



Illinois State Board of Education

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Weekly Message

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State Superintendent

January 15, 2008

Message from State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

I am very pleased to announce statewide availability of EXPLORE and PLAN for every ninth- and tenth-grade student at no cost to your school or district. These ACT products provide valuable information about students' academic development and allow students an opportunity to explore career and training options so they can make sound decisions about their high school coursework and post-high-school choices.

All Illinois public high schools will now be able to provide one administration of the EXPLORE and PLAN program to every ninth- and tenth-grade student at no cost to the district.

Included with the EXPLORE and PLAN programs for all public high schools will be a state license for ACT Online Prep through May 31, 2009. The Online Prep provides easy access to practice tests with real ACT questions; comprehensive content review of ACT English, Math, Reading and Science; practice essays for the ACT writing test; and a diagnostic test that will provide students with a personalized study path to help them better prepare for the ACT test. ACT will be contacting districts directly with access information for the ACT Online Prep.

Please know that the use of EXPLORE and PLAN are optional and not part of our mandated state assessment system. It is my hope that the use of these assessments will provide valuable information about students in grades nine and ten that can be used by teachers and administrators to prepare every student for success on the Prairie State Achievement Examination administered in grade 11.

If you are unfamiliar with the EXPLORE and PLAN programs, I encourage you to visit the following sites for more information: www.act.org/explore/ or www.act.org/plan/.

ISBE will cover the cost for assessment fees only, which will include standard reporting from ACT. Standard reporting includes the following school reports:

EXPLORE

- Student Report
- Student Roster
- School Profile Summary Report Early Intervention Rosters
- Presentation Packet

PLAN

- Student Report
- Score Labels
- School Summary Profile Report
- Early Intervention Rosters
- Presentation Packet
- High School List Report

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Districts interested in participating in this new voluntary program may begin placing their orders today through February 1, 2008. Order forms can be accessed at

<http://www.isbe.net/assessment/default.htm>. Testing must be completed by May 10, 2008. Credit memos will be issued by ACT upon completion of scoring. Costs of additional services or reports not specified above will be the responsibility of the school district.

Districts that have already paid for EXPLORE or PLAN testing for students in grades nine and ten in the 2007-08 school year will be reimbursed by ISBE at the state rate of \$6.35 per student for EXPLORE and \$7.85 per student for PLAN. ACT will administer the reimbursement program and following completion of scoring, will issue a credit memo based on the number of students tested. No action is required on the part of districts.

I want to thank Governor Blagojevich and the members of the Illinois General Assembly for including the funding for this new initiative in our current budget. I would also urge you to reach out to your local lawmakers and thank them, as we plan to continue to request funding for these and expanded services on behalf of Illinois students in the future.

This is a wonderful opportunity that I am very excited about, allowing you to continue to measure student growth in the ninth and tenth grades. It will better position our students to make more informed choices that will focus attention on both career preparation and improved academic achievement.

Finally, I would like to remind everyone about the third statewide conference sponsored by the Illinois New Teacher Collaborative: "Induction and Mentoring: Supports, Solutions, and Successes." This year's conference will focus on promising practices currently in operation across the state of Illinois. Participants will be able to network with others who work in similar roles (administrators, mentors, new teachers, teacher educators, etc.) and there will be time to plan for local needs. The conference will be held on February 26 and 27 at the Hilton Hotel in Springfield. Registration information and a draft of the conference agenda can be found at <http://intc.ed.uiuc.edu/conference/index.html>.

Thanks, and have a great week.

