

March 5, 2024

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Dear Colleagues:

If your 12th grade students haven't completed their 2024-25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), they should do so now. The application system had some down time after it launched around the winter holidays due to the U.S. Department of Education's transition from the traditional FAFSA form to a more streamlined Better FAFSA (<https://www.ed.gov/Better-FAFSA>). The application system now is widely available. This newer version has fewer questions, so the application form takes less time to complete.

As you know, the FAFSA is the form students and families need to file in order to apply for most forms of postsecondary student aid – federal grants, work-study programs, private scholarships, loans, and even financial aid for trade schools. It's the master key that unlocks the door to virtually every opportunity for monetary support. The Better FAFSA not only makes the application process easier; it's also based on a funding formula that will ensure approximately 665,000 more students receive a federal Pell Grant than before, and 1.7 million more students will receive the maximum Pell Grant.

Fortunately, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) offers free assistance statewide to help students and families complete the FAFSA — through free workshops in high schools and the community or one-on-one. School administrators and counselors should check out ISAC's handy "What You Need to Know (<https://www.isac.org/pd/fafsa-simplification#:~:text=The%202024-25%20Free%20Application%20apply%20for%20federal%20financial%20aid.>)" page. Your students can visit the ISACorps webpage to find their local ISACorps member (a near-peer helper) and a list of community events. Because of some technical and other issues with the 2024-25 FAFSA, ISAC will not receive FAFSA data in order to calculate your school's completion rate until later this month. You can check ISAC's FAFSA Completion Initiative webpage (<https://www.isac.org/home/fafsa/index.html>) for updates.

A few technical glitches remain, especially for students whose parents don't have Social Security numbers. Until this glitch is resolved, the U.S. Department of Education has released guidelines for a workaround (<https://studentaid.gov/announcements-events/fafsa-support/contributor-social-security-number>) to be used **only** if the student must have a FAFSA filed to meet a critical deadline.

In Illinois, completing the FAFSA is a requirement for high school graduation – but should never be a reason why a student does not graduate. (If a student cannot complete the FAFSA or Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid (<https://www.isac.org/Alternative-Application>), a Nonparticipation Form (<https://www.isac.org/home/fafsa/media/Non-Participation-Form.pdf?v2>) is available to satisfy the graduation requirement.) At its heart, the requirement is meant to open the eyes of students and families who may assume higher education or trade school is financially impossible. We want to give every student the opportunity to achieve their dreams.

Lastly, as we embark on Women's History Month, I want to thank my friend Goldie Hawn for joining me Monday for the second installation of my fireside chat series. I also want to thank everyone who joined us for an inspiring and informative chat about mental health and the small, research-based steps we can take every day (like 3-minute brain breaks) to strengthen our resiliency. If you want to learn more about Goldie's science-backed mental fitness curriculum, check out MindUp.org (<https://mindup.org/>).

Pictured: Yesterday, State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tony Sanders hosted a Fireside Chat with actress Goldie Hawn. Tony and Goldie discussed mental health and resiliency in Illinois schools for students, teachers, and other school personnel. "We are shaping mind and hearts, we're not just shaping academia," Goldie shared.

All my best,

Tony

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>).

Mar. 3-9	School Social Work Week (https://www.sswaa.org/school-social-work-week)
Mar. 4-8	National School Breakfast Week
Mar. 4-8	National SEL Week
Mar. 5	ACCESS testing ends (https://www.isbe.net/Pages/AccessforELL.aspx)
Mar. 6	McKinney-Vento Homelessness Liaison Conference
Mar. 6	Discipline Dialogues Webinar Series: Being Better to Make Our Schools Better (https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/2385635004034930013)
Mar. 6	Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Office Hours
Mar. 8	International SEL Day
Mar. 9	Illinois Resource Center Job Fair for ESL, Bilingual, & Dual Language Teachers, Aides, & Administrators (https://irc.thecenterweb.org/events/irc-job-fair)
Mar. 11-15	42nd annual Illinois Arts Education Week (https://www.isbe.net/artcontest)
Mar. 13	Webinar: Out-of-School Time After ESSER: Blending and Braiding Funding (https://actnowillinois-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0sdO6gqD0tGtAXrt3afSM4wcdLBJ5IQB8G#/registration)
Mar. 14-15	2024 WELL Summit (https://ilprincipals.org/well-summit/)
Mar. 14	Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Office Hours
Mar. 15	Deadline to submit nominations for the INSPIRA Distinguished Service Celebration (https://www.inspra.org/dsc)
Mar. 15	Deadline to apply for the 2024 NLGA Lt. Governors' STEM Scholarship Program (https://nlga.us/strategies/nlga-state-strategies-in-stem/nlga-lt-governors-stem-

scholarship-program/)

