



Jan. 13, 2014

Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

Most schools are now getting back into their normal routines after winter break and the arctic weather that blasted through Illinois. The New Year offers us many opportunities, however, we still face challenges and many of the same uncertainties as in the past. As we move forward together, it's a good time to review how our collaboration led to success, including the following accomplishments of the past calendar year. While this is just a partial list, we hope that you can share some of these achievements with your local community. They include:

State Board and partners successfully advocates for more education funding: ISBE led a comprehensive and coordinated campaign with its partners to inform legislators, media and the public about the impact of more than \$850 million in cuts to the K-12 statewide education budget between Fiscal Year 2009 and 2013 and to advocate for a restoration of funding. The General Assembly responded by increasing education funding for FY 2014 by \$137 million from FY13 appropriation levels with the majority of the increase going to General State Aid (GSA) for the state's 860 school districts.

Record number of Illinois graduates take AP Exams and post successful scores: The number of Illinois graduates who take AP exams during high school has more than doubled in the last decade, with low-income and minority students continuing to make record gains toward closing the achievement gap on these rigorous tests. Research shows that students who score a 3 or higher on AP Exams typically experience greater academic success in college than otherwise comparable non-AP peers. In 2012, more than 26,400 Illinois graduates scored a 3 or higher on an AP exam, with 17.6 percent of these students coming from low-income backgrounds, according to the ninth annual AP Report to the Nation.

Illinois' ACT score ranks among the best: The graduating Class of 2013 achieved a composite score of 20.6, giving Illinois the second highest score among the nine states in the country that test 100 percent of its graduates. Illinois' ACT composite score is just slightly below the national average of 20.9, which is based primarily on the scores of self-selected college-bound students.

On the Illinois Honor Roll: Earlier this year, ISBE announced that 624 schools made the 2012 Illinois Honor Roll for their continued academic progress or excellence. The state's annual recognition program, based on the previous spring's state standardized tests and demographic information, shows 50 schools that are being recognized for the ninth or tenth consecutive year.

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Illinois aligns state assessments with the more challenging standards of the Common Core: ISBE raised the performance level cut scores of the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) in January 2013. Students are now measured against college and career readiness benchmarks earlier – starting in third grade – to ensure they’re prepared to succeed in high school and beyond rather than waiting for the 11th grade Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) to yield this information.

Illinois schools prepare for new Common Core aligned assessments: Illinois educators have played a key role in the development of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, participating in item review and the development of other materials for the new PARCC assessments. Field testing preparation is underway and nearly 700 Illinois districts and more than 2,000 Illinois schools will participate in field testing this spring.

A new, more user-friendly School Report Card: Illinoisans saw a new and improved view of their local schools through a more consumer-friendly State, District and School Report Card. The new Report Card, released Oct. 31, features multiple measures of academic performance as well as school climate and learning conditions, rendering a more complete picture of the state’s nearly 4,000 K-12 public schools.

New school and district report cards show student and school growth: The new Report Card released in October shows that under higher performance levels for the state elementary test, students have made continued progress over time as well as from one year to the next. Eleventh graders also posted improved scores on the state’s high school assessment, which includes the ACT college admissions test.

Enhancing Early Education: Illinois won an additional \$18 million Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge award to supplement the original \$35 million grant to improve infrastructure, raise program quality for all children, and ensure that the highest need children have access to high quality early learning experiences. In addition, ISBE has been strengthening its commitment to serving children birth to age 3 by launching the new Early Learning Guidelines to support parents and caregivers of infants and toddlers and releasing a new Prevention Initiative Implementation Manual to support program administrators and teachers.

A Focus on Families: ISBE developed a new Family Engagement Framework Guide to support schools and districts in strengthening family engagement (FE). ISBE also hosted more than 800 parents at the Bilingual Parent Summit in May, a Family Engagement Symposium in August, provided intensive Prevention Initiative services to more than 18,000 parents and caregivers of infants and toddlers, and provided FE trainings and webinars to more than 85 school and district personnel.

Illinois a leader in National Board Certification: There were 261 new National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) and 93 National Board renewals. Illinois ranks fourth in the nation with the number of new NBCTs, which increases the state’s total to 5,842.

