

# ISBE's Weekly Message

October 1, 2024

## WHAT'S INSIDE

- [Career & Technical Education \(CTE\)](#)
- [Educator Effectiveness](#)
- [Learning Renewal](#)
- [Standards & Instruction](#)
- [Wellness & Student Care](#)
- [In Brief](#)
- [Data Strategies & Analytics](#)
- [Finance](#)
- [School/District Improvement](#)
- [Student Opportunities](#)
- [Educator Recognition](#)



## Transforming Behavioral Health Services for Illinois Families

Dear Colleagues:

One of the most heartbreaking challenges we experience as educators is seeing a student struggling with mental or behavioral health issues and feeling ill-equipped to connect them with the services they need. The Illinois Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative is taking steps to strengthen and

improve behavioral health services for youth via [12 strategies to adjust capacity, streamline access, and intervene earlier to prevent acute crises](#). The initiative needs you to take two important actions, starting today.

First, each district should submit a response to the Universal Mental Health Screening Readiness Tool, which was released as a survey in IWAS today. The readiness tool has just 13 questions, each rated on a four-point scale, and asks what each district will need to implement [universal mental health screening](#). Once the appropriate district personnel checks out our brief [Frequently Asked Questions about the Universal Mental Health Screening Readiness Tool document](#), they will be able to complete the survey in approximately 10-15 minutes. It will remain open through Nov. 26. Your responses will provide critical information to shape the implementation of this work over the next several years.

Second, starting today, we are encouraging school counselors, school social workers, and special education administrators to start using BEACON, a new portal designed to connect families to the behavioral and mental health help their children need. BEACON has been developed by

Google in partnership with all six child-serving Illinois state agencies and the Children’s Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative, with input from parents. It provides a single, simple place to find out which services a youth is eligible for and how to access them. It will help us boost access, collaboration, and empowerment for the families of youth with the most complex needs. ISBE will send an email to school counselors, school social workers, and special education administrators later this week with a link to BEACON and an invitation to a webinar with Chief Officer for Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Dr. Dana Weiner. View this [introduction video to learn more about BEACON](#).

We have heard from so many students and educators nationwide about escalating mental and behavioral health challenges. My hope is that this work -- and your partnership -- can truly put Illinois at the forefront of implementing solutions to these complex challenges. For some students and families, this may be the most important work we do.

*Pictured: Destiny and Moshika, two first graders at Oak Grove School in Green Oaks, coincidentally wore matching “Just be Kind” shirts to school. A great reminder for us all!*

All my best,  
Tony

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## 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 webpage](#) and the [Data Collections Key Dates webpage](#).

- Oct.**  
**1**     [Joint agreement FY 2025 budget due to ISBE](#)
- Oct.**  
**1**     [Webinar: Part 2 - Helping Students Learn: Using Various Forms of Assessment in CTE](#)
- Oct.**  
**1**     [Webinar: Food Allergies in School Nutrition](#)
- Oct.**  
**1**     [Webinar: College and Career Pathway Endorsement Component Overview](#)
- Oct.**  
**1**     Unfilled Positions Data Collection Opens in EIS
- Oct.**  
**2**     [Webinar: ISBE School Nutrition Programs Updates](#)
- Oct.**  
**3**     [Deadline to submit request in writing and register for FY 2026 ISBE Budget Hearing on Oct. 8](#)
- Oct.**  
**3**     [2024 Report Card Overview webinar](#)

