

ISBE'S WEEKLY MESSAGE


April 18, 2023

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Dear Colleagues:

Yesterday was a great day. For starters, we took the first step in Governor JB Pritzker's four-year Smart Start Illinois plan by releasing the 2024 Early Childhood Block Grant application (</Pages/RFPs.aspx>). This grant will fund the creation of new preschool programs and expansion of existing programs, prioritizing applicants in preschool deserts. You can find the list of preschool deserts where we will target this funding here  (</Documents/FY24ECBGECDeserts.pdf>). This work can help children, families, and communities. Access to preschool provides an essential foundation for the trajectory of a child's well-being and academic outcomes, and we need eligible providers in these preschool deserts to apply for funding and

provide free preschool to Illinois' children and the families who need it.

But that's not all. Early yesterday morning, I went to East St. Louis, to the Gordon Bush Alternative Center, to surprise English teacher Briana Morales with the news that she's our 2023 Illinois Teacher of the Year. When – after a brief moment of shock – she took the podium to speak about what this title, her students, and her career in education means to her, I had no doubt in mind that she's ready to seize this moment to share her message of uplifting all students. Watch our Facebook Live (<https://fb.watch/jZsAV7xFd6/>) of the event.

It's no accident that Briana has chosen to teach at an alternative school. It's no accident that she gravitated toward a Rust Belt city that has faced more than its fair share of challenges. She sees alternative schools as "healing-centered spaces," regards social-emotional learning as an integral part of academics, and believes her job is to "unleash the brilliance that all students bring into the classroom."

Her involvement with East St. Louis dates back to her sophomore year of college, when she spent spring break with a campus ministry group, volunteering at the Orr-Weathers housing development in the after-school program, the community garden, and the women's shelter. With 25 percent of her current students living in Orr-Weathers, she helped establish a Peace Warriors group where teens teach their peers the principles of non-violence.

Already during her young career, Briana has lost a dozen students to gun violence and suicide. To help their classmates process grief and trauma, she developed a "writing as healing" curriculum, inspired by her own middle school English teacher, who, Briana says, saved her life. Students improve their literacy, discover the power of sharing their own stories and the poetry of witness, and activate empathy in themselves and others.

Her students describe her as more than a teacher -- a mother figure, a mentor, a shoulder to cry on. And for the most vulnerable teens in East St. Louis, she accepts all those roles. In her finalist interview, the sentence that jumped out at me was Briana’s simple statement: “There is no such thing as ‘other people’s children.’”

Both of these events remind me of the transformative work that public education can empower and support. I know that you’re doing that work every day. Keep going!

Pictured: English teacher Briana Morales (center) is surrounded by Peace Warriors, a student-led group whose members have achieved national certification in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s principles of nonviolence. She helped establish the program in 2019 at the Orr-Weathers housing development; it now engages students from multiple schools across East St. Louis School District 189. Morales is 2023 Illinois Teacher of the Year.

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>).

Apr. 19	ISBE Board meeting
Apr. 19	CTE professional development webinar: Forming Relationships with Community and Business Partners - Administrator Academy (https://niu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_24gsL4iZ3dDI7jo)
Apr. 19	Illinois Association of School Business Officials Lunch and Learn Webinar: Guide to Braiding & Blending Federal Funds (https://my.iasbo.org/event-information?id=a0l4w00000EV9XbAAL)
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#Foald06985843-f32c-494e-880a-cb5db6d787a4)
Apr. 21	Deadline to nominate a School Nutrition Champion (https://www.isbe.net/Pages/School-Nutrition-and-Wellness-Champions.aspx)
Apr. 24	Webinar: TEAACHing For Change featuring ISBE Board Chair Dr. Steven Isoye (https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=hv5kA8ZJ9Eq1LDNameV30RBkLoG0VTRMnFRhENzGCBNUREZEMDZTMjZLSzRPVTFIS0owWUYzQUNCTS4u)
Apr. 25	CTE professional development webinar: ISBE CTE and Illinois MTSS Network - Differentiation for All Students (https://niu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7Pwf5s5c5wqWbNs)
Apr. 27	Ed Leaders Network live webinar All Improvement Requires Change, Not All Change is an Improvement 3-4 p.m. (https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwsc-Ghrj8rH9Sd786cMgqhk5HOag78vWAq#/registration)
Apr. 28	RSVPs due for the May 20 Those Who Excel & Teacher of the Year Banquet