Chris

Upcoming Deadlines

- **Deadline for Child Nutrition Verification Summary Report** (for those participating in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program) – January 31, 2008
- **Submit Annual Commodity Order Form** (National School Lunch Program Sponsors) – February 1, 2008
- **Deadline to develop and implement plan to operate summer meals program, if required by PA 95-0155** – February 15, 2008
- **Student applications for National Science Youth Camp** – February 18, 2008
- **Non-Certified Staff Salary Study survey** – February 29, 2008
- **Submit a Letter of Intent for the Move and Crunch Challenge for Principals**, www.kidseatwell.org – February 29, 2008
- **Technology Integration Plan** – March 1, 2008
- **Charter Planning Grant applications & Charter Implementation Grant applications** – April 30, 2008

School Business & Support Services

Reorganization Feasibility Studies

Funding is now available for FY 2008 School District Reorganization Feasibility Studies. Feasibility studies

are a tool to be used by school districts wanting to investigate the advantages and/or disadvantages of reorganization options. Interested school districts should submit a proposed agreement with an independent contractor(s) to their Regional Office of Education (ROE). The ROE will submit the agreement to the State Board of Education (ISBE) for approval.

Each study will be funded on a base tier according to the number of school districts involved in the study. Studies will be funded an additional tier based on the combined enrollment of the districts involved in the study. Studies are funded between \$4,500 and \$8,000 based on the procedure listed above. Funds are available on a “first come – first served” basis. In order to receive reorganization feasibility study funds in FY 2008, agreements must be approved by both the ROE and ISBE, and studies must be completed and approved for payment no later than June 30, 2008.

Procedures, funding allotment and sample forms are available at: www.isbe.net/sfms/html/feasibility.htm

If you have any questions, please contact **Michelle Heninger, School Business & Support Services**, at 217-785-8779 or e-mail her at mheninge@isbe.net.

Educator Preparation & Recertification

Note to Superintendents about the Illinois New Principal Mentoring Program

State Superintendent Dr. Christopher Koch has determined that full funding exists for mentoring of new principals in Illinois K-12 public schools consistent with the statutory requirements of PA 94-1039 to provide required mentoring to all new principals at no cost to school districts. The Illinois State Board of Education has designated the Illinois Principals Association as the Program Manager for the Illinois New Principal Mentoring Program (INPM).

Over 250 new principals in Illinois (outside of Chicago Public Schools) are currently receiving mentoring services. Due to the delay in getting a final ISBE budget and subsequent implementation activities of the Illinois New Principal Mentoring Program, there may be some new principals, including mid-year hires, yet to be enrolled in mentoring. Please help account for all new principals in the state and their status regarding mentoring by completing the following questions and returning to IPA at your earliest convenience. Please email to **Rashonda** at rashonda@ilprincipals.org or fax to 217-525-7264.

- School District Name:
- Superintendent:

- First-Year Principals in the School District including name, school, and whether they are currently being mentored:

Thank you for your assistance. Please call 217-525-1383 if you have any questions about supporting the new principal(s) in your district. Also, you may wish to review information on the INPM website at www.ilprincipalmentoring.org. Feel free to use any of these materials as you wish to benefit your district and the students you serve.

Important Information Regarding Certification and Regionally Accredited Institutions of Higher Learning

In recent months the Illinois State Board of Education has received many questions about what “regional accreditation” of colleges and universities means and how it applies to certification applications. We have also had to reject transcripts from institutions that are not accredited at all or that are accredited by technical school organizations, national accreditation agencies, and online accreditation associations. Please note that only coursework completed at and degrees awarded by regionally accredited colleges or universities may be used for certification purposes (i.e. substitute certificates, paraprofessional approvals, endorsement of certificates, etc.). A college or university is regionally accredited if that institution is accredited by one of the following regional accreditation bodies:

- Middle States Association of Schools & Colleges Commission on Higher Education
- New England Association of Schools & Colleges Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
- New England Association of Schools & Colleges Commission on Technical & Career Institutions
- North Central Association of Schools & Colleges Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
- Southern Association of Colleges & Schools Commission on Colleges
- Western Association of Schools & Colleges Accrediting Commission for Community & Junior Colleges
- Western Association of Schools & Colleges Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges & Universities

If an applicant submits transcripts from an institution that is not accredited through one of the bodies listed above, those transcripts cannot be accepted or taken into consideration for any certification purpose. You may check the accreditation status of colleges and universities on the United States Department of Education Accreditation website at <http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/Search.asp>.

