



Weekly Message

March 22, 2016

Message From State Superintendent Tony Smith, Ph.D.

Hello,

Last Wednesday, the State Board of Education met in Springfield and approved the [2016 Financial Profile report](#). The number of school districts earning the top rating of Financial Recognition grew this year to 568. Illinois' average financial rating score also increased slightly. However, this positive trend does not tell the whole story.

The Financial Profile analysis found that 499 or 58.6 percent of school districts are expected to deficit spend, based on districts' budget submissions for fiscal year 2016. Many districts also continue to borrow to maintain daily operations, with districts issuing \$307.2 million in debt in their operating funds in FY 2015, and still must continue to make difficult choices to cut spending.

This data is deeply troubling. Though some districts may be running more efficiently on paper, they've had to reduce staff, forgo supplies, delay necessary building repairs and maintenance, and eliminate programs for students. Several years of reduced state funding are now denying our students valuable opportunities. Worse, many of the affected students are those who rely on public school services the most. This loss strengthens our commitment to establishing a more equitable education finance system that considers schools' unique student populations, the availability of local resources, and the need for services.

In other Board news, members of the Student Advisory Council (SAC) presented the findings of their [research project](#). This year's council focused on the importance of students' feedback in efforts to improve teacher quality and build a more collaborative school community. The quality of the research and thought these students put into their project is truly extraordinary. The SAC has also asked to increase its participation at Board meetings for the upcoming school year. The council helps keep the student voice and experience present in our discussions, and I look forward to working with this student group to expand its interaction with the Board.

The Board also honored Julia Zhang, 11, of Highland Middle School in Libertyville District 70. Her artwork won first place in the 34th Annual Arts Education Week poster contest. Julia's entry features the four areas of fine art – dance, drama, music, and visual arts – to reflect this year's contest theme, "There is Magic in the Arts!" You can read more [here](#), including how to request posters. Congratulations, Julia!

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I am also pleased to report that J. Sterling Morton High School District 201 has been named a [College Board Advanced Placement® District of the Year](#). The award recognizes the district as the nation's leader among medium-size school districts in simultaneously expanding access to challenging AP courses while improving AP exam performance. Morton was one of 425 school districts across the United States and Canada that was selected for the annual AP District Honor Roll. From this list, three AP Districts of the Year – one for each category of district population size: small, medium, and large – were selected based on an analysis of three academic years of AP data.

We are so proud of the hard work of the staff and students and Morton's commitment to providing all students greater opportunities for exposure to college-level coursework. Morton's award ties in with an exciting new project to eliminate racial and income inequality in our high schools' most rigorous courses. Illinois is the first state selected to partner with the Lead Higher Initiative in a statewide challenge to close equity gaps in high school AP and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. Through this partnership, we will receive the tools and resources to strengthen our efforts to find students, in particular underrepresented students, who are eligible for AP coursework and give them greater support. Seven Illinois school districts have already committed to close their AP and IB gaps by fall 2016, and 15 more have been selected for the 2016-17 Lead Higher district cohort. You can read more about this incredible opportunity to ensure greater accessibility for all students [here](#).

Finally, my letter to families explaining the changes to this year's Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers assessment is now available in Spanish. It is posted in the [Superintendent's Corner](#) of our website.

Have a great week,
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>.

- **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)
- **Deadline to register for the April 20 School Safety Conference in Mount Prospect** – April 5 (www.gbriskcontrol.com/retasecurityregistration)
- **Illinois Healthy & High-Performing Green Schools Symposium** – April 8 (www.usgbc-illinois.org/events/schoolssymposium/)
- **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>)
- Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision), Part 20 (Standards for Endorsements in Elementary Education), Part 25 (Educator Licensure) and Part 26 (Standards for Endorsements in Early Childhood Education and in Elementary Education) – Public comment ends May 16
- 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.)

Every Student Succeeds Act

ESEA Changes Requirements for Highly Qualified Teachers

With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), some provisions are being phased in or phased out, with full implementation set for 2017-18. One provision that is no longer required for the 2016-17 school year is the Highly Qualified requirements for teachers and paraprofessionals as outlined in section 1119 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Effective July 1, teachers and paraprofessionals must meet state and local licensure requirements. For more information, please visit the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Licensure Division's website at www.isbe.net/licensure/default.htm.

English Language Learning

Virtual Option Now Available for 2016 Seal of Biliteracy Symposium

Due to limited space at the Seal of Biliteracy Symposium, ISBE will offer a virtual option for participants to view the symposium through Zoom.

