



Illinois State Board of Education

Weekly Message

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 State Superintendent

Jan. 10, 2011

Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

The first full week of 2011 has proven to be a very active one in Springfield as lawmakers try to move forward with a number of issues prior to the start of the new General Assembly later this week. In addition to business at the Capitol, members of the State Board of Education will finalize their budget recommendation at their January meeting in Springfield on Wednesday and Thursday.

There was a frenzy of activity during the holidays as certain groups pushed legislators to move forward with additional reform measures during the closing days of the current General Assembly. It appears that such legislation will not pass prior to new legislators being sworn in on Wednesday. A number of the reforms being discussed do make sense and should be examined more closely; however, it is prudent to move deliberatively and collaboratively in order to achieve reform that works and to minimize unintended consequences. I am sure that this conversation will and should continue during the spring session.

During the first week, legislators took on a number of high profile issues, including the death penalty, Medicaid and workers' compensation. The one issue that has generated the most attention is finding a way to close the state's structural deficit. It now appears possible that within a very short period of time legislators could vote on increasing taxes to pay down the state's backlog of bills, make this year's payment to the pension systems and close the structural deficit over a period of years. The proposal is a combination of tax increases, including income, corporate and cigarette taxes and would include some form of property tax relief.

If this plan passes, it is my hope that we will at least see schools being paid what they're owed in a timelier manner and perhaps a modest increase. It contains provisions that limit the growth of state spending and will likely sunset after a few years, once again relying on natural revenue growth to fund state operations.

Later this week the Board will be making its budget recommendation. Last month, Board members made it clear that regardless of what happens on the revenue side there needs to be an increase in state spending for education. I will be making a recommendation to the Board later this week that calls for an increase in FY 11 General Revenue Funds for education. Given that education is foundational to job creation and that the costs for education continue to climb, increasing state funding for education is a reasonable request and one lawmakers cannot afford to ignore.

Thanks,

Chris

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Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

- **HealthierUS School Challenge (HUSCC) mini-grant application deadline (www.kidseatwell.org) – Jan. 14**

- **Applications due for Energy Efficiency Grants** – Jan. 15
- **Econ Illinois K-12 Teacher Conference on Financial Literacy** – Jan. 21
- **Receipt deadline for ordering PSAE Day 1 ACT-Approved accommodations test materials** – Jan. 27
- **Deadline for ordering PSAE Day 2 standard time and accommodations test materials** – Jan. 28
- **2010-11 Teacher Salary Study Form deadline** – Feb. 1
- **2010-11 Noncertified Staff Salary Study deadline** – Feb. 1
- **Econ Illinois’ Illinois Personal Finance challenge registration deadline** – Feb. 1
- **Econ Illinois’ Economics Challenge registration deadline** – Feb. 1
- **Mathematics and the Common Core: Helping Illinois Educators Prepare for New Standards conference in Chicago** – Feb. 16
- **Part 151 (School Construction Program)** – Public comment period ends Feb. 18.
- **Registration deadline for Econ Illinois’ The Stock Market Game** – Feb. 18
- **PSAE Pre-ID labels sent to ACT for printing** – Feb. 25
- **Illinois New Teacher Collaborative’s Induction and Mentoring Conference in Springfield** – March 1-2
- **Receipt deadline for ordering PSAE Day 1 State-Allowed accommodations test materials** – March 11
- **Illinois Young Authors’ Conference** – May 21
- **2010-11 Eye Examination Data Collection deadline** – June 30

Educator and School Development

Survey Required for Federal State Fiscal Stabilization Funds

The Illinois State Board of Education is seeking your cooperation in completing a survey regarding both teacher and principal evaluations being conducted in your district. This survey is required by the federal government in connection with the State’s previous receipt of Federal State Fiscal Stabilization Funds (SFSF).

The goal of the survey is to enable State officials, parents, local educators and other stakeholders to measure Illinois’ progress towards improving teacher effectiveness and achieving equity in the distribution of teachers and principals. Data that will be posted will be aggregated, and will be made available, no later than Feb. 28, 2011, on the following portion of our website: <http://www.isbe.net/peac/html/surveyresults.htm>.

