



Weekly Message

March 15, 2016

Message From State Superintendent Tony Smith, Ph.D.

Hello,

One of my primary areas of focus as Illinois' State Superintendent is to ensure that students of all abilities and socioeconomic backgrounds have fair access to a high-quality, world-class education. As I've had the opportunity to travel the state and get to know your local school communities better over the last 10 months, I've seen outstanding examples of programs and educators who bring this goal to life in innovative and inspirational ways.

One such example I'd like to share with you is the Kendall County Special Education Cooperative's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program based at Community Unit School District 308. This countywide program serves children ages 3 to 21 with hearing loss in the Oswego, Yorkville, Plano, and Lisbon school districts and the grade school and high school in Newark. It provides educational support by having educators travel to students' home schools and through specialized services in a classroom setting.

As teacher Shelley Strnad explains, hearing loss can create barriers to learning and feelings of isolation, so the program teaches valuable social and coping skills in a nonthreatening environment with other children who share these unique challenges. These skills then help students thrive while interacting with their peers and other adults in a general education setting.

District 308's staff has put together a brief video to explain the program's highlights, with insights from Strnad and other educators. I encourage you all to take a few minutes to watch and learn more at <https://vimeo.com/156297704>.

I would also like to congratulate Superintendent John Asplund of Farmington Central School District 265, who has been named one of Education Week's 2016 [Leaders to Learn From](#). Asplund was recognized for his leadership in innovation, which includes helping the school evolve beyond its rural roots to revitalize the community and facilitating the installation of the largest solar array in a U.S. public school. You may read more about Asplund's accomplishments at <http://leaders.edweek.org/profile/john-asplund-superintendent-innovation/>.

In other agency news, our Assessment Division has an important update about the testing parameters for high school students on the [Illinois Science Assessment](#) that will debut later this spring. Please see

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more details in the item immediately following the calendar below. I recently sat down with Illinois Principals Association Executive Director Jason Leahy for another podcast discussion. It is posted [here](#).

Finally, the Board and I would like to extend our deepest sympathies to the Elk Grove High School community after teacher and coach Alexa Rodheim-Cutler passed away from breast cancer last week at only 29 years old. Alexa received an Early Career Educator Award of Excellence from the Illinois State Board of Education's Those Who Excel program in October 2013. You may read more about her life and accomplishments [here](#). We hope her passion and dedication continue to inspire other young educators to make a meaningful difference in the lives of students and community members.

Thank you,
Tony

Upcoming ISBE Dates and Deadlines

Please note this is not a complete list of events, meetings, and deadlines. For questions, call the Illinois State Board of Education at (866) 262-6663 or (217) 782-4321 or visit the agency's official website at <http://www.isbe.net>.

- **2016 Illinois Arts Education Week** – March 14-20
- **Deadline to submit applications for fiscal year 2016 federal Migrant Education Program funding for summer school programs** – March 15 (www.isbe.net/bilingual/pdfs/20-37A-migrant-summer-app.pdf)
- **Deadline to enter the 2016 Illinois Fatherhood Initiative Chicago White Sox Fatherhood Essay Contest** – March 15 (www.4fathers.org/)
- **2016 Race to the Top Regional Networking meeting in Malta** – March 16 (https://reg.abcsignup.com/reg/event_page.aspx?ek=0044-0016-c8d8466d32ae4cd484d72e795ff6b0be)
- **Fiscal Year 2016 Focus and Priority School Improvement Plan Submission Webinar** – March 22 (<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6596071783056680196>)
- **Deadline to apply for 2016-17 School Grants for Healthy Kids** – April 1 (www.actionforhealthykids.org/grants)
- **Deadline to register for Seal of Biliteracy Symposium** – April 1 (<http://webapps.isbe.net/ISBEConference/>)
- **No Kid Hungry Illinois summer grant application deadline** – April 1 (<http://grants.nokidhungry.org/>)
- **Illinois PTA's annual convention** – April 1-2 (www.illinoispta.org/convention.html)
- **Illinois Healthy & High-Performing Green Schools Symposium** – April 8 (www.usgbc-illinois.org/events/schoolsymposium/)
- **Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision) and Part 27 (Standards for Endorsements in Specific Teaching Fields)** – Public comment ends April 11
- **Seal of Biliteracy Symposium** – April 12
- **Deadline to submit the Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program (TAOEP) FY 2017 RFP** – April 25
- **Ninth annual Illinois School Wellness Conference** – April 28
- **National School Nurse Day** – May 11 (<http://www.nasn.org/AboutNASN/NationalSchoolNurseDay>)
- **Deadline to submit proposals for the Prevention Initiative Training and Technical Assistance: Birth to 3 Years RFP** – May 16 (<http://isbe.net/earlychi/html/birth-3.htm>)
- **ISBE offices closed for Memorial Day** – May 30