Mar. 19	Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Office Hours
Mar. 22	Deadline to enter the 2024 National Center for State Courts essay contest (https://www.ncsc.org/education-and-careers/civics/contest)
Mar. 22	Deadline to register for free suicide prevention training from Illinois Department of Public Health: Question, Persuade, Refer (https://www.echo-chicago.org/resources/qpr/)
Mar. 22	Deadline to register for free suicide prevention training from Illinois Department of Public Health: Assessing and Measuring Suicide Risk Training (https://redcap.uchicago.edu/surveys/?s=4AME4DPD4W8N37JT)
Mar. 27	Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Office Hours
Mar. 29	Deadline to apply for NBCT incentive grant (https://nbc.illinoisstate.edu/4k-incentive/)
Mar. 29	2023-24 5Essentials Survey administration window closes (https://www.isbe.net/Pages/5Essentials-Survey.aspx)
Apr. 5	Deadline to apply for the FY 2025 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Stronger Connections Grant (https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Stronger-Connections-Grant.aspx)
Apr. 13	Argonne National Laboratory's Middle School Electric Car Competition (https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDOEANL/bulletins/388d532)
Apr. 22-23	2024 Illinois Association of Title I Directors Conference (https://www.eventbrite.com/e/iatd-spring-2024-conference-tickets-781622091717?aff=oddtcreator)
Apr. 30	Deadline to apply for School Food System Transformation Challenge Grants (https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/hmi/school-food-system-transformation-challenge)
May 18	Those Who Excel & Teacher of the Year Awards Banquet
May 31	Deadline to apply for the High-Quality CTE for all Students Summer 2024 Cohort (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfkZw0fQlbXlcLo0-f0txG168zfBJ8pifdm_3R2FBZg LZBtUg/viewform)
June 15	Deadline to submit nominations for School Social Worker of the Year and Citizen of the Year
June 18	ISBE Career Connections Conference (https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Career-Connections-Conference.aspx)
July 8-12	Computer Science PD Week (https://www.ltcillinois.org/cspdweek/)
Sep. 30	ARP ESSER III Grant Programs End

NEW

LEADERSHIP

FIRESIDE CHAT WITH DR. SANDERS AND GOLDIE HAWN

Did you miss State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tony Sanders' Fireside Chat with Academy Award-winning actress, producer, director, best-selling author, and founder of MindUp (<https://mindup.org/>), Goldie Hawn? No worries. We recorded it for you! Head over to our YouTube channel 📺 (<https://youtu.be/7lr0cqzzFbw>) to watch their in-depth conversation about mental health and resiliency.

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=hv5kA8ZJ9Eq1LDNameV30Ufi4KgH87ICv6FRRQl8cvlUNTdHWktDS1NJWjJZVDFaQ09RVINCUVdMRI4u>) how you

are investing federal relief funds to help students recover.

JOIN US IN CELEBRATING #SELWEEK2024

ISBE is proud to partner with Illinois's Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Hubs to celebrate #SELWeek2024! National SEL Week, **March 4-8**, is a call to rally for online communities to unite and showcase the transformative power of SEL, culminating with International SEL Day on March 8.

We are excited to spotlight a diverse array of curated resources, carefully selected by our dedicated SEL directors and coaches, throughout #SELWeek2024. These resources – from inclusive welcome activities to trauma-informed toolkits – are designed to empower educators, parents, and students in fostering emotional intelligence, resilience, and well-being.

We invite you to actively participate in SEL Week by exploring these resources, sharing them with your networks, and integrating them into your daily practices.

Join the conversation on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/IllinoisStateBoardofEducation/>) or Twitter (<https://twitter.com/ISBEnews>) this week to discover inspiring resources for social-emotional learning. To learn more about the Social-Emotional Learning Hubs, visit the ISBE website ([/selhubs](https://selhubs.org)).

SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING: DEADLINE EXTENDED, NEW OPTION FOR BULK REGISTRATIONS

The registration deadline for the Illinois Department of Public Health's free suicide prevention training courses designed specifically for educators has been extended to **March 22** to offer additional opportunities for educators and school personnel to participate. Additionally, district leaders can opt for bulk registration, streamlining the process for districtwide participation.

Two courses are offered:

- Question, Persuade, Refer Training (<https://www.echo-chicago.org/resources/qpr/>), a one-credit hour course, is open to all school personnel.
- Assessing and Measuring Suicide Risk Training (<https://redcap.uchicago.edu/surveys/?s=4AME4DPD4W8N37JT>), a 6.5-credit hour course, is targeted at school support personnel, including school social workers, counselors, psychologists, and nurses.

Districts or schools interested in bulk registration may contact klee64@bsd.uchicago.edu (<mailto:klee64@bsd.uchicago.edu>). For all other questions, contact DPH.Safety@illinois.gov (<mailto:DPH.Safety@illinois.gov>).

NEW

2024 ILLINOIS TEACHER OF THE YEAR COHORT

ISBE has announced (</Lists/News/NewsDisplay.aspx?ID=1486>) the members of the 2024 Illinois Teacher of the Year Cohort, including the 13 finalists for 2024 Illinois State Teacher of the Year (</teacheroftheyear>). 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 cohort members in the Weekly Message each week leading up to the announcement of the 2024 Illinois State Teacher of the Year this spring. Congratulations to all this year's extraordinary awardees!

JACQUELINE SAN DIEGO



Special Education Teacher of the Year

Intrinsic Charter High School, *Chicago Public Schools*

Jacqueline San Diego is a dedicated high school special education teacher at Intrinsic Schools in Chicago's Hermosa neighborhood. Her teaching journey commenced with Teach for America, aiming to give back to her hometown. Ms. San Diego teaches world history and math to diverse learners, embodying Intrinsic's EPIC values – Empathy, Perseverance, Identity, and Curiosity. She grew up in a working-class immigrant household with roots in Poland and the Philippines, also learning the importance of these values from her parents.

In her six years at Intrinsic, she has taught various subjects spanning seventh to 12th grades, fostering independence and confidence in her students. Her mission goes beyond traditional teaching; she empowers her students to develop independence, self-confidence, and strong interpersonal skills. Her "LIFE" project enables her students to express themselves creatively, plan for their future, budget, and network -- all equipping them with essential life skills and connecting them with professionals in various fields.

Currently a fellow of Teach for America's Leaders of Color for Systems Change Fellowship, she's driven by a deep commitment to social justice. Ms. San Diego's warm and demanding leadership creates a brave and safe space, inspiring confidence and a shared passion for change.

Her infectious enthusiasm extends beyond the classroom, as she's always prepared for an impromptu dance party, spreading joy and energy in her classroom. A lifelong learner, Ms. San Diego draws her inspiration from her students and humbly acknowledges them as her most profound teachers.

NEW

COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

2024 SUMMER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CALENDAR






The calendar provides an overview of professional learning events (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wN2RIHUcq-Ei4yglxT4KBKEdnvPkva46AMRc8ZniOAQ/edit>) being offered this summer. Additional learning opportunities may be added, and the majority of events are free for Illinois educators. Professional development hours (and Administrator Academy credit, where relevant) are available. More information and/or registration for these experiences can be found on the ISBE website (</cte>).