It is imperative that all districts respond to this survey. This is baseline data that will be posted on the ISBE website and will be shared with the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council, which under PA 96-0861, is charged with making recommendations to the State Superintendent for model teacher and principal evaluation frameworks.

The survey can be found at the following link: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JN2VQMR>. Surveys

are due back to ISBE by Jan. 31, 2011. They must be submitted electronically.

If you have any questions please contact Patrick Murphy, Division Administrator, Educator and School Development at pmurphy@isbe.net or 217-782-2948.

Assessment

Webinar on ISAT Test Administration Procedures and Issues Offered

Sign up now for a webinar titled “ISAT 2011 – Test Administration Procedures and Issues.” This Webinar will cover some of the basic information, procedures and issues regarding the ISAT test administration. A question-and-answer session will follow the webinar presentation.

The webinar is designed for district coordinators, school coordinators and test administrators. New coordinators are especially encouraged to participate. The session will review general ISAT information, accommodations, linguistically modified tests, test security, test preparation, test administration and test irregularities.

If you are unable to attend the webinar, the presentation and PowerPoint will be posted after the second session on the ISAT Web page, <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/isat.htm>.

Register now. Space is limited. There are two dates to choose from. Please select one date that is most

convenient as the material covered will be the same for each session.

- 9-10:30 a.m., Wednesday, Jan. 26, 2011, <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/686412737>
- 1:30-3 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 27, 2011, <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/981136449>

After registering you will receive a confirmation e-mail containing information about joining the webinar.

System Requirements for PC-based attendees are Windows 7, Vista, XP or 2003 Server. For Macintosh-based attendees, Mac OS X 10.4.11 (Tiger) or newer is required.

Department of Public Health

Prevention and Control Stressed With Rise in Cases of Bed Bugs

In response to the increasing number of bed bug incidents occurring across the country in recent months, here is valuable information from the Illinois Department of Public Health:

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/pcbbugs.htm>.

The website provides a number of documents, including those on identification and inspection of bed bugs; guidelines for schools and daycare centers; and others for prevention and control.

While bed bugs do not transmit human disease, they are of public health importance because of risk of allergic reactions, secondary infections, stress, loss of sleep, life disruption, financial burden and lost productivity for those affected. The cost of treating an infestation can be substantial, IDPH officials say.

For more information, contact the Illinois Department of Public Health, Division of Environmental Health at 217-782-5830, TTY (hearing-impaired use only) 800-547-0466.

School Business Services

Deadline Nears for Energy Efficiency Grants Applications

The applications for Energy Efficiency Grants must be submitted online to the Regional Offices of Education by

Jan. 15, 2011. The Energy Efficiency Grants are a dollar for dollar state matching grant program providing up to \$250,000 for energy efficiency projects in schools. All school districts, charter schools, vocational center or public university laboratory schools are eligible. The FY 2010 Capital Bill provided \$50 million for Energy Efficiency Grants. The grants are planned to be distributed over the next two fiscal years, with \$9 million currently released.

The online applications can be found on the IWAS website under Energy Efficiency Grants. For additional information and assistance, contact Kimberly Beachy with the School Business Services Division at 217-785-8779.

Illinois Energy Now Special Lighting Sale Runs until April 15

The State Energy Office at the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is announcing a special lighting sale for public sector buildings through its Illinois Energy Now program.

The federal government has mandated that T12 lamps be phased out of production in 2012. Approximately 30 percent of all fluorescent lamps sold in the U.S. are still T12 technology. As a result of the T12 phase out, 70 percent of all T12 fluorescent lamps sold in the U.S. will be phased out by July 2012. This means all public facilities will eventually have to upgrade all of their T12 lighting.

To help the public sector and public schools, the State's Illinois Energy Now program is offering its best incentives to upgrade to high-efficiency T8 or T5 lamps. DCEO's Illinois Energy Now special sale is open to municipalities, park districts, fire districts, public k-12 schools, public universities, community colleges and state and federal facilities within ComEd and Ameren electric service areas.