- **Deadline to submit nomination forms for the 2016-17 Those Who Excel/Illinois Teacher of the Year program** – June 6 (www.isbe.net/those-who-excel/2017/03-10-twe-application16-17.pdf)
- **Deadline to submit data in the Student Health - Vision system** – June 30
- **Deadline for Focus or Priority schools to update or develop and submit an Intervention or Transformation plan to ISBE** – June 30.
- **Postmark deadline for waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in fall 2016** – Aug. 12, 2016 (See www.isbe.net/isbewaivers/default.htm for public notice requirements for all waiver requests.)

Assessment and Accountability

Important Information on the Illinois Science Assessment for High School

Thanks to the feedback of a number of high school educators and administrators, we have adjusted the testing parameters for high school students who will take the Illinois Science Assessment.

Students who are enrolled in one of the following courses and who do not have a prior full year credit in any of the following courses must test: 03051A000 Biology, 03052A000 Biology – Advanced Studies, 03056A000 AP Biology, or 03057A000 IB Biology.

Students who will take the Dynamic Learning Maps alternate assessment in science will test at grades 5, 8, and 11. There is no end-of-course assessment available on the alternate assessment, so it will be administered at grade 11, which is the currently tested grade in English language arts and math on the alternate assessment.

School Technology

Illinois' Statewide Consortium for K-12 Technology Purchases

The Illinois Learning Technology Purchase Program (ILTPP) is a statewide purchasing consortium for technology products and services that negotiates contracts on behalf of all K-12 public and private school districts in Illinois. Through this program, schools are able to purchase technology products and services, from Chromebooks to antivirus software, that are discounted up to 35 percent off retail price.

For more information on ILTPP, such as its Chromebook Showcases and other events, visit ilttp.k12.il.us.

Illinois Student Assistance Commission

ISAC FAFSA Completion Initiative

There's still time for high school seniors to access federal and even some institutional aid for college by filing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Although the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) recently announced this year's [cut-off date](#) for fiscal year 2017 Monetary Award Program (MAP) awards (students who filed FAFSAs on or



after March 10 will not be eligible for MAP unless ISAC determines there will be additional funds to distribute later in the year), federal Pell dollars and other financial aid continue to be available to Illinois students.

Last year, more than 61 percent of Illinois' 12th-grade students completed a FAFSA (as of June 30, 2015). This year, ISAC aims to move the needle even higher and help more students get to college.

Schools can help increase their FAFSA completion rates by participating in ISAC's [FAFSA Completion Initiative](#). This free service offers schools a way to effectively improve school FAFSA completions by easily identifying students who have not filed a FAFSA, so high school counselors can reach those who might otherwise not complete an application. Principals can sign up their high school for the initiative through the [Gift Assistance Program Portal](#).

ISAC is also offering and/or helping to support free FAFSA Completion Workshops across the state. Visit the [ISAC Outreach Calendar](#) to learn more. The [ISACorps](#), the agency's team of near-peer college mentors, can also help support in-school events and are available to provide one-on-one assistance.

Free Text Messaging Services Provides College Access, Financial Aid Answers

“ISAC College Q&A” is a free service that answers students’



questions and provides important information about college planning events and deadlines from ISAC’s college access and financial aid experts – all via text message.

To text with one of ISAC’s college mentors, students and/or their parents can simply text their first and last name to one of the phone numbers listed below that is in their area code:

- (773) 453-9520
- (630) 216-4910
- (847) 243-6470
- (815) 242-4630
- (217) 207-3265
- (309) 306-7066
- (708) 252-3890
- (618) 223-6450

For more information about the service, contact isac.outreach@isac.illinois.gov.