NEW

WELLNESS



UPDATED RESOURCES TO INCREASE 5ESSENTIALS PARENT PARTICIPATION

The deadline to complete the 5Essentials Survey is soon approaching. We have updated our 5Essentials webpage (/Pages/5Essentials-Survey.aspx) with additional resources to assist schools in increasing their parent participation and reaching the goal of at least a 20% participation rate, including:

- Flyers (in English  (/Documents/5Essentials-Parent-Flyer-English.pdf) and Spanish  (/Documents/5Essentials-parent-flyer-Spanish.pdf))
- Tip sheet  (/Documents/5Essentials-Tips-Parent-Participation.pdf)
- Parent Guide (in English  (/Documents/5E-Parent-Family-Guide-English.pdf) and Spanish  (/Documents/5E-Parent-Family-Guide-Spanish.pdf))

FY 2025 BIPARTISAN SAFER COMMUNITIES ACT STRONGER CONNECTIONS GRANT

ISBE is pleased to announce that the fiscal year 2025 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Stronger Connections Grant Program Request for Proposals (RFP) is now available. The program's purpose is to support high-need Local Education Agencies in their efforts to prevent violence and to establish safe, healthy, inclusive, and supportive teaching and learning opportunities and environments that create a positive school culture and climate and prioritize student wellness and academic outcomes through evidence-based activities as specified in Section 4108 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Available federal funds will not exceed \$40,424,746. Successful applicants will receive a one-time award of no less than \$100,000 to a maximum of \$4,958,020, contingent upon district population to include a base and per student amount based on the most recent fall enrollment report.

For more information, including a technical assistance webinar  (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHFKmkfHTDQ&feature=youtu.be>) and the RFP  (/Documents/FY25-BSCA-Stronger-Connections-NOFO.pdf), visit ISBE's Stronger Connections Grant webpage (/Pages/Stronger-Connections-Grant.aspx). If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Littrell at strongerconnections@isbe.net (mailto:strongerconnections@isbe.net). Responses to questions received will be posted in an FAQ document on the Stronger Connections Grant webpage. Proposals are due no later than **April 5**.

FINANCE

ISBE OFFERS GUIDANCE FOR FY 2025 STATE AND FEDERAL GRANT APPLICANTS

State or federal grantees must ensure all Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) requirements are met. ISBE cannot process awards or approve fiscal year 2025 grant applications that lack the following.

1. Active public SAM.gov (<https://sam.gov/content/home>) profile. Renewal assistance is available through the Federal Service Desk (https://www.fsd.gov/gsafsd_sp) at 866-606-822.
2. Approved current fiscal year Fiscal and Administrative Internal Control Questionnaire (ICQ) in the GATA Grantee Portal (<https://grants.illinois.gov/portal/>).
3. Approved current fiscal year Organizational Risk Assessment (ORA) in IWAS.

A Unique Entity Identifier (<https://sam.gov/content/home>) must be verified before ICQ scores can be imported into the ORA and grant applications. Discrepancies may cause delays/errors in processing a grant application.

Additional information and updates are available under the "News and Updates" dropdown on the ISBE GATA webpage (/gata). Please contact 217-782-5630 or GATAICQ@isbe.net (mailto:GATAICQ@isbe.net) if you need technical assistance or have questions.

IMPROVEMENT & INNOVATION

PROVIDER APPLICATION – SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERSHIP TRAINING

School board members are required to complete four hours of professional development leadership training covering topics in education law, financial oversight and accountability, fiduciary responsibilities of a school board member, and, beginning with this school year, trauma-informed practices for students and staff. (See 105 ILCS 5/10-16a (<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/fulltext.asp?DocName=010500050K10-16a>).) Entities that offer professional development activities – such as training organizations, Regional Offices of Education, professional associations, teachers' unions, institutions, firms, and higher education providers – may apply to ISBE to become approved providers of school board member leadership training.

All applications must be submitted on or before **May 1** to DDSL@isbe.net (mailto:DDSL@isbe.net). See the ISBE School Board Member Training Provider Information webpage (</Pages/School-Board-Member-Training-Provider-Application.aspx>) for more information on school board member training and how to apply.

IN BRIEF


EDUCATOR OPPORTUNITIES

March Madness: High Performance Under Pressure

Andrew Marotta (<https://andrewmarotta.com/>) is an energizing and impactful speaker, author, and school leader. A master storyteller, Andrew engages his audiences and fellow leaders with authentic and heartfelt stories; memorable props; and collaborative, fun, and thought-provoking activities. In “High Performance Under Pressure,” hosted by Ed Leaders Network (<https://edleadersnetwork.org/>), Andrew dives deep into powerful stories and experiences from his time as an NCAA Division I men's college basketball official. At **3 p.m. March 11**, he will take you through the ups and downs, successes and failures, and the journey of trying to be the best you can be under the spotlight and intense scrutiny.