The Illinois Energy Now special sale is from Dec. 13, 2010, to April 15, 2011. Applicants seeking the Illinois Energy Now Special must submit an addendum along with the standard application and follow the Public Sector Electric Efficiency Program Guidelines and specifications posted at <http://www.IllinoisEnergy.org> (follow the Illinois Energy Now link). Incentives cannot exceed 100 percent of project cost.

The Illinois Energy Now program offers a portfolio of electric efficiency programs to achieve targeted annual

energy savings goals. The Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard was signed in to law August 2007, giving Illinois among the most ambitious energy efficiency standards in the nation. This initiative required Illinois utilities to reduce overall electric usage by 0.2 percent of demand in 2008, climbing to 2 percent by 2015. This portfolio creates a substantial budget for programs and incentives to reduce electric energy usage and demand for customers of ComEd and Ameren.

Legal

Mandatory Period of Silence Found Constitutional

On Oct. 15, 2010, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit reversed the decision of the U.S. District Court and determined that Section 1 of “The Silent Reflection and Student Prayer Act” (the “Act”) is, on its face, constitutional. On Dec. 30, 2010, after denying the Plaintiff’s Petition for Rehearing, the Seventh Circuit issued its mandate, which requires the District Court to lift the injunction on the Act’s implementation. It is anticipated that the District Court will lift the injunction this week, at which time the Act will retake effect. ISBE will send notice via IWAS when the injunction is lifted.

Section 1 of the Act states: “In each public school classroom the teacher in charge shall observe a brief period of silence with the participation of all the pupils therein assembled at the opening of every school day. This period shall not be conducted as a religious exercise but shall be an opportunity for silent prayer or for silent reflection on the anticipated activities of the day.”

While Section 1 does not define the length of the period of silence, the Seventh Circuit pointed approvingly to an example of one district that, when the law was in effect, made a school-wide morning announcement that there would be a brief period of silence, and then, after fifteen (15) seconds had passed, the announcer would begin the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Court’s apparent approval of this example does not mandate that the brief period of silence must be implemented in that way, and — unless presented with any evidence that the Act is being implemented in an unconstitutional manner — the State Board of Education has no intention to limit Illinois school districts’ flexibility to implement in a manner that works best for the district and its students.

Innovation and Improvement

Lead Partner RFSP Release for FY 2012 School Improvement Grants

The Innovation and Improvement Division is seeking applications for entities to serve as an Illinois State Board of Education approved Lead Partner to offer services and programs designed to assist school districts [local educational agencies (LEA)] with school improvement efforts in Illinois’ persistently lowest schools.

Information (e.g., release date, due date, requirements, related webinars) regarding this RFSP will be available at the Illinois Procurement Board (<http://www.purchase.state.il.us/>).

A Bidders Webinar will be conducted by ISBE on Thursday, Feb. 3, 2011, from 1 to 3 p.m. CST to discuss the FY 2012 SIG 1003(g) Lead Partner RFSP and answer questions from potential applicants. Pre-registration is required at <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/580311904>.

Institutions of higher education, community based organizations, not-for-profit or for-profit entities are eligible to apply provided they have evidence of their demonstrated record of success in supporting academically underperforming schools and districts and demonstrate the qualifications defined in the RFSP. The successful bidders for this solicitation may be contracted for these services in one of two ways:

- Directly by an LEA that has successfully competed for a School Improvement Grant pursuant to Title I, Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 or;
- Directly with ISBE to support LEA activities or as part of a direct state intervention. This work will include working with ISBE, the LEA, and the school.

A separate Request for Proposals (RFP) will be used to identify LEAs with eligible Tier I and Tier II schools that will receive Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grants [SIG 1003(g)] in spring 2011 for FY 2012. Detailed information on the SIG 1003(g) grants, including the list of eligible LEAs and schools, access to the USDE Federal Guidance, and school improvement resources, are available on the ISBE School Improvement Grant webpage at http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/sip_1003.htm.