System of Support & District Intervention

FY 2016 Focus and Priority School Improvement Plan Submission Webinar

On Dec. 10, 2015, President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) provided guidance to states to facilitate an orderly transition for the programs authorized by ESSA. As part of this guidance, ED informed states with an approved ESEA flexibility waiver to continue to implement flexibility requests through the 2015-16 school year. Therefore, Illinois schools identified as Focus or Priority must update or develop and submit an Intervention or Transformation (school improvement) plan to ISBE by June 30.

The following link provides access to the Statewide System of Support Focus and Priority schools lists:

www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/state_sys_support.htm. If a school is on one of these lists, it must submit a plan to ISBE.

ISBE’s Division of System of Support and District Intervention will host a webinar on March 22 to provide Focus and Priority schools with plan submission guidance for Intervention and Transformation plans using the Rising Star continuous improvement planning system tool. This webinar will also provide current information as an update to the “September 2014 ISBE Continuous Improvement and Rising Star Platform Frequently Asked Questions” document.

Eligible participants for this webinar include school improvement team members, school/district leadership team members, process managers, and individuals who will submit a school’s Intervention or Transformation plan. The webinar will be recorded and made available on ISBE’s website. To register, go to <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6596071783056680196>. A confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar will then be sent.

For more information, please contact Robin M. Lisboa, Division Administrator for System of Support and District Intervention, at rlisboa@isbe.net.

- **Fiscal Year 2016 Focus and Priority School Improvement Plan Submission Webinar**
- **Date:** March 22
- **Time:** 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- **Register:** <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6596071783056680196>

Every Student Succeeds Act

New ISBE Website Provides Every Student Succeeds Act Resources

ISBE has created an Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) webpage at www.isbe.net/ESSA/default.htm with resources about the new version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the federal education law focused on equal opportunity for all students.

Due to the complexity of ESSA, ISBE will engage in deliberate stakeholder involvement throughout this process. ISBE will conduct a listening tour throughout Illinois this spring. Specific dates will be announced as they become available.

The ESSA webpage will be updated as additional resources become available. Meanwhile, questions, comments, or concerns about ESSA should be sent to essa@isbe.net.

Early Childhood

FY 2017 Prevention Initiative Training and Technical Assistance RFP Released

The Prevention Initiative Training and Technical Assistance: Birth to 3 Years request for proposals (RFP) is now available. The purpose of the RFP is to identify a qualified entity to coordinate and deliver statewide training and technical assistance services as outlined in this RFP to the recipients of Prevention Initiative grants. Proposals must be received at ISBE no later than 4 p.m. on May 16.

The RFP is available at <http://isbe.net/earlychi/html/birth-3.htm>.

The RFP can also be obtained by contacting the Early Childhood Division at (217) 524-4835.

Family Engagement

Illinois PTA's Annual Convention Scheduled for April 1-2 in Springfield

The Illinois PTA is hosting its 114th annual convention in Springfield on April 1 and 2. This event is for parents, teachers, and all child advocates. It provides a unique opportunity to share new ideas, improve skills, and recharge volunteer energy as leaders from all areas of the state interact with one another.

Workshop topics will include school assessments, family involvement, engaging the community and forming partnerships, being tech savvy, money management, and leadership development.

For more information and to register, visit www.illinoispta.org/convention.html.

State Funding and Forecasting

Data Available to Start Estimating Fiscal Year 2017 General State Aid

ISBE's State Funding and Forecasting staff has posted preliminary data used to complete the forecasted fiscal year 2017 General State Aid (GSA) claim. Please visit the [GSA website](#) to obtain the following data sets found under the "Reports" heading:

- Final EAV 2013 and Tax Rates
- Preliminary 2014 EAV and Tax Rates
- Preliminary 2014 Limiting Rates
- CPPRT receipts from 2014
- Districts Subject to the Alternate PTELL Adjustment

You are encouraged to use these reports in conjunction with the updated FY 2017 forecasting tool (also available on the [GSA website](#) under the "Tools" heading) to assist with calculating your estimated GSA for FY 2017 budgeting purposes. We ask that you review the data listed on the website and compare it your records.

Please contact State Funding and Forecasting staff at (217) 782-0249 if you identify any discrepancies.