Healthy bodies fuel healthy minds: In May, ISBE announced that 132 schools across the state earned certification in the past year for meeting federal standards related to nutrition and physical activity. The schools are among more than 200 in the Prairie State that have earned voluntary certification through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Healthier U.S. School Challenge.

P.E. Task Force releases recommendations: State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch and Dr. LaMar Hasbrouck, director of the Department of Public Health, co-chaired the Illinois Enhance Physical Education Task Force, which developed a report presented in August to Gov. Pat Quinn, the Illinois State General Assembly, and health organizations and community groups interested in turning the tide of childhood obesity and improving health for all students. The report calls for new benchmarks and strategies to

improve and increase physical education classes, noting the latest neuroscience research linking physical activity with improved academic performance.

ISBE awards \$22 million in School Improvement Grants: Four schools in three Illinois school districts will launch comprehensive changes this fall as the latest schools in the state to earn federal School Improvement Grants worth \$22 million. These new awardees join 20 schools in eight districts that are already undergoing similar overhauls with support of the federal grant and state resources.

School Districts received funding for school maintenance needs: In July 2013, 212 school districts received \$8.3 million in funding for School Maintenance Grants. These grants are designed to assist with school facility maintenance needs such as windows, heating, electrical, etc. The maximum grant award is \$50,000 and requires an equal amount of local funding. An additional \$50 million was released in FY 2014 for School Construction Grants. Staff is currently reviewing the 621 applications received for final approval.

New process to evaluate kindergarten students for school readiness: ISBE is partnering with dozens of local districts across the state in a pilot program to assess the school readiness of individual kindergarten students and identify gaps in development. The Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) pilot project aims to measure kindergarteners' skills and knowledge, informing educators about the learning and developmental needs of students in preschool through the early primary grades.

Educators recognized for outstanding performance: ISBE joined the Illinois Education Association and the Illinois Federation of Teachers at an awards luncheon in June to honor 36 educators who were chosen as the best in their field of expertise during the 2012-13 school year by their respective professional education organizations. The Exemplary Teacher Recognition Award Luncheon included several national award-winners from Illinois, including Joshua Bill of Waukegan High School, the National History Teacher of the Year.

ISBE honors top educators at annual Those Who Excel banquet: In October, state education officials honored more than 180 of Illinois' outstanding educators and school personnel at the 39th annual Those Who Excel/Teacher of the Year banquet in Normal. Pam Reilly of Woodbury Elementary in Sandwich Community Unit School District 430 was named the 2014 Illinois Teacher of the Year and will now compete for National Teacher of the Year title.

State Superintendent named to two national education organizations: State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch is lending his experience and expertise to two national organizations aimed at improving education policy to better prepare students for the work force and higher education. Dr. Koch, a former teacher and longtime policy maker, started a two-year term as the vice chair of the Finance Committee of the policy-focused Education Commission of the States and as a member of the inaugural Board of Directors for the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, the new accreditation body for educator preparation.

Making a difference for English learners in Illinois: ISBE formally adopted revised guidance to help English Learners, called the "2012 Amplification of English Language Development Standards," through the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA). The new guidance provides more explicit connections to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The Board also initiated the process of developing standards for the preparation of teachers of English Learners (ELs), which will create clear, consistent standards to support ELs in meeting the rigorous content and linguistic demands of the CCLS. Illinois is overseeing a federal enhanced-assessment grant for the Speech and Language Support for All, or SALSA project, which saw the launch of the new WIDA Spanish Language Development Standards in 2013.

Additional resources were provided for families of ELs in the form of translated guidance for parents and record-breaking parent participation at the spring Bilingual Parent Summit in Oak Brook.

A boost to performance evaluation: In FY 13, \$800,000 in federal Title II grant funding was distributed to the Regional Offices of Education, Intermediate Service Centers, and CPS to pay for either teacher or principal (or both) evaluator trainings for administrators and/or peer evaluators. These monies could also cover teacher evaluation training for current and future principal preparation candidates. An additional \$600,000 is being distributed for the same purposes in FY 14.