Should you have any questions related to the Lead Partner RFSP or the FY 2012 SIG 1003(g) grant, contact Marti Woelfle at mwoelfle@isbe.net or 217-524-4832.

ISBE Introduces Parent Involvement Webinar Series

The Illinois State Board of Education's Division of Innovation and Improvement has planned a series of four 90 minute Parent Involvement Webinars as part of a statewide parent involvement initiative. The webinars will examine areas of best practices pertaining to parent involvement and provide tools and resources for implementing evidence-based strategies. These sessions are open to district staff, school staff, parent facilitators and parents. Information on two of the upcoming sessions is given below. You may register by clicking on the registration links.

- School-Home Communication**, 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Jan. 27: The reliability of a three-legged stool depends on each of its parts and if you were to remove the seat, the function of the remaining pieces becomes subject to speculation. The seat is the piece that joins the three legs and gives it value in its purpose. School-Home Communication is like the seat of the stool – it is the piece that brings the student, the family and the school together in a purposeful relationship. This webinar will offer evidence-based tools, strategies and resources that help schools to develop better communication with families and help build relationships that support success. Register at <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/552317264>.
- Parent Involvement as a Collaborative Process**, 3:30 to 5 p.m., Feb. 24: No single person can hum a symphony – it takes a full orchestra to deliver all of the elements that make it a symphony. Student success is much like a symphony in that it depends on several persons coming together in a collaborative spirit to play their part. This webinar will examine three dimensions of parent involvement that together build a supportive educational network through intentional collaborative processes. It will offer evidence-based tools, strategies and resources to help schools develop collaborative relationships with families, other schools, and assist in building positive relationships between families that support student success. Register at

<https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/276971937>.

Grant Readers Sought for 21st Century Community Learning Center Program

The Illinois State Board of Education's Innovation and Improvement division, is seeking grant readers for the FY 2012 21st Century Community Learning Center Program competition.

Preferred Candidates should have knowledge and experience in after-school programming and community based programming that serves school-aged students.

Candidate finalists should prepare for an ISBE phone interview (exact times to be scheduled), by visiting the following link to review 21st CCLC background information: <http://www.isbe.net/21cclc/default.htm>.

Candidates who are selected will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement and complete a conflict of interest questionnaire.

Readers will be required to:

- 1) participate in a training that will be delivered via a webinar;
- 2) read and score their assigned applications, which will be sent to the readers electronically; and
- 3) readers must travel to Springfield in March to participate in a one- to two-day consensus session. An honorarium and travel expenses will be provided.

To be considered for this opportunity, please send a letter of interest and resume or curriculum vitae by Jan. 14, 2011, to: Tammy Greco, Principal Consultant, Illinois State Board of Education, Innovation and Improvement Division, 100 N. First St., Springfield, IL 62777-0001; or via e-mail at tgrec@isbe.net.

Contact Tammy Greco with questions at (217) 524-4832.

Funding and Disbursement Services

Recalculation of FY 2011 GSA

On Nov. 19, 2010, the General Assembly voted to override Governor Quinn's veto of SB 2499, making the bill law as Public Act 96-1480. The law requires that beginning in FY 2011, for purposes of calculating General State Aid (GSA) for districts subject to the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law "tax caps" and

that span more than one county, the limiting rate and operating tax rate used in the calculation must be the rates of the county where the majority of the district's Equalized Assessed Value is located.

This change resulted in a larger payment for district(s) subject to the law and will require a minor proration to all districts' GSA payments. ISBE staff has finalized the change in payments. The total statewide reduction of payments is \$260,407.24, resulting in prorated payments equal to 99.994 percent of each district's claim amount. The effect of this proration will be applied to the final GSA payment scheduled for June 20, 2011, and is now reflected in the GSA and FRIS Inquiry systems.

If you have any questions, contact Jason Hall (jhall@isbe.net) at 217-782-0249 or James Mathes (jmathes@isbe.net) at 217-782-5256.