Apr. 30	Last day to review and update Entity Profile System data
May 1	Start of Mental Health Awareness Month
May 4	Informational webinar: National Board Certification (https://forms.illinoisstate.edu/forms/learn_about_national_board_certification_for_illinois_teachers_spring_2023)
May 5	Survey for science educators closes (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSePQ5JUYUy-YMnw2xdJB_21strE8rvrYRNrL4BbRnnpPhljSw/viewform)
May 8-12	Teacher Appreciation Week
May 8	Webinar: Building Resilient Schools through the REACH Statewide Initiative (https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5287142830112706650)
May 10	National Board Certification state spring subsidy window closes (https://nbrc.illinoisstate.edu/firsttime/index.php)
May 12	ISBE Career Pathways User Group Meeting (https://niu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bvZKx2J8m2JDtBg)
May 20	Those Who Excel & Teacher of the Year Banquet – New date!
May 20	Those Who Excel & Teacher of the Year Banquet – Awardees check your email for an invitation!
May 29	ISBE offices closed for Memorial Day
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Jun. 13-15	Illinois New Teacher Collaborative 2023 Summer Conference Series (https://emails.illinois.edu/newsletter/37/1612142237.html)
Jun. 19	ISBE offices closed for Juneteenth
Jun. 20-21	IncludED Conference (https://www.ltcillinois.org/included/)
Jul. 25-26	School Nutrition Programs Back to School Conference

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?](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=hv5kA8ZJ9Eq1LDNameV30Ufi4KgH87ICv6FRRQI8cviUNTdHWktDS1NJWjJZVDFaQ09RVINCUVdMRI4u)

[id=hv5kA8ZJ9Eq1LDNameV30Ufi4KgH87ICv6FRRQI8cviUNTdHWktDS1NJWjJZVDFaQ09RVINCUVdMRI4u](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=hv5kA8ZJ9Eq1LDNameV30Ufi4KgH87ICv6FRRQI8cviUNTdHWktDS1NJWjJZVDFaQ09RVINCUVdMRI4u)) how you are investing federal relief funds to help students recover.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH WEBINAR: BUILDING RESILIENT SCHOOLS THROUGH THE REACH STATEWIDE INITIATIVE

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and it is the perfect time for schools to assemble a team -- or make plans to leverage an existing one -- to reflect on both strengths and areas ripe for improvement in supporting the mental health and well-being of students and staff. The REACH Statewide Initiative (/reach), open to all K–12 schools in Illinois, provides the support and structure for school teams to collaboratively assess eight different domains of a trauma-responsive school, laying the groundwork for the development of a roadmap for educators to effectively enact trauma-responsive strategies so students and staff can thrive.

Join ISBE, the Illinois Principals Association, and the Center for Childhood Resilience at **2 p.m. May 8** for the Building Resilient Schools through the REACH Statewide Initiative 📌 (<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5287142830112706650>) webinar. Attendees will learn about the support and resources offered by the REACH initiative and Illinois’s seven Social-Emotional Learning Hubs (/selhubs) and hear one school leader’s experience developing and implementing a trauma-responsive action plan. Registration for the webinar is available online 📌 (<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5287142830112706650>).

NEW

CTE & INNOVATION

ISBE CAREER PATHWAYS USER GROUP MEETING

Don’t miss next month’s ISBE Career Pathways User Group (CPUG) meeting from **9-10 a.m. May 12**. The purpose of CPUG is to create a community of educators who can learn and lead together by sharing successes with and asking questions of one another. New members are asked to please complete the Illinois Career Pathways User Group registration form (https://niu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bvZKx2J8m2JDiBg) to join!


SUMMER 2023 ISBE CTE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OFFERINGS

ISBE and the Northern Illinois University Illinois CTE Project Team invite you to participate in a variety of online and regional professional development opportunities this summer, including:

- Team-Based Challenge Writing Workshops
- CTE & Equity Promising Practices
- Administrator Academies
 - Illinois Career Pathways Overview
 - Social & Emotional Learning Leads to College & Career Readiness
 - PaCE Framework Overview
- Teaching & Assessing the Essential Skills in CTE
- Problem-Based Learning in CTE

For more information and to register, please visit the ISBE CTE Professional Learning Calendar - Summer 2023 (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VnDxNz8z-19vsnOS4Y0viGILQlu1FB6f4Ma8k19Zlvs/edit>).