Efforts to improve educator preparation: Administrative rules were redesigned for elementary and middle grades teacher preparation based on the full participation of the Elementary and Middle Grades Advisory Groups. Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) grant for \$200,000 was awarded for the purpose of initiating an advisory group to provide recommendations to change administrative rules for the preparation of special education teachers, special education directors, and meeting the needs of all teachers to be prepared to teach students with disabilities. Also, a total of 26 principal preparation programs have now been approved by the State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board (SEPLB).

Congratulations to Jason Markey, principal of East Leyden High School, who was named by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) as one of three 2014 National Digital Principals. The award recognizes school leaders for their “success in using technology to improve instruction, communication, and student engagement.” You can read more about the award at the following link [http://www.nassp.org/tabid/3788/default.aspx?topic=Three School Leaders Named National Digital Principals](http://www.nassp.org/tabid/3788/default.aspx?topic=Three%20School%20Leaders%20Named%20National%20Digital%20Principals).

Have a great 2014!

Chris

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>.

- **Postmark deadline for waiver applications to be considered by General Assembly in Spring 2014** – Friday, January 17, 2014 (See <http://www.isbe.net/isbewaivers/default.htm> for new public notice requirements for all waiver requests.)
- **ISBE offices closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day** – Jan. 20
- **Part 227 (Gifted Education), Part 232 (Summer Bridges Program), Part 240 (Alternative Learning Opportunities Program) and Part 265 (Grants for Arts Education and Foreign Language Education)** – Public comment period ends January 21
- **ISBE offices closed for Lincoln’s Birthday** – Feb. 12
- **ISBE offices closed for Presidents’ Day** – Feb. 17
- **Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision), Part 25 (Educator Licensure) and Part 30 (Programs for the Preparation of Principals in Illinois)** – Public comment period ends Feb. 18
- **Deadline to complete 2013-14 District Technology Plan on IIRC** – Feb. 28 (http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/elearning/html/tech_plan.htm)
- **National School Breakfast Week** – March 3-7
- **School Nutrition Employee Week** – May 5-9
- **Applications for the Exception to the 1.0 Percent Cap due** – May 16

- ISBE offices closed for Memorial Day – May 26
- Student Health Data – Vision system report deadline – June 30
- ISBE offices closed for Independence Day – July 4

U.S. Department of Education

New School Discipline Guidance Package Released to Assist Schools

The U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice, released a school discipline guidance package on Wednesday, Jan. 8, that will assist states, districts and schools in developing practices and strategies to enhance school climate, and ensure those policies and practices comply with federal law. Even though incidents of school violence have decreased overall, too many schools are still struggling to create positive, safe environments. Schools can improve safety by making sure that climates are welcoming and that responses to misbehavior are fair, non-discriminatory and effective. Each year, significant numbers of students miss class due to suspensions and expulsions — even for minor infractions of school rules — and students of color and with disabilities are disproportionately impacted. The guidance package provides resources for creating safe and positive school climates, which are essential for boosting student academic success and closing achievement gaps.

The resource package consists of four components:

- The Dear Colleague guidance letter on civil rights and discipline, prepared in conjunction with the Department of Justice, describes how schools can meet their legal obligations under federal law to administer student discipline without discriminating against students on the basis of race, color or national origin;
- The Guiding Principles document draws from emerging research and best practices to describe three key principles and related action steps that can help guide state and local efforts to improve school climate and school discipline;
- The Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources indexes the extensive federal technical assistance and other resources related to school discipline and climate available to schools and districts; and
- The Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations, an online catalogue of the laws and regulations related to school discipline in

each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, compares laws across states and jurisdictions.

The guidance package is a resource resulting from a collaborative project — the Supportive School Discipline Initiative (SSDI) — between the Department of Education and the Department of Justice. The SSDI, launched in 2011, addresses the school-to-prison pipeline and the disciplinary policies and practices that can push students out of school and into the justice system. The initiative aims to support instead school discipline practices that foster safe, inclusive and positive learning environments while keeping students in school. The Department of Justice enforces Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race or national origin in public schools, and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin by schools, law enforcement agencies, and other recipients of federal financial assistance.