All Federal Grants Moving to Reimbursement Model in FY 2012

The Code of Federal regulations at 34 C.F.R. § 80.21 prescribes the basic standard and the methods under which Federal payments are made to subgrantees. The basic standard is that the "method and procedures for payment shall minimize the time elapsing between the transfer of funds and disbursement by the grantee or subgrantee Reimbursement shall be the preferred method when the [advance funding] procedures are not met."

Due to recent audit findings issued by the Federal Office of Inspector General regarding ISBE's Federal cash management procedures and excessive cash balances identified at local education agencies (LEAs), an agency policy decision has been made that beginning with Federal grants approved for FY 2012, ISBE will move to a reimbursement model because it is the "preferred method when the [advance funding] procedures are not met."

MAJOR CHANGES

- LEAs will enter cumulative (i.e. year-to-date) expenditures for reimbursement on a cash basis as Federal funds are needed. LEAs will be reimbursed for actual costs as expenditures are reported for approved grants.
- LEAs are still required to submit quarterly expenditure reports within 20 days following the end of each quarter (i.e. Sept. 30, Dec. 31, March 31 and June 30) but have flexibility to submit interim reports to request Federal funds

at the LEA's discretion. LEAs must submit a completion report within 20 days after the project end date.

- LEAs will not be allowed to submit outstanding obligations except on the completion report submitted at the end of the project year (e.g. June 30, Aug. 31 etc.). The current 90 day period is still in effect to liquidate and report outstanding obligations.
- Monthly payment schedules will be removed from Federal grant applications.
- Funding and Disbursement Services staff will voucher more frequently (e.g. once a week) instead of once a month, to ensure the latest submitted expenditures are paid in a timely manner. Federal funds are not delayed and are normally received by the LEA 3-5 business days from the ISBE voucher date.

LEA BENEFITS

- Improves Federal cash management procedures and eliminates LEA excess cash on hand.
- Provides flexibility for LEAs to submit expenditures when reimbursement is needed.
- Eliminates federal interest calculations.
- Eliminates check returns for federal programs.

A webinar held Thursday, Jan. 13, 2011, from 10-11 a.m. will describe the FY 2012 reimbursement process. A question and answer session will follow. Register at <http://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/902148016>.

If you have immediate questions, please contact Kim Lewis at kewis@isbe.net or Sally Cray at scray@isbe.net in the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services at 217-782-5256.

Rules and Waivers

JCAR, Board Agree to Remove Proposed Changes to Superintendent Employment

On Dec. 14, 2010, the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) and the State Board of Education agreed to remove proposed changes from rules governing the employment of school district superintendents (see <http://www.isbe.net/board/meetings/2010/oct/rules.pdf>). Although the rules were revised based on public comment to allow for limited part-time employment and the use of interim superintendents in emergency situations, JCAR believed that the State Board lacked statutory authority to set criteria for employment and

recommended the agency seek legislative changes in Section 10-21.4 of the School Code to define what is meant by the requirement “to employ a superintendent.”

Therefore the rules (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.310) will remain unchanged. Unless and until Section 10-21.4 of the School Code is amended, the State Board will not be enforcing its long-held prohibition against a district's use of interim, or retired, superintendents. Regional offices of education will no longer be monitoring for compliance in this regard, and districts contracting with interim or retired superintendents will see no change in their recognition status. The State Board is not seeking, and at this time has no intention to seek, a statutory change to the School Code to address this issue.

For questions, contact Patrick Murphy, Division Administrator, the Educator and School Development Division, at 217-782-2948 or pmurphy@isbe.net.

Notice of Completed Rulemaking

Please be advised that a set of amendments recently adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education are now in effect. These rules have been posted on the agency's Web site at <http://www.isbe.net/rules>. Please choose “Rules Currently in Effect” and scroll to Part 365.

Part 365 (Children's Low-cost Laptop Program)

Sets forth the requirements for applying for and criteria for review of proposals submitted for grants under the Children's Low-cost Laptop Act [105 ILCS 65].
Affected Section: 365.10, 365.20, 365.30, 365.40, 365.50, 365.60
Effective Date: Nov. 29, 2010

Invitation to Comment on Rules

A proposed rulemaking recently reviewed by the Illinois State Board of Education is available for public comment. The proposal has been posted on the agency's Web site at <http://www.isbe.net/rules>; choose “Proposed Rules and Amendments.” Please submit any comments or suggestions to rules@isbe.net.