- Oct.  
4** [Deadline for students to apply for the United States Senate Youth Program](#)
- Oct.  
7** [Deadline to submit request in writing and register for FY 2026 ISBE Budget Hearing on Oct. 10](#)
- Oct.  
7** [Workshop: Unpacking IAR and ISA Results to Inform Instructional Practices \(in person, Freeport\)](#)
- Oct.  
7** [College & Career Pathway Endorsements Workshop 101 Waubensee Community College](#)
- Oct.  
7** [College & Career Pathway Endorsements Workshop 201 Waubensee Community College](#)
- Oct.  
8** [FY 2026 ISBE Budget Hearing \(in person, Springfield\)](#)
- Oct.  
8** [Workshop: Unpacking IAR and ISA Results to Inform Instructional Practices \(in person, Champaign\)](#)
- Oct.  
8** [ISBE Career Pathways User Group](#)
- Oct.  
8** [ISBE Office Hours: ARP ESSER Liquidation Extension](#)
- Oct.  
9** [Workshop: Unpacking IAR and ISA Results to Inform Instructional Practices \(in person, Peoria\)](#)
- Oct.  
9** [College & Career Pathway Endorsements Workshop 101 Parkland Community College](#)
- Oct.  
9** [Evaluating CTE Lessons and Materials for Instructional Improvement](#)
- Oct.  
9** [College & Career Pathway Endorsements Workshop 201 Parkland Community College](#)
- Oct.  
9** [Webinar: Providing AP Opportunities to a More Diverse Group of Students](#)
- Oct.  
10** [FY 2026 ISBE Budget Hearing \(virtual\)](#)
- Oct.  
10** [Workshop: Unpacking IAR and ISA Results to Inform Instructional Practices \(in person, Elgin\)](#)
- Oct.  
10** [ACCESS test materials ordering window opens](#)
- Oct.  
11** [Illinois Technical Assistance Projects Fall Virtual Institute for educators supporting students with disabilities](#)
- Oct.  
14** ISBE offices closed for Columbus Day and Indigenous People's Day
- Oct.  
15** [RTO Reduction Plans due - nonpublic special education facilities and special education cooperatives](#)

- Oct. 15** [Deadline to submit nominations for the 2025 Those Who Excel & Teacher of the Year Awards](#)
- Oct. 15** [\(Or earlier exclusion date established by district/school\): Deadline for students to submit applicable health examination and immunization records to school. Students that have not submitted this data must be excluded from attending school.](#)
- Oct. 16** [Webinar: Unpacking IAR and ISA Results to Inform Instructional Practices \(in person, Carterville\)](#)
- Oct. 16** [Webinar: Lessons from the Field: The Secret is OUT! Helping McKinney-Vento Families With Housing in Illinois](#)
- Oct. 17** [Workshop: Unpacking IAR and ISA Results to Inform Instructional Practices \(in person, Belleville\)](#)
- Oct. 17** [Webinar: The ACT With Writing Accommodations](#)
- Oct. 17** [College & Career Pathway Endorsements Workshop 101 Jerseyville High School](#)
- Oct. 17** [College & Career Pathway Endorsements Workshop 201 Jerseyville High School](#)
- Oct. 17** Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Capacity Builders Webinar Series Session 1: Overview of the Series and Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan
- Oct. 18** [Deadline to submit Illinois State Flag designs](#)
- Oct. 18** [Deadline to submit nominations for Thomas Lay Burroughs Award](#)
- Oct. 18** [College & Career Pathway Endorsements Workshop 101 ROE #3/Galesburg](#)
- Oct. 18** [College & Career Pathway Endorsements Workshop 201 ROE #3/Galesburg](#)
- Oct. 20** [Deadline to nominate female-identifying and nonbinary high schoolers to the Illinois Council on Women and Girls' Girls Committee](#)
- Oct. 20** [Deadline for girls in Grades 5-12 to apply for the Illinois Council on Women and Girls' Girls Lead Program](#)
- Oct. 22** [Webinar: Serve It Safely Food Handler Training](#)
- Oct. 23** [Deadline to submit request in writing and register for FY 2026 ISBE Budget Hearing on Oct. 28](#)
- Oct. 28** [FY 2026 ISBE Budget Hearing \(virtual\)](#)
- Oct. 30** [Illinois Report Card updates with 2024-25 data](#)