To view the resource documents, visit www.ed.gov/school-discipline.

NCLB

ISBE Seeks Federal Waiver Regarding Supplemental Educational Services

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is seeking the following waiver from the U.S. Department of Education. ISBE hopes that by soliciting this waiver from the U.S. Department of Education, students of Illinois will be better served.

Under the law, ISBE may approve as an SES provider only an entity that has demonstrated record of effectiveness in increasing student academic achievement. ISBE seeks a waiver of this provision for the 2013-14 school year on behalf of Chicago Public Schools, the only district in status currently operating as an SES provider. ISBE further seeks a waiver of this provision for the 2014-15 school year on behalf of Chicago Public Schools and any similarly situated district in status that is approved to serve as an SES provider.

To view the complete waiver visit <http://www.isbe.net/nclb/pdfs/waiver-request-ses->

[011014.pdf](#). To submit a comment on this request, please send an email to ncbwaiiver@isbe.net by Friday, Jan. 24, 2014.

School Business Services

School District Annual Financial Report Review Process Under Way

All district superintendents should have received an email broadcast asking the district to review their preliminary Financial Profile Report. If district administration wants to submit comments regarding their district's finances that will be published along with their Financial Profile Report (500 characters max), the comments must be submitted no later than Feb. 2, 2014.

The broadcast included links to the memorandum, instructions and definitions to assist with the review process. These documents are also available in IWAS and on the School District Financial Profile Score Information webpage.

The email broadcast and this notice will be the only ones sent to districts. If you have not received the broadcast, please contact ISBE at (217) 785-8779. If you have given another person authority to review these reports, please forward the email broadcast to them. Since the financial profile designation will be approved and publicly released by ISBE, it is crucial that districts review their financial profile data and score. Any district that wishes to include comments that support the Financial Profile report may do so directly in IWAS beneath the report. Although comments are optional, they are encouraged; this is an opportunity for districts to explain significant financial circumstances.

The financial profile will be adjusted to incorporate mandated categorical aid payments due to school districts that were not paid by June 30, 2013.

Any questions regarding the verification process should be directed to a School Business Services consultant at (217) 785-8779. Any questions regarding IWAS should be directed to the Call Center at (217) 558-3600.

Funding and Disbursements Division

Final FY 2014 Mandated Categorical Prorations

Final prorations and payments have been calculated for all 2012-13 school year categorical claims that will be vouchered in FY 2014. If you have questions regarding

this information, contact the Division of Funding and Disbursements at (217) 782-5256.

- Special Education Personnel – 100 percent
- Special Education Private Facility – 94 percent
- Special Education Funding for Children Requiring Special Education Services – 100 percent
- Special Education Summer School – 81 percent
- Special Education Orphanage – 100 percent
- Special Education Transportation – 97 percent
- Regular/Vocational Transportation – 74 percent
- Regular Education Orphanage – 100 percent

Federal Interest Income – Quarterly Reminder

The Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34-Education, Part 80 Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments, Subpart C-Post Award Requirements, Section 80.21 Payment, requires grantees and subgrantees to promptly, but at least quarterly, remit interest earned on advances to the appropriate federal agency. The grantee or subgrantee may keep actual interest amounts up to \$100 per year gained on Federal deposits per bank account, if applicable, for administrative purposes. Grant recipients have discretion to set up account(s) that are non-interest bearing to avoid returning interest.

To ensure compliance with federal administrative requirements, local education agency fiscal officials should develop internal controls and a sound methodology to calculate and return, at least quarterly, interest earned in excess of \$100 on federal program funds. Interest calculation methodologies must be based on actual, not estimated, interest earnings on federal funds. Further details as to how federal interest should be calculated and remitted can be found on Pages 10-12 of the State and Federal Grant Administration Policy and Fiscal Requirements and Procedures, which is online at http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/fiscal_procedure_handbk.pdf.

Interest should be returned using the following guidelines:

- Checks for interest earned should be made payable to the Illinois State Board of Education.
- Checks should not include the return of unexpended disbursements from the Illinois State Board of Education. Even though unexpended disbursements and interest

payments are made payable to the Illinois State Board of Education, separate checks should be issued for both.