Part 151 (School Construction Program)

Sets forth the “green” building standards for any school construction projects for which school districts make application on or after July 1, 2009 (see P.A. 96-37, effective August 25, 2009).
Deadline for Public Comment: Feb. 18

U.S. Department of Education

Resources Available for Efforts to Prevent Bullying in Schools

In partnership with the departments of Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Interior, Defense and Justice, the U.S. Department of Education is developing key strategies to support and encourage efforts to prevent bullying in schools.

In addition to the first Federal Bullying Prevention Summit in August and support of the Stop Bullying Now! campaign, the Education department launched a bullying-resource Web site: <http://bullyinginfo.org>.

For further technical assistance on addressing bullying, contact the Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-free Schools by calling 202-245-7896 or visiting <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/index.html>.

Nutrition

Join The Outlook Newsletter Listserv

The Outlook newsletter is published August through May for school-based Child Nutrition Program staff serving meals in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

To receive monthly notices of The Outlook newsletter link, join the Outlook listserv. E-mail outlook10-join@list.isbe.net and type only the e-mail address to be added in the message section. A confirmation will be sent to the e-mail address provided.

Please note: School staff listed as the contact person on NSLP site and/or sponsor applications are already on The Outlook listserv.

For questions regarding The Outlook newsletter or listserv, e-mail Joan Love at jlove@isbe.net or call 800-545-7892 or 217/782-2491.

Webinar on Whole Grains for Healthy School Meals Scheduled for Feb. 10

According to the Whole Grains Council, 40 percent of American teenagers do not eat any whole grains. Through a USDA Team Nutrition Training grant, the Illinois Nutrition Education and Training (NET) Program is teaming up with the Whole Grains Council to help schools increase the number of whole grain foods offered to students by providing a free webinar on whole grains from 2-3 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 10, 2011.

The goal of the webinar is to teach foodservice staff ways to easily increase the amount and variety of whole grains served during school meals. Foodservice staff will learn about the benefits of whole grains, how to identify whole grain products, cost-effective menu strategies, whole grain commodities and purchasing specifications. Participants will also learn about how other schools successfully made the switch to whole grains and received valuable resources from the Whole Grains Council.

For more information, contact the Illinois NET Program at 800-466-7998. Register online for the webinar at <http://www.kidseatwell.org>.

Career and Technical Education

Connections Conference Set for March 16-17 in St. Charles

The 2011 Connections Conference is set for March 16-17. The two-day conference will be held at Pheasant Run Resort, 4051 E. Main St., St. Charles, Ill., 60174.

The Connections Project at Illinois State University assists in initiating pilot programs in High Schools That Work, a national initiative designed to prepare students for careers and further education by improving curriculum and instruction in high schools and middle grades.

The conference will focus on new practices in all discipline areas and features teachers, counselors and other educators from across the country sharing innovative programs and strategies. Goals are to provide experiences to grow professionally, to showcase exemplary programs and to encourage school improvement strategies.

For more information, visit <http://www.connectionsproject.ilstu.edu/index.php>. The registration form is available at http://www.connectionsproject.ilstu.edu/2011_registration.pdf. Early registration rates end Feb. 4.

Curriculum and Instruction

Two Illinois High School Students to be Selected for National Youth Science Camp

Governor Pat Quinn is calling on graduating high school seniors to apply for an opportunity to attend the National

Youth Science Camp (NYSC) in West Virginia this summer.

Students from across Illinois are encouraged to apply for a full scholarship to the month-long NYSC program. Two students will be selected as official Illinois delegates, allowing them to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, regardless of financial status.

For more information, visit the NYSC page at <http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/html/nysc.htm>.

Grades 4-12 Can Compete in The Stock Market Game

Registration for the spring 2011 sessions of The Stock Market Game are open. Students in grades 4-12 can participate with their classroom teachers in the national program, which is provided by Econ Illinois in our state. Students participate in teams and manage a simulated investment portfolio. A variety of sessions are available for participation throughout the school year.