- Oct.**  
**31** [School district FY 2025 budget due to ISBE](#)
- Oct.**  
**31** [Deadline to submit FY 2026 budget requests](#)
- Oct.**  
**31** Webinar: Preview of new BEACON Portal
- Nov.**  
**1** [School-Level Finance Surveys due](#)
- Nov.**  
**1** Unfilled Positions Data Collection due in EIS
- Nov.**  
**4** [Webinar: ISBE School Nutrition Programs Updates](#)
- Nov.**  
**4** [Newly Designated School Webinar](#)
- Nov.**  
**5** ISBE offices closed for General Election Day
- Nov.**  
**6** [Webinar: The ACT With Writing Pre-Test Training](#)
- Nov.**  
**6** [Deadline to order ACCESS test materials](#)
- Nov.**  
**6** [Newly Designated School Webinar](#)
- Nov.**  
**11** ISBE offices closed for Veterans Day
- Nov.**  
**14** Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Capacity Builders Webinar Series Session 2: Understanding Literacy Data
- Nov.**  
**15** [8th annual Mastering KIDS Summit](#)
- Nov.**  
**15** [Deadline to apply for Public School Districts' Opioid Recovery Trust](#)
- Nov.**  
**15** Deadline for schools to submit student immunization and health examination data to ISBE via IWAS
- Nov.**  
**25** [FY 2025 Planning Year Grant Webinar](#)
- Nov.**  
**26** [FY 2025 Planning Year Grant Webinar](#)
- Nov.**  
**28-29** ISBE offices closed for Thanksgiving
- Dec.**  
**5** Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Capacity Builders Webinar Series Session 3: Making Sense of Data Overload

- Dec. 15** [Deadline to submit FY 2025 Round 1 School Maintenance Project Grant applications to ROE/ISC](#)
- Dec. 25** ISBE offices closed for Christmas
- Dec. 31** [Deadline for ROE/ISC to submit FY 2025 Round 1 School Maintenance Project Grant applications to ISBE](#)
- Dec. 31** [Operational Funds Reserve Reduction Plan due to finance1@isbe.net](#)
- Jan. 1, 2025** ISBE offices closed for New Year's Day
- Jan. 22, 2025** [Webinar: PreACT 9 Secure and PreACT Secure Pre-Test Training](#)
- Jan. 23, 2025** Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Capacity Builders Webinar Series Session 4: Local Control and Data Utilization
- Jan. 30, 2025** [Webinar: ACT Technical Readiness](#)
- Feb. 6, 2025** [Webinar: PreACT 9 Secure and PreACT Secure Test Day Training](#)
- Feb. 13, 2025** Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Capacity Builders Webinar Series Session 5: Evaluating Curriculum and Instructional Practices
- Feb. 28 - Mar. 1, 2025** [Illinois Teacher Leadership Summit](#)
- Mar. 13, 2025** Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Capacity Builders Webinar Series Session 6: Key Literacy Strategies and Concepts
- Apr. 10, 2025** Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Capacity Builders Webinar Series Session 7: Assembling and Leading a Literacy Team
- May 8, 2025** Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Capacity Builders Webinar Series Session 8: Monitoring Progress and Leveraging Resources
- June 5, 2025** Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Capacity Builders Webinar Series Session 9: Revising and Sustaining Literacy Plans

## CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE)

### Workplace Readiness Week

ISBE is excited to introduce Workplace Readiness Week, as required by [Public Act 103-0598](#). Workplace Readiness Week is dedicated to preparing students for the future workforce. The purpose is to educate high school students about their rights as workers and the labor movement. [Learn more about Workplace Readiness Week in this overview flyer.](#)

### College and Career Pathway Endorsement In-Person Workshops

The goal of these in-person workshops is to assist districts that are still planning the implementation/creation of pathway endorsements, along with those that have started the process but need additional support with component criteria. These workshops are intended to help district staff working on any component of the College and Career Pathway Endorsements (CCPEs), such as CCPE teachers, district department chairs, district administrators, and Area Career Center teachers.