- Checks should be accompanied by a statement identifying the program and the program year from which the interest was earned.

All checks must be mailed to: Illinois State Board of Education, Funding and Disbursements Services Division (E-320), 100 N. First St., Springfield, IL 62777-0001.

New Census Estimates Released for Fiscal Year 2015 Title I Low Income

The U.S. Department of Education has released the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) for income year 2012. These estimates will be used to calculate FY15 Title I Allocations. A file of 2012 Poverty Data, by Local Education Agency (LEA) is provided in an alphabetical listing of LEAs, Poverty Count, 5-17 Population, Poverty Percentage and Total Population online at http://www.isbe.net/funding/excel/FY15Preliminary_eligibility.xlsx. With this data, LEAs can determine their potential eligibility for Basic, Concentration, Targeted and Education Finance Incentive Grants (EFIG).

Basic Grant eligibility: An LEA must have at least 10 poverty children and the number of poverty children must be greater than 2 percent of the LEA population of children ages 5-17.

Concentration Grant eligibility: An LEA must have at least 6,500 poverty children or the number of those children exceeds 15 percent of the total 5-17 population.

Targeted and EFIG grant qualifications: An LEA must have at least 10 poverty children and that number must be at least 5 percent of the 5-17 population.

The following link to the Census Bureau, www.census.gov/did/www/saipe/index.html, provides various aspects of the SAIPE count. We will be using the 2012 data to calculate SY 2014-15 Title I, Part A allocations because they are the most recent available data.

Superintendents, business managers, and Title I directors should carefully examine the data for their LEA as this will be the first indication as to whether your LEA may be gaining or losing in eligibility for Title I funds in FY14. ISBE neither controls nor generates the data. The challenge period for the 2012 estimates is Dec. 11, 2013, through March 10, 2014. Refer to the Census Bureau link

www.census.gov/did/www/saipe/contact/challenges.html if interested.

Note that this preliminary data does not include other non-census information, such as foster, neglected or delinquent counts that may be used to calculate Title I allocations.

If you have questions on the information provided in this message, please contact Sally Cray (scray@isbe.net) in the Funding and Disbursements Division at (217) 782-5256.

CDC

Health Advisory Issued on Severe Strain of Flu in Young and Middle Aged Adults

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a health advisory on Dec. 24 regarding early reports of a severe strain of influenza (pH1N1) in young and middle aged adults, with multiple associated hospitalizations. Many of the hospitalized patients required intensive care. Some fatalities have been reported. Influenza activity is expected to increase during the next few weeks.

All vaccine formulations this season contain a pH1N1 component. CDC recommends annual influenza vaccination for everyone 6 months and older. Based on current influenza activity with pH1N1, anyone who has not yet been vaccinated this season should get an influenza vaccine now. Illinois State Board of Education encourages all school staff to obtain vaccination against influenza, if medically possible.

Visit the CDC's Seasonal Influenza webpage at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm> for a variety of resources. General information is also available on the Illinois Department of Public Health's site at <http://www.idph.state.il.us/flu/index.htm>, including an "If You Get Sick ..." link and vaccine facts and recommendations.

Nutrition and Wellness Programs Division

Grant Funds Available to Support School Breakfast Programs

ISBE released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for School Breakfast Program (SBP) Expansion Grants. ISBE will award up to \$187,000 (\$10,000 per district with at least one qualifying school) for the purpose of increasing school breakfast participation. A "qualifying school(s)" is a school participating in NSLP that served 40 percent or more of its lunches to students eligible for free or reduced

price in school year 2011-2012. Priority will be given to those SFAs with qualifying schools in which in October 2012, had at least 75 percent of the students eligible for free or reduced price school lunches under the NSLP, at least 60 percent of students participating in the lunch program, and less than 20 percent of students participating in the breakfast program.

The SBP Expansion Grant RFP is posted at http://www.isbe.net/funding_opps/htmls/rfp.htm and the deadline to apply is Feb. 14, 2014. Additional information on the School Breakfast Program is available at http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/national_school_lunch.htm. If you have questions regarding this grant, please contact Shawn Backs at sbacks@isbe.net or (217) 782-2491.