REVIEW AND UPDATE ENTITY PROFILE SYSTEM DATA FOR SY2023 BEFORE MAY 1

Please ensure that information for the Entity Profile System (EPS) for school year 2023 is correct and up to date. If EPS is **not** up to date, delays in all aspects of application processing may occur. Most entity profile changes can be made online through IWAS via EPS. Please review the EPS User Guide  (/Documents/eps-guide.pdf) information about making updates to EPS. On May 1, we will begin our annual EPS update period for SY 2024. After this date, any updates for SY 2023 will require the user to enter a reason for the data to be processed.

Questions should be directed to datahelp@isbe.net (mailto:datahelp@isbe.net) with “EPS” in the subject line. If you need assistance with IWAS access, please contact the ISBE Help Desk at **217-558-3600**.

UNPAID BALANCE DATA COLLECTION


Section 10-20 9a (c) (<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/documents/010500050K10-20.9a.htm>) of the School Code requires that no public high school shall withhold a student's grades, transcripts, or diploma because of an unpaid balance on the student's school account. The code also requires that each school district report to the State Board of Education the total amount that remains unpaid by students due to this prohibition.

To avoid an additional reporting mechanism, ISBE will collect this data via the fiscal year 2023, FY 2024, and FY 2025 Annual Financial Report (AFR). School districts are required to catalog and report unpaid fees from students that result from the high school's inability to withhold student grades, transcripts, and diplomas. The total amount will be reported in the AFR on the Audit Questionnaire tab, Part C - Other Issues #22.

If you have questions regarding this data collection, please contact finance1@isbe.net (mailto:finance1@isbe.net) or 217-785-8779.

ISBE RELEASES REVISED FY 2024 EBF SPENDING PLAN FOR REVIEW

In consultation with an advisory group, ISBE has redesigned the Evidence-Based Funding Spending Plan (/ebfspendingplan). It will appear as a new tab in the annual district budget form beginning in FY 2024. Organizational units that do not submit a budget form to ISBE will complete the spending plan via a standalone Excel template. ISBE is making the template available now so that Organizational Units can get familiar with the new format. It is for review only and is not meant to be submitted to ISBE. Additional resources, including a webinar, guidance document, and finalized templates will be available later this spring.

Many questions in the revised plan are consistent with prior spending plans. Instructions and context are provided throughout. There is also a table at the bottom of the template that allows users to determine if all required questions have been completed. Additionally, the EBF Spending Plan webpage has been updated with new content, including definitions of key EBF terms that appear in the spending plan. Leaders can learn more about the advisory group's work to redesign the plan by reading “Preparing for the Evidence-Based Funding Spending Plan – FY 2024”  (/Documents/Spring-23-UPDATE-p20-23.pdf),” an article that appeared in the Spring 2023 Update Magazine published by the Illinois Association of School Business Officials. Questions can be directed to ebfspendingplan@isbe.net (mailto:ebfspendingplan@isbe.net).

NUTRITION

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS: HEALTHY MEALS INCENTIVES INITIATIVE GRANTS FOR SMALL AND/OR RURAL SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITIES

A cooperative agreement with the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to develop and implement the Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnp/healthy-meals-incentives>) has enabled Action for Healthy Kids to offer competitive grants (up to \$150,000 per School Food Authority [SFA]) for small and/or rural SFAs to support efforts to improve the nutritional quality of their school meals. The deadline for submitting a grant application (<https://healthymealsincentives.org/>) is **4 p.m. May 26**.

Eligibility criteria:

- An SFA must participate in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program
- An SFA must meet the following definitions of small and/or rural:
 - Small SFA: SFA with an enrollment of fewer than or equal to 5,000 students.
 - Rural SFA: The majority of students within the SFA are enrolled in a rural school as defined by a locality code of 41, 42, or 43, according to the National Center for Education Statistics online tool (<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/Geographic/LocaleBoundaries>).

The Healthy Meals Incentives Grants for small and/or rural SFAs are a key part of the USDA FNS Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative, which was established to improve the nutritional quality of school meals through food systems transformation, SFA recognition and technical assistance, the generation and sharing of innovative ideas and tested practices, and grants.

Questions may be sent to support@healthymealsincentives.org (mailto:support@healthymealsincentives.org).

SNP BACK TO SCHOOL CONFERENCE

ISBE's annual School Nutrition Programs Back to School Conference returns to an in-person event **July 25-26** in Springfield. Pre-conference sessions will be scheduled for July 24. Watch for an announcement in May with complete information, including registration links, hotel information, and pre-conference offerings. The conference is a free annual training that includes sessions on menu planning, USDA Foods, procurement, food safety, administrative reviews, resource management, and more. We look forward to connecting with school nutrition professionals from across Illinois in July!

