HALF-DAY TO FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN CONVERSION SY 2023-24

Any school district that wishes to convert from half-day to full-day kindergarten for the 2023-24 school year must provide ISBE with a board resolution expressing the intent to make the change, as well as the minutes from the meeting when the resolution was approved. School district staff are asked to submit these documents to sff@isbe.net (mailto:sff@isbe.net) by **March 1**. Please contact sff@isbe.net (mailto:sff@isbe.net) or

MULTILINGUAL

REFUGEE SERVICES GRANT OPPORTUNITY FOR DISTRICTS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The Jewish Federation, in partnership with the state of Illinois, released the FY 2024 Refugee Services Notice of Funding Opportunity (https://juf-grants.smapply.org/prog/fy24_illinois_refugee_social_services_application/) (NOFO) to provide services to refugee youth from birth through high school graduation in order to promote academic performance and successful integration for children who are eligible for Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) services. And for the first time, services are being expanded to ORR-eligible children ages birth-5 to ensure this population is prepared to succeed in formal schooling.

This is an open, competitive bidding process that seeks a broad range of applicants to deliver services to qualifying populations across Illinois. A recording of the optional bidder’s conference held Feb. 13 will be made available.

Applications are due no later than **3 p.m. Monday, March 13.**

Questions should be submitted to Alison Bell at alisonbell@juf.org (<mailto:alisonbell@juf.org>) or Marc Adelman at marcadelman@juf.org (<mailto:marcadelman@juf.org>).

TEACHING & LEARNING

SENATE RESOLUTION 774 UPDATE

Senate Resolution 774 (<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/fulltext.asp?DocName=&SessionId=110&GA=102&DocTypeID=SR&DocNum=774&GAID=16&LegID=138641&SpecSess=&Session=>) passed in the spring 2022 legislative session. The resolution requests that the Performance Evaluation Advisory Committee (PEAC) initiate and complete a research study to examine the implementation of teacher evaluation in Illinois. Specifically, the study will gather feedback on teacher evaluation systems and structures from stakeholders in Illinois and review best practices from other states. Findings from the study will inform a set of policy recommendations that would address any identified challenges while preserving the core benefits of the current evaluation system. This evaluation constitutes the first statewide look at how districts in Illinois implemented the Performance Evaluation Reform Act enacted in 2010 and how the pandemic impacted approaches to teacher evaluation.

ISBE released a Request for Sealed Proposals in summer 2022. Applicants were required to provide evidence of successfully:

- Carrying out statewide evaluations,
- Developing questions with stakeholders,
- Suggesting a methodological approach,
- Showing ability to securely handle data,
- Presenting research to a variety of audiences, as well as
- Sufficient staff capacity and expertise to complete the research and produce the interim and final reports.

The successful applicant from this competitive procurement is American Institutes for Research (AIR). AIR will facilitate conversations with PEAC over the next two months to clarify and finalize the research questions. In May, ISBE will submit the interim report to the General Assembly, including the finalized research questions and data collection approaches. ISBE will submit the final report to the General Assembly no later than **June 30, 2024.**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Ed Leaders Network

Ed Leaders Network is offering the following live webinar. Visit the Ed Leaders course library (<https://edleadersnetwork.org/courses/>) to view the entire selection available.

- **3 p.m. April 4:** Afterschool: A Key Strategy for Spending ESSER (https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_98721XiISMmL2Sg-rgxwUA) – Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an unprecedented amount of support for after-school and out-of-school time (OST) presented by the federal government. This presentation was developed in an effort to inform local education agencies and affected parties of the availability Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding, as well as provide guidance on how to use funding sustainably, particularly through partnering with local community-based organizations. During this training, participants will explore the benefits of OST programming for youth and caretakers, barriers to engaging in OST programming, and how to utilize ESSER dollars to develop solutions and mitigate barriers. Finally, participants will be provided with peer examples of successful program implementation and additional resources to guide efforts.

Ready, STEM, Go! - Virtual STEM Conference

A national alliance of after-school networks (Vermont, Nebraska, Ohio, North Dakota, Montana, Colorado, and Illinois) are partnering to host a **no-cost**, two-day virtual conference **March 14-15** to shine a spotlight on resources, strategies, and inspiration to boost out-of-school time STEM programming. Sessions will elevate resources available through the Million Girls Moonshot Initiative and unique STEM program models, and provide actionable steps for OST professionals to:

- Introduce high quality curriculum options that challenge youth to problem solve with curiosity and creativity.
- Increase equity in STEM programming.
- Implement facilitation methods to promote an engineering mindset and positive STEM identity in youth.