Special Education Services

Deadline is Feb. 28 for 2013-14 District Technology Plan to be Completed on IIRC

If your district has a technology plan that will expire on June 30, 2014, please note that the district technology plan, completed through the IIRC, is due on Feb. 28, 2014. No late plans will be accepted.

The Illinois State Board of Education has provided a writing guide to help districts through the new template and provide writing guidance. Detailed information and the guide can be accessed at http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/elearning/html/tech_plan.htm. For access to IIRC, log-in or register at <https://iirc.niu.edu/MyIIRC/Login.aspx>.

ISBE Teacher of the Year Program

New Illinois Teacher of the Year Available for Speaking Engagements

Do you need an enthusiastic, energetic, exciting speaker for an upcoming conference, in-service, meeting or workshop? If so, look no further than ISBE's 2014 Illinois Teacher of the Year!

Pam Reilly, a second-grade teacher at Woodbury Elementary School in Sandwich CUSD 430, is described by colleagues as an excellent collaborator and a natural leader. Students are immediately drawn to her sincere and caring attitude. A passionate advocate for children and education, Pam seeks advice and guidance from teachers in higher grades so that she can find ways to best help her students succeed and prepare them for future learning success.

If you would like to learn more about Pam's strategies and her commitment to helping all children succeed, please visit Sandwich Community Unit School District 430 at <http://www.sandwich430.org/reilly.html> to fill out a speaker request form.

Integrated Math Model

Upcoming Forums Feature Free Research-Based Resources for Schools

ISBE will be hosting a series of forums this winter focusing on how schools and districts transition to the use of the integrated math model. Please join us for one of our forums on either Jan. 28 in Mount Vernon, Jan. 29 in Springfield, or Feb. 27 in Lisle. Reserve your slot now at <http://webapps.isbe.net/ISBEConference/>.

During the day's sessions, participants will get an opportunity to develop an understanding of the advantages of using the integrated math model, the free research-based resources available, the alignment of the model with the Common Core state standards and PARCC, the impact on learning and engagement for students, and the impact on teacher practices.

Participants will gain a first-hand perspective of how to navigate the ISBE website and the LiveBinder tool. ISBE has been working diligently to provide school districts and schools resources to assist with their math curriculum, including the recent release of the ISBE integrated math model framework, http://www.isbe.net/common_core/htmls/math-models.htm. All materials are aligned with the Common Core state standards as well as the PARCC assessment. The opportunity to collaboratively interact with local peers about math curriculum challenges and opportunities will also be provided to participants during the forums. In addition, a panel of local Illinois teachers and administrators in various stages of planning and implementing the integrated math model will host a question and answer session to share lessons learned. For more information about the integrated math model, please call (217) 524-4832 or email rfilson@isbe.net.

Visiting Teachers Program

Informational Meeting Set for Districts Interested in International Educators

The Ministry of Education in Spain sponsors a program, whereby English-speaking teachers come to the United States to teach for three years and then return home. These teachers cover lots of subject areas — but the chance to

have a person from another country “in residence” in an American school is a valuable opportunity for the students, staff and community. The teachers have the appropriate state license, an International Visiting Teacher license with a bilingual endorsement. Districts interview and hire visiting teachers in much the same way that they hire American teachers.

The visiting teachers make a one to three year commitment to teach in the United States provided that the school district agrees to rehire them. Participating districts employ these teachers in accordance with local regulations and policies. Teachers are paid according to their experience and certification level.

ISBE tests the candidates’ language proficiency and verifies their qualifications for an International Visiting Teacher License.

Visiting Teachers have at least three years of experience. The 45 teachers hired in 2013 to work in 13 Illinois school districts are highly qualified to teach early childhood, elementary, middle and high school in a variety of areas, including special education, ESL, math and science.

Districts interested in learning more about the Visiting Teachers Program may attend a meeting in person or by phone. RSVP by Jan. 17, 2014, by calling Jorge Berne at (312) 814-5696 or by email at jorge.berne@mecd.es or jberne@isbe.net.