RESEARCH & EVALUATION

ILLINOIS ASSESSMENT OF READINESS COMMITTEE

ISBE is currently recruiting participants for the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) English Language Arts (ELA) Rangefinding meetings, which will be hosted by Pearson Inc. from **8 a.m.-4 p.m. each day from May 9-12**. Rangefinding requires participants to review student responses to hand-scored field test items and expand them into full scorer training sets for operational scoring. We have many slots that still need to be filled. Please complete this Doodle poll (<https://doodle.com/meeting/participate/id/eZ4ERYwb>) if you are interested. Participants must have experience in ELA instruction, specifically in at least one of Grades 3-8. Additionally, we request interested educators to complete the IAR Committee Participant Survey (<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=hv5kA8ZJ9Eq1LDNameV30axeKsbrv2JKiFik-ZuY5eIUMIZHNkJDM1A3QTVRUVdHWEpWSExYWENNVC4u>) to help make assignments based on experience. All meetings will be held virtually.

The goal is to have educator committees that represent a diverse range of backgrounds and expertise. These committees are extremely valuable in understanding the process that goes into creating the IAR by collaborating with other educators to help shape it into the best assessment for students statewide. Completing the Doodle poll does not prompt an automatic committee invitation, but it helps us target those educators first when sending invitations.

If selected for a committee, participants will receive a certificate of participation and professional development hours at the conclusion of the meeting. Qualifying educators may also be eligible for one of two types of compensation:

- Substitute Teacher Reimbursement – If your school is in session and a substitute is required for your absence at the time of the meeting, your district will be compensated.
- Committee Member Honorarium – If you participate in the meeting while on vacation, personal leave, or are retired, you will receive an honorarium of \$150 per day.

If you know an Illinois educator (active or retired) who may be interested, please forward this information to them.

NEW







STANDARDS & INSTRUCTION

TEAACHING FOR CHANGE WEBINAR WITH ISBE CHAIR DR. STEVEN ISOYE

Please join ISBE Chair Dr. Steven Isoye for a discussion on creating positive, inclusive change in your educational community from **4:30-5 p.m. April 24**. This webinar supports the implementation of the Teaching Equitable Asian American Communities History (TEAACH) Act, which requires public schools to include in their curriculum a unit of instruction about Asian American history this year. During this discussion, Dr. Isoye will tell some of his story and role in creating positive change, examine some of the challenges Illinois faces in supporting inclusive history, and share ways educators can contribute to bringing positive, inclusive change to their own communities.

Register today! (<https://forms.office.com/r/95y7dnggHM>) A recording of the webinar will also be posted on the ISBE Standards and Instruction webpage (</Pages/Learning-Standards.aspx>).

Related resources:

- TEAACH Act Fact Sheet  (</Documents/TEAACH-Act-Fact-Sheet.pdf>)
- TEAACH Act ISBE Resource Guide  (</Documents/TEAACH-Act-Resource-Guide.pdf>)
- Overview of the TEAACH Act  (<https://register.gotowebinar.com/webinarOver>)
- TEAACH Act Implementation Guide  (<https://register.gotowebinar.com/recording/8919133200247537410>)
- TEAACHing For Inclusion  (<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/7140812780921766914>)
- TEAACHing With Pushback  (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xzGHcM_AUc)

SAFE & HEALTHY CLIMATE

ILLINOIS EPA ANNOUNCES \$27 MILLION NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY FOR ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUSES

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) announced a \$27,023,485 Notice of Funding Opportunity (<https://epa.illinois.gov/topics/air-quality/driving-a-cleaner-illinois.html>) (NOFO) to fund the replacement of existing diesel school buses with new all-electric school buses. This funding opportunity will enable Illinois EPA to fund projects in the three priority areas:

- **Priority Area 1:** Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties; Oswego Township in Kendall County, and Aux Sable and Goose Lake Townships in Grundy County
- **Priority Area 2:** Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair counties

- **Priority Area 3:** Champaign, DeKalb, LaSalle, McLean, Peoria, Sangamon, and Winnebago counties

Applications for the Driving a Cleaner Illinois – Volkswagen All-Electric School Buses NOFO will be accepted through **5 p.m. Sept. 5**. All applicants must pre-qualify through the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act Grantee Portal (<https://grants.illinois.gov/portal/>).