The “Ready, STEM, Go! (<https://www.readystemgoconference.com/>)” virtual conference will provide opportunities to network with peers from across the country, engage with speakers committed to supporting others in designing enriching STEM activities beyond the classroom, and ignite excitement to help youth explore STEM and all the ways it can inspire and set their lives up for success.

Illinois Council for the Social Studies Spring Conference

Join the Illinois Council for the Social Studies for its in-person conference at Eastern Illinois University! Teachers, administrators, and curriculum specialists are invited to the Illinois Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference (<https://www.illinoiscss.net/2023-spring-conference.html>) on **Friday, March 31**, at Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois. With the theme of “Social Studies in Today’s Landscape,” sessions focus on implementation of the TEAACH Act, inquiry-based approaches to social studies, navigating controversial topics in the classroom, religious literacy in the classroom, and more.

SCHOOL RECOGNITION

Turnip the Beat Award

Congratulations to Springfield School District 186 for being the only Illinois district to receive the Turnip the Beat Award (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/turnip-the-beet>) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. The award recognizes sponsors within the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option that went above and

beyond program requirements to serve high-quality meals to children during summer 2022.

Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Grants

The U.S. Department of Education recently announced awards of more than \$188 million across 170 grantees in over 30 states to increase access to school-based mental health services and to strengthen the pipeline of mental health professionals in high-needs districts.

Congratulations to the Illinois recipients who received funding from the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (<https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-announces-more-188-million-bipartisan-safer-communities-act-support-mental-health-and-student-wellness>):

- Board of Education City of Chicago
- Skokie School District 69
- Crystal Lake Community Consolidated School District #47
- Cook County School District 130
- Region 06 West Cook ISC 2
- La Moille Community Unit School District #303

EDUCATOR OPPORTUNITIES

Teach Plus Fellowships

Teach Plus is excited to share **four highly selective leadership opportunities** (<https://teachplus.org/il/>) for outstanding teachers looking to expand their influence without leaving the classroom, all of which are now accepting applications for next school year. All of these programs span the 2023-24 school year and offer selected teachers a generous stipend for their time and work.

- Chicago Change Agent Fellowship (https://teachplus.org/regional_programs/instructional-leadership-programs-illinois/)
- K-12 Teaching Policy Fellowship (https://teachplus.org/regional_programs/policy-fellowship-illinois/)
- Early Childhood Educator Policy Fellowship (https://teachplus.org/regional_programs/illinois-early-childhood-educator-policy-fellowship/)
- Affinity Group Facilitator Fellowship (https://teachplus.org/regional_programs/illinois-affinity-group-facilitators/)

For more information, please contact Kimberly Nguyen at knguyen@teachplus.org.

NEW STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

FEMA Seeks Leaders for Youth Preparedness Council

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is accepting applications for the Youth Preparedness Council, a program that brings teens together from across the nation who are interested and engaged in community preparedness. Council members are selected based on their dedication to public service, their efforts in making a difference in their communities, and their potential to expand their impact as national leaders for emergency preparedness. Students in Grades 8-11 are eligible to apply.

Council members will collaborate virtually with each other during their one-year term to develop projects that promote preparedness on a local and national scale. Members will also attend the council summit in July and engage with top leaders within FEMA, the federal government, and national nonprofit organizations.

Youths interested in applying to the council must submit a completed application form and provide two letters of recommendation. All applications and supporting materials must be submitted no later than **1:59 a.m. March 6**. Visit the FEMA website (<https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/individuals-communities/youth-preparedness-council>) to access the application materials, read about the current council members, and find more information about the Youth Preparedness Council. New council members will be announced in June.

National Center for State Courts Annual Civics Education Essay Contest

Each year, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) invites elementary, middle, and high school students from around the country to enter our civics education essay contest. The contest is designed to promote civics education and deepen students' understanding of U.S. government.

This year's contest will open on **Wednesday, February 22**. Visit [ncsc.org/contest](https://www.ncsc.org/education-and-careers/civics-education/contest) (<https://www.ncsc.org/education-and-careers/civics-education/contest>) to discover this year's essay questions/prompts, entry guidelines, promotional materials and more. Essays will be accepted online through **11 p.m. Wednesday, March 22**. Winners will be announced on May 1.

Please contact Molly Justice (<mailto:mjustice@ncsc.org>) for additional information.