Meeting and participation details:

- **Who:** Illinois School Districts Recruiting Teachers for the 2014-2015 School Year
- **What:** Informational Briefing on the Visiting Teachers Program
- **Where:** James Thompson Center, 100 W. Randolph, 14th Floor, Chicago, IL 60601
- **When:** Friday, Jan. 24, 2014
- **Conference Call Number:** (888) 494-4032
- **Conference Call Access Code:** 3959821977

For more information, visit the ISBE website at http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/htmls/spanish_exchange.htm.

Upcoming Events

‘Culturally and Linguistically Responsive MTSS for English Learners’ Webinar Set

Register now for a live webinar titled “Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Multi-Tiered Systems of

Supports (MTSS) for English Learners (ELs),” which will be presented 10 a.m. to noon on Thursday, Feb. 6.

Through this webinar, participants will increase their understanding of critical components and concepts of MTSS for all students, with an emphasis on factors specific to ELs that need to be considered when designing and implementing MTSS. Tools and resources specific to ELs will also be shared. Register at <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/909361960>.

Questions about the webinar can be directed to Kathryn Cox at kcox@isbe.net.

Registration Under Way for Annual Statewide ESEA/NCLB Conference

Register now for the annual Statewide ESEA/NCLB Conference, “Preserving Our Learning Space: Creative Teaching Within the Common Core,” which is set for Feb. 18-20 at the Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers.

This year's program puts emphasis on comprehensive school improvement, including evidence of school turnarounds and transformations, implementation of Common Core standards in Math and English Language Arts, Early Childhood Education, Homeless Education, the integration of assessment into teaching strategies, and much more.

Outstanding keynote speakers, including Ruby Payne, Linda Gojak, Tyler DeWitt, Samuel Betances and others will focus on topics such as understanding poverty and diversity in relation to classroom strategy, national trends in math instruction, best practices in teaching STEM subjects, and the strengthening of creativity and professionalism among teachers. More than 200 highly informative breakout sessions will also be offered.

Information about registration, both online and through the mail, can be found at www.thecenterweb.org/irc.

Annual Illinois Young Author’s Conference Scheduled for May 17

The 40th annual Illinois Young Author’s Conference is set for May 17 at Illinois State University in Bloomington-Normal. Sponsored by the Illinois Language and Literacy Council and Illinois Reading Council, this daylong event is designed to honor exceptional writing by kindergarten through eighth-grade students across the state of Illinois. Guidelines and

registration materials can be found at <http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org/yac.html> or http://www.isbe.net/grants/html/young_author.htm.

Updates on the conference will be posted on the Illinois Young Author's Conference Facebook page. Volunteers are always needed and appreciated for this event. Please email Christina Podraza at ilyac2014@gmail.com if interested in assisting.

Conference organizers are also looking for stories from past young authors, volunteers, and anyone involved with the conference about past experiences with the Illinois Young Author's Conference to use in this year's conference. Please share them on the Facebook page or email them to ilyac2014@gmail.com.

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

Fifth- and Sixth-Graders Invited to Enter Annual Poster, Poetry and Prose Contest

Fifth- and sixth-grade writers and artists from around Illinois are invited to compete in this year's Poster, Poetry and Prose Contest sponsored by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and with the partnership of the Illinois State Board of Education. This year's contest is focused on environmental justice and how to balance people with industry and learning about environmental issues in their own communities.

Each school can enter up to eight (four posters and four written) works. Entries must be postmarked and sent in to the Illinois EPA by Feb. 3. An in house panel from the Illinois EPA judges all entries to select the finalists, whose entries are then judged by an outside panel of authorities to determine the top 12 winners. Following the awards ceremony and reception, these entries will be on exhibit in the atrium of the Illinois EPA's headquarters building in Springfield from March 31 through April 30, and the top winners will be featured on the Illinois EPA's homepage at www.epa.state.il.us.