Professional development hours are available for each session. [Register for the College and Career Pathway Endorsement In-Person Workshops using this form.](#)

Dates/Locations:

- **Oct. 7** - Waubensee Community College
- **Oct. 9** - Parkland Community College
- **Oct. 17** - Jerseyville High School
- **Oct. 18** - ROE 33/Galesburg

### Upcoming CTE Professional Development Opportunities

We hope you will join us for one or more of the upcoming professional learning offerings we're co-hosting with the Northern Illinois University CTE Project this month:

- [Oct. 8 - ISBE Career Pathways User Group \(Register\)](#)
- [Oct. 9 - Evaluating CTE Lessons and Materials for Instructional Improvement \(Register\)](#)
- [Oct. 16 - CTE & Equity Promising Practices - Accessibility - Eliminating Barriers for CTE Students \(Register\)](#)

All sessions are open to all Illinois educators. Participants who complete workshops will earn Illinois professional development hours. Check out the full [Professional Development calendar](#) to see all the offerings throughout the year.

NEW

## DATA STRATEGIES & ANALYTICS

## Earlier Due Date – Unfilled Positions Data Collection in EIS

This year, ISBE is again collaborating with the Illinois Association of Regional School Superintendents (IARSS), the Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Goshen Consulting to reduce reporting redundancies and to ensure a more complete understanding of Illinois' educator workforce in relation to districts' staffing needs. The ISBE Unfilled Positions Data Collection will be reported in conjunction with the Educator Shortage Survey conducted by IARSS. Both collections refer to staffing needs as of Oct. 1. Both data collections will close on Nov. 1 to ensure timely reporting.

The Unfilled Positions and Position Closures Data Collection will open on **Oct. 1** for both online and batch entry into the Employment Information System (EIS). **Data is due Nov. 1. (Please note this is earlier than prior years.)** ISBE will use responses to inform initiatives and partnerships to support entities in reducing unfilled positions. We need accurate unfilled positions data to prioritize resources and opportunities appropriately.

Please provide the following information:

- 2024-25 positions that your district was unable to fill with a permanent, appropriately licensed educator as of Oct. 1, 2024, and the reason.
- 2024-25 positions lost due to a position closure and the reason for the closure.

If your district does not have any unfilled positions as of Oct. 1, 2024, you must still log in to EIS to certify that you do not have any unfilled positions to report.

Your district's timely submission of its unfilled position data is imperative. Your responses inform budget requests that will be made by ISBE (and other advocacy groups) and serve as evidence for launching initiatives related to teacher recruitment, teacher retention, and other efforts to address educator shortages in the state. Unfilled position data also are used to determine district eligibility for funding through particular formula grants, such as the Teacher Vacancy Grant and the Elevating Educators Grant. Completing this survey may enable your district to be eligible for upcoming funding or included in targeted recruitment or retention work led by the state, which could help your district find or retain teachers.

To opt out of receiving further emails and phone calls about data quality for this collection, please submit your data for the 2024-25 ISBE IWAS Unfilled Position Survey by **5 p.m. Oct. 15**.

Unfilled Positions Resources

- [Archived Webinars and Presentations](#)
- [Unfilled Positions Batch File Template](#)
- [EIS Data Elements](#)

Contact the EIS Help Desk at [datahelp@isbe.net](mailto:datahelp@isbe.net) if you need further assistance pertaining to EIS. Contact the ISBE Help Desk at [helpdesk@isbe.net](mailto:helpdesk@isbe.net) or 217-558-3600 if you need IWAS technical assistance.

## 2024 Report Card Resources

We're less than one month away from publishing the 2024 Illinois Report Card! Every year, ISBE produces a series of fact sheets and other communications resources to help you interpret your data, tell your story, and engage your community. ISBE has updated the following for 2024:

- [2024 Illinois Report Card Timeline](#) - Know what to expect and how to prepare for the release of the 2024 Illinois Report Card.
- [How to Tell Your Summative Designation Story](#) - Use this guide to foster deeper local conversations about what your designation means and engage your stakeholders in your school improvement efforts.
- [Letter to parents/families template](#) - Adapt this template to communicate highlights from your school/district Report Card to parents and families.
  - Translations in Arabic, Polish, Spanish, and Urdu coming soon! Check back under Resources on the [ISBE Report Card webpage](#).
- [Press release template](#) - Adapt this template to announce highlights from your school/district Report Card to your local media.
- [Sample questions for surveying families to assist with school improvement process](#) - You may want to create a survey to engage parents/families in the school improvement process. Use this list of suggested questions in a survey format that suits your community.
  - [Survey to Parents - Arabic](#)
  - [Survey to Parents - Polish](#)
  - [Survey to Parents - Spanish](#)
  - [Survey to Parents - Urdu](#)
- [Multiple Indicators of Student Success](#) - Learn what indicators contribute to the annual summative designations for 2024.
- [Annual Summative Designations](#) - Learn about the five summative designations in 2024.- Learn about the five summative designations in 2024.

## 2024 Report Card Overview

ISBE will host a [webinar covering key upcoming dates, the Illinois Report Card timeline, and available tools](#) from **10-11:30 a.m.** on **Oct. 3**. The webinar also will have a Question & Answer session so that districts can ask questions about the Illinois Report Card.

**NEW**

## EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS

### Teacher Vacancy Grant: Year 1 Results

We are pleased to announce that the first year of the Teacher Vacancy Grant has led to nearly 5,400 new hires and the retention of 11,000 educators! ISBE and the IWERC recently [released early results from a \\$45 million state investment that show improved recruitment and retention](#) in the state's most understaffed school districts.

"It's a great time to be a teacher in Illinois," said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tony Sanders in [ISBE's press release](#). "The funds provided by the state's Teacher Vacancy Grants are empowering school districts to provide new financial incentives, special pipeline programs, and other supports to recruit and retain teachers. Illinois is leading the way in investing in education, making our state the best place for educators to build their careers."

ISBE partnered with IWERC to evaluate the grant program and release two studies:

- [How Illinois Districts are Addressing Teacher Shortages: An Evaluation of the Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program](#)
- [Early Teacher Staffing Trends: An Evaluation of the Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program](#)

NEW

## FINANCE

### FY 2026 Budget Hearings

Planning for fiscal year 2026 has started, and ISBE invites everyone to provide input on state funding for public education. [Budget requests can be submitted until Oct. 31 using this form](#). Testimony at past hearings has led to ISBE advocating for increased investments in Evidence-Based Funding, early childhood education, and Career and Technical Education programs. ISBE wants school leaders, classroom teachers, parents, and community advocates to tell us what investments would make a difference for their students. More information on ISBE's budgeting process is available on the [ISBE Agency Budget Information webpage](#).

In addition to the request forms, ISBE will hold three public hearings to receive testimony. Those hearings are on **Oct. 8, 10, and 28**. Anyone providing testimony must submit a [budget request form](#) before registering for a hearing. Please note that ISBE will give equal consideration to written and oral testimony.

### FY 2025 School District Reorganization Feasibility Studies

ISBE is now accepting agreements for FY 2025 School District Reorganization Feasibility Studies. Feasibility studies can be used to investigate the advantages and/or disadvantages of reorganization options. The school board of each district involved in a feasibility study must approve a resolution to initiate a study. The districts involved should submit a proposed agreement with an independent contractor(s) to their Regional Office of Education (ROE)/Intermediate Service Center (ISC). The ROE/ISC will then submit the agreement to ISBE for approval.

The state allotment amount for FY 2025 studies will be the cost of the study, up to a maximum of \$15,125. Any study cost above the state funding will be the responsibility of the participating districts. Studies are funded on a first-come, first-served basis. Studies must be completed and submitted to the ROE/ISC and ISBE no later than **May 31, 2025**. ROE/ISC approval or denial of the study must be submitted to ISBE no later than **June 30, 2025**. Procedures and sample forms can be found on the [ISBE School District Reorganization Feasibility Studies webpage](#). Please contact Christy Morgan at 217-785-8779 or [cmorgan@isbe.net](mailto:cmorgan@isbe.net) if you have any questions.

**NEW**

## **LEARNING RENEWAL**

### **ARP ESSER Liquidation Extension Office Hours**

ISBE is holding office hours from **1-2 p.m. Oct. 8** to answer questions regarding liquidation extension for American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds. [Register for ISBE Office Hours: ARP ESSER Liquidation Extension via GoTo Webinar](#).