Please pass this information along to regional and district staff. We encourage school staff to alert students to check the accreditation status of the school they plan to attend if they want to become teachers.

Accountability

Civil Rights Notice from U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division

Recently there have been news reports of several incidents of racially-motivated harassment and violence at elementary and secondary schools. These incidents have included the hanging of nooses, the spray-painting of racial slurs and swastikas on school property, and verbal and physical assaults that appear to be motivated by race. Some of these incidents may constitute prosecutable violations of federal hate crimes laws. They also may constitute violations of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000c-6, which authorizes the Department to take action in certain circumstances to enforce the equal protection clause, and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin by recipients of federal financial assistance.

We know that you join us in condemning all such incidents. Since it is vitally important that all students attend school free from discrimination because of race, religion, disability, sex and national origin, we ask for your cooperation in helping to prevent such deplorable conduct. Please identify, investigate and respond, in an appropriate matter, to all such incidents. When you determine that discrimination has occurred, take prompt, effective remedial action. Finally, if a potentially criminal incident occurs, school officials should report it to the local police department or local office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In addition, we encourage you to consider other factors that may bear upon a positive atmosphere for learning for all students. For example, an issue that is closely related

to a positive atmosphere for learning involves the consistent and impartial application of discipline policies.

Your assistance and cooperation is appreciated.

Homeless Education

The U.S Department of Education required school district homeless liaison registration vehicle is now completed in the ISBE website under IWAS. School district homeless liaisons will need to work with their IWAS administrator to complete the registration. All school district homeless liaisons in Illinois must register in the IWAS system no later than **4 p.m., Monday, February 11**. The Area Lead LEA Liaisons have access to the [NCLB Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program](#) report under the IWAS System and will double check the progress of all school district liaisons completing this form. This will also be monitored at ISBE for completion by the deadline date.

More information is available on ISBE's Homeless Education web page, <http://www.isbe.net/homeless>. For further information, please contact the Area Lead LEA Liaison serving your county. This person can be identified from the map and directory linked on this website: <http://homeless.net/Directory/directoryindex.htm>. For questions, contact **Peggy Dunn**, Accountability Division, at 217-782-2948 or madunn@isbe.net.

Fiscal & Procurement

Illinois Textbook Loan Program

The Illinois Textbook Loan Program (ITLP) opened December 15, 2007, for school ordering. The program concludes **March 15, 2008**. General information on the ITLP is located in the Textbook Loan Program website at <http://www.isbe.net/htmls/textbook.html>.

This year, material orders are limited to grades K-6 and access to the ITLP order entry system is through IWAS (ISBE Web Application Security). You can access IWAS by clicking on the IWAS link at the top of the ISBE homepage. For those of you new to IWAS, you can create an IWAS account by clicking on the 'Sign Up Now' link on the IWAS homepage.

If you require assistance with your IWAS account or in gaining access to the ITLP system, please contact the ISBE Call Center at 217-558-3600. If you have

questions regarding the ordering process please contact the ITLP staff at 217-782-0734.

A Note to Local IWAS Administrators: For the ITLP system in IWAS, it is very important that you assign the correct access level to staff who sign up for the ITLP system to represent your organization. When assigning access rights in IWAS, Public School Districts (except for Chicago 299) should assign staff 'District Doc Author' access. All other organizations (including Chicago 299) should assign staff 'School Admin' access.

Nutrition

Basic Training Workshops – Administrative Workshops

Basic Training workshops are ideal for new school food service and administrative staff members, but also allow veteran school staff a refresher course on the National School Lunch Program. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is currently in the process of planning *Basic Training* workshops for this coming summer. Our tentative schedule for these workshops is as follows:

- July 16—Schaumburg
- July 17—Tinley Park
- July 30—Effingham
- July 31—Fairview Heights
- August 6—Oak Lawn
- August 7—Bolingbrook
- August 13—Galesburg
- August 14—Bloomington
- September 4—Springfield

For more information on the Basic Training workshops, please check the ISBE website this spring at <http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/workshops.htm>

Change in Illinois Free Rate

Effective January 1, 2008, the IL Free Breakfast and Lunch Program reimbursement rate will be \$.1100. The adjustment is based on an analysis of meals claimed and dollars disbursed to date. A final proration will be made in August 2008, to ensure all districts receive equitable funding for meals served.