All finalists, together with their families and teachers, are invited to an awards ceremony and reception that will be held on March 29 at the Old State Capitol Historic Site in Springfield. During the 1840s and 1850s, the Old State Capitol was the scene of debate over issues that led the nation to war in 1861. During the Civil War, as the seat of government, it was the center of the state's wartime mobilization. The capitol also provided space for local events aiding the needs of local residents as well as soldier relief efforts.

Information about the annual event can be obtained by contacting Kristi Morris, Environmental Education Coordinator for the Illinois EPA, at (217) 558-7198 or kristi.morris@illinois.gov. To enter the contest, visit <http://www.epa.state.il.us/kids/teachers/contest/index.html> for the participation packet for rules and materials to turn in with the students' works by Feb. 3.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Applications Available for Educators Interested in Earth Day in the Parks Events

Applications for Earth Day in the Parks events from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources will be accepted through Feb. 28. To download the application form and to see the list of participating state parks, visit <http://dnr.state.il.us/education/CLASSRM/EDITPinstruct.htm>.

Involve your students in these natural resources stewardship activities and help them make a difference in their environment. A grant from the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund helps support these events.

In Brief

Professional Development

- The Pathways Resource Center of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign will present a workshop for middle level and high school leaders called **“Building Student Success Through Individualized Learning Plans”** Jan. 30 in Bloomington and Jan. 31 in Naperville. The cost is \$60, which will be waived for educators from Race to the Top districts. Register at http://pathways.illinois.edu/?page_id=1206.
- The Epilepsy Foundation of Greater Chicago and the Epilepsy Resource Center of Central Illinois will host a free **Training for School Nurses on Seizures and Epilepsy Management** with a bonus piece on Concussion Management from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 8. For more information, visit <http://www.epilepsyichicago.org/2014/01/02/managing-students-with-seizures-training-for-school-nurses-5/>.

District Opportunities

- The Education Division of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Chicago administers the **Visiting Chinese Language Teachers From Taiwan Program**, which assists districts in recruiting Chinese language teachers. Contact John Lin at (312)

616-0805 or johnlin@edutw.org for more information or visit the Education Division online at <http://www.taiwanembassy.org/US/CHI/ct.asp?xItem=12968&CtNode=2525&mp=27&xp1>.

Educator Opportunities

- PBS is looking for 100 of America's most innovative educators. Applications for **2014 PBS LearningMedia Digital Innovator** will be accepted Dec. 11 through Feb. 14. This year-long program is designed to foster and reward a community of 100 digitally-savvy K-12 educators. Get started at <http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/digitalinnovators/>.

Student Opportunities

- The state of Florida is planning an academic tournament for students across the U.S. The **National Tournament of Academic Excellence** is set for June 14-16 in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. Teams of six students in grades 9-12 with a coach will compete against other states, the District of Columbia, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands. For more information, visit <http://www.academic-challenge.org/ntae/index.html>.
- The Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln administers the **World War II Descendants Statewide Scholarship** for high school seniors. The deadline is March 1. For more information visit <https://www.scholarselect.com/scholarships/13978-2014-world-war-ii-illinois-descendants-scholarship>.
- The **Rural Rental Housing Association of Illinois – Barbara Carpenter Memorial Scholarship** goes to high school students who reside in apartments developed and financed under the USDA Section 515 Program, and owned and/or managed by members of the Rural Rental Housing Association of Illinois. Visit <https://www.scholarselect.com/scholarships/13821-2014-rural-rental-housing-association-of-il--barbara-carpenter-memorial-scholarship>.

Grant Opportunities

- The Illinois Department of Public Health and the State Health Improvement Plan Implementation Coordination Council have issued a **Video Challenge** for organizations. Up to 10 awardees will receive \$1,500 in grant funding to continue health transformation work in their community. Details at http://healthycommunities.illinois.gov/video_challenge.htm.
- The Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color recently launched its third annual **COSEBOC**

School Awards, which are designed to celebrate schools demonstrating success in educating boys and young men of color. This year the awards will be focused on schools educating preK-6 grade students. For details, visit <http://coseboc.org/school-awards>. The deadline for applications is Jan. 20.

Employment Opportunities

- An **External Vacancy List for ISBE** is available at <http://www.isbe.net/hr/Default.htm>.