**NEW**

## **SCHOOL/DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT**

### **Newly Designated School Webinar**

This informational webinar introduces newly designated schools to the Statewide System of Support and outlines the requirements for districts and schools during the planning year of school improvement status. The Newly Designated School Webinar will be offered from **2-3 p.m. Nov. 4 and 9-10 a.m. Nov. 6**. [Register for the Newly Designated School Webinar](#) at the date and time that works best for you.

### **FY 2025 Planning Year Grant Webinar**

This informational webinar will assist districts and schools with newly designated schools in understanding and completing the Planning Year Title 1, Part A, Section 1003 grant application. The FY 2025 Planning Year Grant Webinar will be offered **2-3 p.m. Nov. 25 and 9-10 a.m. Nov. 26**. [Register for the FY 2025 Planning Year Grant Webinar](#) at the date and time that works best for you.

**NEW**

## **STANDARDS & INSTRUCTION**

### **Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Updates**

We are excited to announce the release of additional Literacy Toolkit Resources! These new materials include:

- [Considerations for Teaching Literacy Instruction of Illinois Multilingual and Bidialectal Learners Presentation](#)
- [Considerations for Multilingual and Bidialectal Learners Handout](#)
- [Considerations for Support of Newcomer Students Handout](#)

These resources are designed to enhance literacy instruction for multilingual, bidialectal, and newcomer students. Educators will find valuable insights and practical strategies to support diverse learning needs in their classrooms. Be sure to explore these new tools, along with all the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan resources, on the [ISBE Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan webpage](#).

## **Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Capacity Builders**

ISBE, which is partnering with ROEs and institutions of higher education (IHEs), is excited to announce the launch of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Capacity Builders series. This monthly virtual series will run from October to June 2025 and guide participants through key topics aimed at building the capacity of school leaders to become effective literacy leaders. The sessions will cover areas such as data literacy, building school leaders' literacy knowledge, and the development and revision of local literacy plans. Engaging in this series will enable participants to gain practical insights to improve literacy outcomes in their schools and districts. This series is designed for regional and local education leaders, including ROE staff, school and district administrators, and representatives from IHEs, who are committed to enhancing literacy outcomes and leading systemic change.

**Mark your calendars!** Registration for the series will be available soon. In the meantime, save the dates and be prepared to join us for these insightful sessions. Recorded presentations and resources will be posted here following each live session. If you have any questions, please contact [standards@isbe.net](mailto:standards@isbe.net).

- Session 1: Overview of the Series and Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan
  - **10-11 a.m., Thursday, Oct. 17**
- Session 2: Understanding Literacy Data
  - **10-11 a.m., Thursday, Nov. 14**
- Session 3: Making Sense of Data Overload
  - **10-11 a.m., Thursday, Dec. 5**
- Session 4: Local Control and Data Utilization
  - **10-11 a.m., Thursday, Jan. 23, 2025**
- Session 5: Evaluating Curriculum and Instructional Practices
  - **10-11 a.m., Thursday, Feb. 13, 2025**
- Session 6: Key Literacy Strategies and Concepts
  - **10-11 a.m., Thursday, March 13, 2025**
- Session 7: Assembling and Leading a Literacy Team
  - **10-11 a.m., Thursday, April 10, 2025**
- Session 8: Monitoring Progress and Leveraging Resources
  - **10-11 a.m., Thursday, May 8, 2025**
- Session 9: Revising and Sustaining Literacy Plans

- **10-11 a.m., Thursday, June 5, 2025**

## **Providing AP Opportunities to a More Diverse Group of Students**

School administration teams, counselors, and teachers are invited to join College Board and ISBE from **10-11 a.m. Oct. 9** to learn more about the research showing the effectiveness of exposing a wider range of students to Advanced Placement (AP) rigorous coursework. The session will focus on three courses that have shown success for first-time and underrepresented students: AP Seminar, AP Precalculus, and AP Computer Science Principals.