Get Ready to Move & Crunch with Elementary Principals!

In an innovative new program to promote student health, elementary school principals will take the lead! Principals from elementary schools participating in the *Move and Crunch Challenge* will log the number of days they meet physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption recommendations. They will also engage school staff, students and their parents as well in this friendly competition. Schools will be rated on their *Challenge* activities and the top schools in three different size categories will earn a grant of \$800 to spend on student nutrition education curriculum and materials. Schools must submit their entries by **April 15, 2008** to be eligible. Challenge resources, including the application, rules and resources may be downloaded at: www.kidseatwell.org/MoveCrunch.html

The Illinois Nutrition Education and Training Program in partnership with the Illinois Department of Health & Human Services and the Illinois Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance developed the *Move & Crunch Challenge* program. The purpose of the program is to create local wellness role models for students through a fun statewide competition. The *Move & Crunch Challenge* is made possible by a 2006 USDA Team Nutrition Training Grant. Team Nutrition is a USDA initiative to promote lifelong healthy eating and an active lifestyle for kids.

School Wellness Policy Task Force Report on the Evaluation of School Wellness Policies Released

The Illinois School Wellness Policy Task Force continues its work as outlined in Public Act 094-0199. The required report on the evaluation on six school districts' effectiveness of the school wellness policies was submitted to the Governor and General Assembly as of January 1, 2008. For access to this report and all of the reports and a complete list of Task Force members, please visit http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/wellness_policy.htm.

Check Your Diversions to Processors

Processors who had enough schools order products from them will be awarded contracts this month. What this means to schools—you need to check and see if the processor you diverted commodities to will be awarded a contract. If the processor to which you diverted commodities IS getting a contract, you do not have to do

anything. If the processor to which you diverted commodities is NOT getting a contract, you might want to switch the commodities to a processor who IS going to receive a contract. We will post a message on the Illinois Commodity System message board by **February 8, 2008**, listing which processors will be getting a contract and instructions on how to switch commodities. Schools will have until **February 15, 2008**, to switch their commodities. If a school does not switch their commodities, ISBE will “zero out” those pounds diverted to a processor NOT getting a contract.

REMINDER! Verification Summary – Report due January 31

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program and/or the School Breakfast Program must select and verify a sample of household applications approved for benefits. The Verification Summary Report (summarizing the results of your verification efforts) must be submitted electronically to the Illinois State Board of Education by **January 31, 2008**.

Instructions on accessing the Verification Summary Report through

IWAS are available at <http://www.isbe.net/nutrition> under *What's New*.

Education Week's Quality Counts

Quality Counts 2008: Tapping into Teaching: Unlocking the Key to Student Success

Education's Week's annual Quality Counts report is now available online at <http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2008/01/10/index.html>.

The report was released Wednesday, January 9, and assigns grades to all states in six different categories: a student's chances for success; K-12 achievement; standards, assessments and accountability; transition and alignment; teaching profession, including pay; and school finance.

Professional Development

2008 Illinois Teacher of the Year Available

Looking for a dynamic, enthusiastic speaker? **Ruth Meissen**, the 2007-08 Illinois Teacher of the Year is now

available for workshops, conferences, in-services, meetings, etc. Ruth is an art teacher from Harlem Middle School who is in her eleventh year in the profession. She has a gift for making learning come alive for her students and she is a master at helping her students see far beyond their classroom walls, as is evident in the community service work she's done with projects involving Habitat for Humanity and a school in New Orleans. Ruth is dedicated to helping students understand how important it is to “give back” and the impact those lessons will have on students throughout their lives.

To learn more about Ruth's philosophies and the amazing things she has accomplished, please call **Jean Langkamp** at 815-654-4510, ext. 250 to schedule Ruth as your next speaker.