The free online education program provides teachers access to grade- and subject-specific lesson plans, tutorials and more for classroom instruction that stress the importance of long-term savings and investment and financial literacy. Lessons are available in both English and Spanish.

For more information, visit <http://www.econed-il.org/icee/smg.shtml> or <http://illinois.smgww.org>. Econ Illinois is a non-profit organization that provides professional development and resources to K-12 teachers.

Professional Development

Abraham Lincoln Fellowship Program Brings Teachers to Springfield

Applications are available for the Horace Mann and Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Fellowship Program. The deadline has been extended until Feb. 12.

The annual program will accept 50 teachers for a six-day visit to Springfield to broaden their knowledge of the 16th president through lectures, workshops and group discussions. The fellowship features visits to Lincoln sites, including his tomb, the Lincoln-Herndon Law Office, the Old State Capital and New Salem State Historic Site.

The program covers the cost of round-trip transportation, lodging and meals while in Springfield for a week.

Twenty-five teachers will attend a session June 19-24, and the other half selected for the fellowship will visit July 10-15.

Visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiYGTQIbrs> to hear teachers talk about their experience in the fellowship program. Apply online at <https://www.horacemann.com/teacher-lounge/fellowship-program/how-to-apply.aspx>.

Student Opportunities

National World War II Museum Essay Contest Open to Grades 5-12

The National World War II Museum in New Orleans is asking middle school and high school students from across the country to answer the question “Why should we remember Pearl Harbor?” The question is the theme of this year’s essay contests.

Middle school students (grades 5-8) will compete for a \$250 prize awarded to the top essay for each grade. Three honorable mentions will also be given. The winning essays will be posted on The National World War II Museum’s website. High school students will compete for first (\$1,000), second (\$750) and third (\$500) overall. Another 50 essayists from across the country will receive honorable mention.

Go to <http://nationalww2museum.org/essaycontests> for thematic guidelines, formatting requirements and submission instructions. The deadline for submissions via the website is 5 p.m. March 31, although only the first 500 properly formatted entries will be accepted. The website will indicate when 500 essays have been submitted.

For questions, contact Kenneth Hoffman at educator@nationalww2museum.org.

Web Design Contest Offered for High School Students

Illinois high school students are invited to compete in a Web design contest sponsored by Microsoft. Using the company’s Expression Studio software, students can participate in teams of two to four people in the “blink” competition.

Registration for the contest is under way until Feb. 28, with final Web site submissions due by March 1. Inquire about receiving free Expression Studio software for your school by e-mailing innovativeteachers@microsoft.com.

See <http://www.blinkcontest.com> for more information and to register.

The theme for this year’s competition is “Imagine a Future Made Better by Technology.” Prizes include Xbox consoles, games and the new Kinect device. Free tutorials and learning materials on Web design are available at <http://expression.microsoft.com/education>.

High School Students Eligible for International Essay Contest

High school students enrolled in 9th through 12th grades and attending public and private schools are eligible to enter an international essay contest organized by the Gulen Institute at the University of Houston.

Held in collaboration with the Rumi Forum in Washington, D.C., the Dialog of Civilizations Youth Platform asks students from across the world this year to address: “The use of military means as a solution to today’s international and national political issues: Diplomacy of war, democracy or military coup?”

Essays must be in English and be original, unpublished and written entirely by the student. The top 30 students will be awarded a four-day trip to Washington with travel, accommodations and meal expenses covered by the Gulen Institute. First place also receives \$4,000; second receives \$2,500; third receives \$1,000. The deadline for essay submission is Jan. 31. For more information, visit <http://gulenyouthplatform.org>.

Employment Opportunities

ISBE External Vacancy List

An External Vacancy List for the Illinois State Board of Education is available at <http://www.isbe.net/hr/Default.htm>.

In the News

Weekly News Clips

ISBE has posted highlights from last week’s education news clips at <http://www.isbe.net/news/2011/newsclips/110110.htm>.