Illinois Poison Prevention Month Resources

March is Illinois Poison Prevention Month. The Illinois Poison Center (IPC) is happy to provide students, school nurses, and staff with a free, quick, and easy online Poison Prevention Education Course (<https://www.illinoispoisoncenter.org/education/poison-prevention-education/>) (available in English and Spanish). IPC also invites all Illinois middle and high schools to:

- Integrate this free course into the school's curriculum (early learning/development, science, physical development and health, community service, etc.). Bonus: Nurses, child care providers, and emergency medical services professionals can earn free continuing education credit (<https://www.illinoispoisoncenter.org/education/continuing-education-credit/>).
- Integrate the IPC logo into your communications.
- Encourage staff/students to order free poison prevention education materials  (<https://ipcblog.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Illinois-Poison-Prevention-Month-flyer-1.pdf>) (tote bags, activity books, stickers, posters, magnets, etc.).

Illinois Council for the Social Studies Spring Conference

Teachers, administrators, and curriculum specialists are invited to the Illinois Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference (<https://www.illinoiscss.net/2023-fall-conference.html>) on **April 12** at the University of Illinois Springfield. This year's theme is “Emerging Narratives and Technologies in Social Studies,” and sessions will focus on AI and generative technologies as well as expanding students' experiences with underrepresented voices. Sessions include dialogue regarding navigating controversial topics in the classroom, using Supreme Court cases in the classroom, and more.

Computer Science PD Week

Illinois students deserve equitable access to high-quality computer science (CS) learning. CS PD Week (<http://www.ltcillinois.org/cspdweek>) is your ticket to bringing the power of computer science to your district or classroom.

During CS PD Week, **June 8-12** in Peoria, new and experienced CS educators from around the state will engage with current CS curriculum, network and connect with peers, and discover research-backed strategies for making CS learning engaging at all grade levels. Limited scholarship funding is available via generous support from Code.org and Google to cover the registration fee.

Unpacking the Accelerated Placement Act

Join the Illinois Association for Gifted Children from **8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. May 3** for an in-depth discussion and workshop with regional, district, and school leaders across the state to examine updated Illinois education policies regarding gifted programs, accelerated placement, and the application of best practices in advanced learner instruction.

For more information and to register, visit the IACG Spring 2024 Leadership Summit webpage (<https://www.iagcgifted.org/2024summit>). Registration closes **April 26**. Participants will receive five PD hours.

STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

Your Voice: Changing the World, One Speech at a Time Contest

The Simon Wiesenthal Center's Mobile Museum of Tolerance (MMOT) has joined with the Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes for the "Your Voice: Changing the World, One Speech at a Time" contest as part of its ongoing work to promote human dignity and digital media literacy.

All students in Grades 6-12 can weigh in on a quote from Simon Wiesenthal, a Holocaust survivor who dedicated his post-Holocaust life to pursuing justice. Speeches are due **March 22**. For more information on the contest, visit the MMOT website (<https://mmot.com/your-voice/2024-2/>).

Student Leadership/Service Learning Program

Explore.Act.Tell. (<http://exploreacttell.org/>) is a free student leadership/service learning program for Grades 6-12 that teaches students to understand and act on solutions to hunger insecurity in their community. Standards alignment guides can be found at ExploreActTell.org. In four interactive lessons, students will practice skills needed to become good citizens and advocate for community involvement and service, while developing leadership skills. They will have the opportunity to submit projects into a competition for a chance to win one of 30 grants for hunger-focused charities and may use the experience to fulfill community service requirements. This program, funded by Albertsons (Jewel-Osco), is free.

Register at ExploreActTell.org (<https://exploreacttell.org/registration/>) for instant access to program materials or contact Beverly Johnston at Beverly@ExploreActTell.org for more information.

FEATURED ISBE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

- Executive Director of Teaching & Learning (Executive Director #1291) (</Lists/ISBECareers/CareerDisplayForm.aspx?ID=939>)
- Director - Special Education Operational Support (Director #1120) (</Lists/ISBECareers/CareerDisplayForm.aspx?ID=938>)

View all open positions at ISBE (</Pages/Careers-at-ISBE.aspx>).