Please note that virtual participants will NOT be able to participate in the symposium, but there will be an online chat room for participants to post questions and comments. These questions and comments will be reviewed after the symposium and may be used for

future development of the FAQs and Seal of Biliteracy program.

The deadline to register for the virtual option is April 7, 2016. Online registration is available at <http://webapps.isbe.net/ISBEConference/>. A link with directions to sign into Zoom will be emailed to participants by April 8.

Please email biliteracy@isbe.net or contact ISBE's Division of English Language Learning at (312) 814-3850 with any questions.

Family Engagement

Input Sought for New Website Promoting Family and School Engagement

ISBE and the University of Illinois are creating a new website focused on promoting family and school engagement. The new website will provide information, resources, activities, and ideas that highlight bringing families and schools together.

Currently, ISBE and university staff members are gathering information from school staff and families to learn what they would like included on the new website. Please consider filling out a short online survey and sharing this information with families and colleagues.

To participate, visit go.illinois.edu/ParentsSurvey.

School Safety Issues

School Safety Conference on April 20

ISBE, RETA Security, Oak Park and River Forest High School, Oak Park Police and Fire Department, and Proviso Area for Exceptional Children are hosting a gathering of experts in the field of school safety and crisis prevention to heighten safety awareness. The April 20 event in Mount Prospect is free and will teach participants how to enhance the safety and security of their school facility on a day-to-day basis and long term. This vital information will be practical and easy to apply, and there will be ample time for specific questions.

- **Date:** April 20
- **Time:** 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- **Location:** Bristol Palace, 828 E. Rand Road, Mount Prospect, IL 60056
- **Registration:**
www.gbriskcontrol.com/retasecurityregistration

Registration is open through April 5.

District administrators, school administrators, police and fire officials, transportation directors, and any other party in charge of school safety are encouraged to attend. Registration is limited to four people per department or school. If more than four participants are needed, please call Randy Braverman at (224) 578-0484.

Rules and Waivers

Invitation to Comment on Rules

Four sets of proposed amendments recently reviewed by ISBE are available for public comment. The proposals and a summary of the issues involved have been posted at www.isbe.net/rules; choose “Proposed Rules and Amendments.” Please submit any comments or suggestions to rules@isbe.net. The public comment period ends May 16. The rulemakings are:

- **Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision),**
- **Part 20 (Standards for Endorsements in Elementary Education),**
- **Part 25 (Educator Licensure), and**

- **Part 26 (Standards for Endorsements in Early Childhood Education and in Elementary Education).**

Notice of Completed Rulemaking

Please be advised that four sets of amendments recently adopted by ISBE became effective March 2.

Changes have been posted at www.isbe.net/rules/archive/default.htm. Please choose “Rules Currently in Effect” and scroll to the Part number.

Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision): See Section 1.540.

Part 25 (Educator Licensure): See Sections 25.15, 25.25, 25.60, 25.70, 25.72, 25.335, 25.337, 25.345, 25.355, 25.400, 25.425, 25.450, 25.480, 25.485, 25.486, 25.487, 25.488, 25.489, 25.490, 25.491, 25.520, 25.610, 25.620, 25.800, 25.805, 25.830 and 25.855.

Part 425 (Voluntary Registration and Recognition of Nonpublic Schools): See Sections 425.20 and 425.30.

Part 525 (Regional Offices of Education and Intermediate Services): See Sections 525.20 and 525.50.

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 iltp.p.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.

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

Educator Opportunities

- The official state affiliate of the national Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents has formed. The **Illinois Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents** (IALAS) is made up of like-minded professionals focused on education and a commitment to all students. Its mission statement is to provide authentic, high-quality learning opportunities for students by building capacity among Latino educational leaders and by advocating for responsive, informed policy development. IALAS is currently running a free membership drive. Information about becoming a member, its newsletter, and upcoming events can be found at www.ialas.org.
- The Illinois Association of School Administrators is hosting a series of **Leadership in Literacy workshops** for its members in April. The workshops will focus on innovative solutions, including resolving grade-level reading deficiencies through the Sonday System from Winsor Learning and the influence of reading preparedness on lifelong learning supported by myOn. Click [here](#) for dates and registration information.
- 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.

School Opportunities

- 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.

District Opportunities

- Applications are now being accepted for the \$100,000 **Innovations in American Government Awards**. Offered by Harvard Kennedy School's Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, the Innovations Award recognizes programs that demonstrate creative and effective government at its best. All units of government are eligible to apply for recognition. Applications and additional information are available at www.innovationsaward.harvard.edu. The deadline to apply is April 15.

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>.