WHY DOWNERS GROVE ENROLLED IN THE PSCFA (AND WHY YOU SHOULD, TOO)

Downers Grove District 58 recently completed the Public Schools Carbon-Free Assessment (PSCFA), which is offered free to public schools in the ComEd territory. The following is a Q&A session with Kevin Barto, director of Buildings and Grounds at Downers Grove, on what the PSCFA process was like and why he chose to take advantage of the free assessment.

Why did the Downers Grove district enroll in PSCFA?

Doing an assessment like this helps us focus on long-term strategic improvements, efficiencies, and sustainability. Rather than constantly putting out daily “fires” (real or perceived), programs like the PSCFA allow us to be more proactive and push forward with a longer-term vision for our facilities.

Did you find the information helpful for your district’s future infrastructure planning?

While we have completed energy assessments before, we found great value in having our schools reviewed again. The enhanced portions of this particular assessment allowed us to focus on carbon reduction and WELL certification, which are items that many programs are not yet focused on. The information we were given will serve as a road map of improvements to consider down the road. The best part of the PSCFA is that it came at no cost to our district, and we had no obligation to implement the proposed measures or ideas. We do, however, hope to implement many of the recommendations in our upcoming facilities projects that were approved by a referendum in November of 2022.

If your district is considering signing up for the PSCFA, we encourage you to do it, regardless of your district’s ability to implement the recommendations. The process is still very valuable.

What was the best takeaway from your PSCFA report?

The best takeaway was the overall format of the report. Since it has several categories and covers many areas, there is a depth of information that is very valuable. If you just want to focus on energy efficiency, that category is there for you. If you’d rather focus on solar opportunities or electrification of your facilities, you’ll find baseline data for that type of work. For us at Downers Grove, we plan to work on almost all areas of the report in order to increase energy efficiencies, reduce our carbon footprint, and increase building occupant satisfaction; all while saving taxpayer dollars in the process!

A few highlights from Downers Grove’s PSCFA results:

- 12 facilities assessed
- 986,800 kilowatt hour reduction identified
- \$39,850 annual energy savings
- \$5,857,500 solar lifetime savings
- \$191,630 potential energy incentives
- \$ 8,697,600 potential grant opportunities
- 34% energy savings reduction

What is the PSCFA?

PSCFA is a free program from ComEd that is designed to help public schools by assisting in energy cost savings and carbon reduction strategies because of Section 8-402.2 of the Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act. The program is offered at no cost to public schools.

Sign up today

Request your free assessment online at ComEd.com/PSCFA (<http://www.comed.com/PSCFA>), over the phone at 855-433-2700, or via email at BusinessEE@ComEd.com (<mailto:BusinessEE@ComEd.com>).

IN BRIEF

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.

- **3-4 p.m. April 27:** All Improvement Requires Change, Not All Change is an Improvement (<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom-join?secret=9876543210&from=joinlink>) - Leadership requires change management. Whether it's intentional or not, leaders will spend most of their time managing change. It could be driven by state mandates, board elections, or local community issues. Successfully managing change is what will separate a great leader from a mediocre or underperforming leader. If navigated properly, it can create a win-win environment.

Math Coaching Mini Conference

Join the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics (ICTM) on **Saturday, April 29**, for an instructional coaching in math classrooms mini conference. Participants will gather in-person with other instructional coaches and teacher leaders at one of several host sites located around Illinois. Each site will be connected by Zoom and participate in cross-site sharing/discussion as well as lots of opportunities for discussion within each site. There will be two moderators who will share insights related to "Supporting Teachers, Coaching Cycles, Social Emotional Learning and Math," and then facilitate sharing/discussion across the various sites.

The conference is free to ICTM members, and \$35 for non-ICTM members. Participants are eligible for 3.5 hours of professional development credit. Click here to register (https://ictm.memberclicks.net/index.php?option=com_mcform&view=ngforms&id=2156558#%21/)!

FEATURED ISBE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

- School Finance Data Analyst (Principal Consultant 1676 and 1855) (</Lists/ISBECareers/CareerDisplayForm.aspx?ID=816>)
- Early Childhood Data Coordination/Grant Reviewer (Principal Consultant 1856) (</Lists/ISBECareers/CareerDisplayForm.aspx?ID=817>)
- Administrative Support (Program Specialist II #425) (</Lists/ISBECareers/CareerDisplayForm.aspx?ID=814>)
- Program Support (Program Specialist II #1448) (</Lists/ISBECareers/CareerDisplayForm.aspx?ID=815>)

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