In Brief

Educator Recognition

- Congratulations to the Illinois Principals Association/Horace Mann 2016-17 Principals of the Year. The award winners are:
 - **Elementary Principal of the Year** – Aimee Kasper, Kishwaukee Elementary School, Rockford School District 205
 - **Middle School/Junior High Principal of the Year** – Charley Cass, Central Junior High School, Frankfort CUSD 168
 - **High School Principal of the Year** – Robert Nolting, Victor J. Andrew High School, Consolidated High School District 230
 - **Assistant Principal of the Year** – Andrew Johnson, Teutopolis High School, Teutopolis CUSD 50

School Recognition

- **Lombard Elementary District 44** recently won a Gold Sustainable Award from the Illinois Landscape Contractors Association for its nature-based playground at William Hammerschmidt Elementary School. WHS Learn+Play Gardens was the only project in Illinois to receive the honor. Read more at www.sd44.org/pages/Lombard_IL/News/WHSLearn_x2b_Play_Gardens_Wi. Congratulations to the Lombard community!

Student Recognition

- Two Illinois students were named the state's top youth volunteers for 2016 in the 21st annual Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. **Jungin Angie Lee of Naperville** and **Nicolas Ramkumar of Champaign** each will receive a \$1,000 award, an engraved silver medallion, and a trip to Washington, D.C., this spring for the program's national recognition events. More than 29,000 youth from across the country participated in this year's program. Congratulations, Jungin and Nicolas!

Educator Opportunities

- The Illinois Association of School Administrators' **Aspiring Superintendent Summer Academy** is a program for school leaders who are thinking about becoming a superintendent. The five-day program will hone participants' leadership knowledge and skills and give them a view of the modern superintendency. For more information and questions, contact Cherry Middleton at (217) 753-2213 or cmiddleton@iasaedu.org.
- The 33rd annual **National Resource Center for Paraeducators Conference** will take place April 1-3 in Oak Brook. Sponsored by the Illinois Education Association and the National Education Association, the event will include interactive sessions on the Every Student Succeeds Act, literacy and math instruction, effective behavior management, and more. For more details and to register, go to www.nrcpara.org/conference. If you have questions, contact Jennie Young at jyoung@nea.org, Kathi Griffin at kathi.griffin@ieanea.org, or Emily Phillips at para@nrcpara.org.

- The **National Principals Leadership Institute** will hold its 19th annual Summer Institute July 9-14 in New York City. Participants will look at common attributes of successful leaders, describe the leadership demands of their settings, and compose a Personal Leadership Action Plan. For more details and to register, visit <https://npli.squarespace.com/2016-summer-institute-1/#2016-summer-institute>.

School Opportunities

- The National Principals Leadership Institute (NPLI), in partnership with TD Ameritrade, is seeking applicants for the **2016 NPLI School Innovation and Change Awards**. Winning schools will receive a \$10,000 grant. The deadline to apply is April 1. For more information, visit <https://npli.squarespace.com/sicaapplication/#logo>.
- The **Kid Explorer Club** is a comprehensive reading curriculum for pre-K through sixth grades that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards. The curriculum is diversity inclusive, enhances the student's existing school education, and is customized to overcome individual learning challenges. Students at Title I schools qualify for a tuition grant that will cover nearly 100 percent of the tuition cost. To become a host site for the summer or next school year, contact Regional Director Beatrice Cooper at (773) 672-7492, ext. 1, or beatrice@kidsexplorerclub.com.

Student Opportunities

- **Latino Art Beat** is offering \$1,000-minimum scholarships to the winners of its 2016 visual arts competition for high school juniors and seniors. For the arts competition, students may select one of two themes: "Friendship: Between the Youth of the USA and Cuba" and "What Hispanic Heritage & Culture Means to Me." Artwork must be accompanied by an entry form and original essay describing the piece. Latino Art Beat is also offering its film and animation competition for students under 21 who attend a high school or college in Illinois. Films must be original, with an original score and 15 minutes or less total running time. The deadline for all entries is May 27. For more information, visit www.latinoartbeat.com or contact latinoartbeat@hotmail.com.

School Safety

- The **Illinois School Resource Officers Association's Annual Training Conference** will take place June 22-24 in Normal. The event is open to all school-based law enforcement officers, school administrators, and school security/safety professionals. For more information, visit www.ilsroa.org.

Employment Opportunities

- Watch for vacancy lists and find instructions for applying on ISBE's Human Resources webpage at <http://www.isbe.net/hr/Default.htm>.