If you are thinking about how to build your school's AP program or how to make sure your AP courses mirror the demographics of the rest of your school, this is the webinar for you.

Register for the [Providing AP Opportunities to a More Diverse Group of Students webinar](#).

**NEW**

## **STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES**

### **2024-25 United States Senate Youth Program**

Applications for the United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) for the 63rd annual Washington Week to be held March 1-8, 2025, are due by **4 p.m. Oct. 4**. USSYP is a unique educational experience for outstanding high school seniors and juniors interested in pursuing careers in public service.

Two student delegates plus a first and second alternate will be designated by the chief school officer from each state, the District of Columbia, and Department of Defense Education Activity by Dec. 1. The students will meet their peers from across the nation, be immersed in leadership experiences, and receive a \$10,000 undergraduate college scholarship in the name of the U.S. Senate. The program encourages outstanding young people in our country to become leaders in government and public service.

High school juniors or seniors interested in applying must demonstrate leadership by actively serving in elected or appointed positions in which they are representing a constituency in organizations related to student government, education, public affairs, or community service. They must be enrolled in high school and living in the state that they will represent for the entire 2024–25 academic year and be a legal permanent resident or citizen of the United States.

Please visit the [ISBE United States Senate Youth Program webpage](#) for more eligibility information and for the application. Contact [ussyp@isbe.net](mailto:ussyp@isbe.net) or 217-782-5270 if you have questions.

### **Help Your Students Get Ready to Vote in the 2024 Elections**

As the 2024 presidential election approaches, it's a good time to remind your students of their options for registering to vote. Any student who is currently 17 but will turn 18 on or before Nov. 5 may register and vote in the Nov. 5 election. Similarly, students who are now 17 but will turn 18 on or before the April 1, 2025, consolidated elections may register and vote in that election. Students who are 18 and citizens of the United States can register to vote if they have not already. Additionally, individuals who are 16 years old may preregister to vote. Students may [register to vote online](#) and can find additional information on the [Illinois State Board of Elections website](#).

NEW

## WELLNESS & STUDENT CARE

### **Rescheduled Training - Lessons from the Field: The Secret is OUT! Helping McKinney-Vento Families With Housing in Illinois**

There is a way for your school district to financially help McKinney-Vento families keep or rehouse in your community and, at the same time, save you money on transportation costs and receive additional reimbursement via state transportation funding. This option enables a family to receive support through the local Continuum of Care homeless agency in your area. Families can take advantage of a partnership between a school and its local Continuum of Care agency to become or remain financially stable. Additionally, children who are involved can continue to have a quality education without interruption. Join ISBE for a webinar at **1:30 p.m. Oct. 16** to learn more.

The guest speaker will be Tom Bookler, a McKinney-Vento regional liaison based in Des Plaines. He will take you through the ISBE Housing Checklist, which is a simple guide to help you implement this program in your school district. You also will hear success stories. [Register for Lessons from the Field: The Secret is OUT! Helping McKinney-Vento Families with Housing in Illinois.](#)

### **FitnessGram: Empowering Illinois Students Through Physical Fitness**

We are excited to share important updates regarding FitnessGram, the state-mandated physical fitness assessment for students in Grades 3-12. As you know, FitnessGram provides valuable data on student fitness levels, helping schools and districts promote healthier lifestyles and improve academic performance.

Key updates for SY 2024-25:

- **Continued Importance of FitnessGram:** FitnessGram remains a crucial component of the commitment made by ISBE to student health and wellness.
- **Data Submission Deadline:** All FitnessGram data for Grades 5, 7, and 10 must be submitted to ISBE through the IWAS system by **June 30, 2025**.

- **New IWAS Users:** If you are new to IWAS, please refer to the [Student Health Data: Physical Fitness IWAS Electronic Submission User Guide](#) for detailed instructions on how to create an account and report FitnessGram data.

See our [FitnessGram Best Practices document](#) for more information, including resources and support.

## EDUCATOR RECOGNITION

### Accepting Nominations for 2025 Those Who Excel & Teacher of the Year Awards

Join ISBE in celebrating the accomplishments of outstanding educators across the state by nominating your colleagues and community members for the [2025 Those Who Excel & Teacher of the Year Awards](#). **New this year, all candidates must be nominated before being invited to apply.** Anyone may submit nominations, and there is no limit to the number of nominations that can be submitted by a person, school, or district. It takes only five minutes to [submit a nomination](#) that could lead to your staff and schools being recognized with the highest educational honor in the state. Eligible candidates will then be invited to submit an official application. Nominations for consideration in the 2025 award cycle are due **Oct. 15**.

Nominators, external relations staff, and potential applicants are all encouraged to [review the recording of ISBE's TWE&TOY Awards Informational Webinar](#)  to learn more about the agency's awards process and discover how to integrate ISBE's awards within your school communities.

### Thomas Lay Burroughs Award

Does your school district have an outstanding school board member – someone who has pushed for equity, overcome challenges, and improved outcomes for students? Nominate them for the [Thomas Lay Burroughs Award](#)!

Named after late State Board of Education Chairman Tom Burroughs, the annual Burroughs Award recognizes extraordinary service on a local board of education, welcoming nominations of any school board member who has demonstrated:

- Personal leadership in improving student learning, closing achievement gaps, and supporting educational excellence; and/or
- Personal leadership in expanding educational opportunities for underserved students; and/or
- Personal leadership in resolving a crisis or major difficulty with the result of more equitable outcomes for students.

Submit your nomination, using the [Thomas Lay Burroughs Award Nomination Submission form](#), by the close of business on Friday, **Oct. 18**.

## **Eighteen Illinois Schools Receive Prestigious National Blue Ribbon School Recognition**

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona named 18 schools in Illinois, among 356 nationwide, as [National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2024](#). The U.S. Department of Education selects National Blue Ribbon Schools based on their overall academic performance or progress in narrowing achievement gaps between student subgroups.

These schools serve as models of effective and innovative practices for educators across the nation. Blue Ribbon Schools are committed to empowering educators, centering equity, and collaborating with community and family members to ensure student success. Schools, both public and nonpublic, may be nominated for the award only once within a five-year period.

Congratulations to Illinois' 2024 National Blue Ribbon Schools! Read the [full list of 2024 National Blue Ribbon winners](#).

## **IN BRIEF**

### **Educator Opportunities**

#### **Illinois Teacher Leadership Summit**

Each year, the Illinois Teacher Leadership Summit welcomes teams of leaders, teachers, administrators, and education stakeholders who come together to work on various projects with one goal -- student success. The summit is a great opportunity for teams to develop an action plan to implement ideas and innovations in their schools, districts, and/or education-focused organization. Learn more about the Illinois Teacher Leadership Summit and register on the [Illinois Teacher Leadership Summit website](#). This year's summit will be held in Normal **Feb. 28-March 1, 2025**.

#### **Illinois Conference on Volunteerism and Administration**

The Illinois Department of Human Services -- Serve Illinois invites educators across the state to attend the Illinois Conference on Volunteerism and Administration on **Oct. 10** in Chicago. Attendees at this convening will be among the first to learn about the upcoming launch of civics in the classroom curriculum, discover volunteer engagement resources, and connect with colleagues supporting civic-minded youth. [Sign up now for the Illinois Conference on Volunteerism & Administration](#). Registration closes Oct. 4.

### **Student Opportunities**

#### **18th Annual Create-A-Greeting Card Scholarship Contest**

The Gallery Collection invites high school students to enter the [18th Annual Create-A-Greeting Card \\$10,000 Scholarship Contest](#). Students can design a greeting card for the opportunity to win a \$10,000 scholarship. Plus, the winning entry will be made into a bona fide greeting card. Learn more about the contest on the [Gallery Collection website](#).

### **Featured ISBE Career Opportunities**

- [Educator Licensure and Professional Development Coordinator \(Principal Consultant #1829\)](#)
- [Audit Reviewer \(Principal Consultant #1637\)](#)

[View all open positions at ISBE.](#)