Teacher Resources

IL Zero Waste Schools Grant Program

The Illinois Zero Waste Schools Grant Program is now accepting grant applications to assist Illinois schools in achieving zero waste status, thus increasing the amount of solid waste diverted from Illinois landfills. This grant opportunity is annually presented by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Energy and Recycling.

Schools Grant funds may be used to purchase project-related capital equipment such as collection containers, reusable cafeteria utensils, and erasable classroom slates. Applications are being solicited for projects to begin in the fall of 2008. More information, including application materials are available online at http://www.illinoisbiz.biz/dceo/Bureaus/Energy_Recycling/Education/ISTEP_Zero_Waste_Schools.htm.

All applications must be received by DCEO on or before 5 p.m., **Friday, February 15, 2008**. For general information and questions about the IL Zero Waste Schools Grant Program, please contact **Brett Ivers**, DCEO, at 217-524-5859 or by e-mail at Brett.Ivers@illinois.gov.

Teacher Grant Deadline Extended

The deadline for the 2007-2008 Innovative Economic Educator Mini-Grant applications from the Illinois Council on Economic Education has been extended to **January 23, 2008**.

Any K-12 teacher is eligible and may apply for a 3M Innovative Economic Educator Mini-Grant (up to \$500). These Innovative Economic Educator Mini-Grants are designed to support the development of innovative economic education learning activities that will be submitted to the 3M Innovative Economic Educator Award Program. The 2007-2008 Innovative Economic Educator Mini-Grants applications are due no later than January 23, 2008.

For more information and details about 3M mini-grants, please go to http://www.econed-il.org/icee/3m_innov.shtml#ieemini. For an informational flyer about this program, please go to http://www.econed-il.org/icee/docs/2008/ieea_mini_flyer.pdf. For additional support, please contact the Center or Office of Economic Education nearest you or the Illinois Council at icee@niu.edu.

2008 Freida J. Riley Teacher

The Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation is now accepting nominations for the 2008 Freida J. Riley Teacher Award.

The annual award honors an American teacher who works with a physical disability, teaches in an especially challenging educational environment or has performed a heroic act by making an exceptional, personal or physical sacrifice on behalf of students.

Nomination forms, rules and guidelines are available online at www.columbusfdn.org/freidajriley/default.asp. All nomination materials must be received by the Foundation no later than **February 4, 2008**. For questions or more information, contact **Judi Shellenberger**, Executive Director, at 315-258-0090 or by e-mail at judithmscolumbus@cs.com.

Student Opportunities

National Radon Poster Contest – For students ages 9 – 14

University of Illinois Extension, the American Lung Association of Illinois and the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Radon Program are partnering with the National Safety Council and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to coordinate the Illinois portion of the 2009 **National Radon Poster Contest** for youth. By January 18, details about the radon poster contest will be

available on this website:

<http://www.TakeActionOnRadon.uiuc.edu/moreinfo.html>

This contest is to inform students and parents alike about radon gas. Radon is a colorless, odorless, tasteless, radioactive gas that can cause lung cancer. Fifty percent of Illinois counties are at high risk. We hope your teachers and eligible students will participate as a fun way to learn about radon and reduce their risk of exposure. The radon poster contest also offers prizes for the winning posters. A state-wide committee will select three winning posters from your region for consideration for state, and national competition. Each regional winner will receive a \$50.00 savings bond, and three state winners will receive \$100.00 savings bonds. Three state winning posters will be sent on to the national competition. The national winner, a parent, and teacher will win an all-expense paid trip to Washington D.C. to participate in the award ceremony in January 2009. The national winning poster will be distributed throughout the U.S. in January during National Radon Action Month.

Illinois Students Selected for United States Senate Youth Program

Students Headed to Washington and to Receive \$5000 Scholarship

Senators Richard J. Durbin and Barack Obama announced the names of the two Illinois students who have been selected as delegates to the 46th Annual United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) that will be held March 1 – 8, 2008 in Washington, D.C. **Rustin Fakhri** of **Bloomington** and **Jonathan Koch** of **Tremont** were chosen from hundreds of applicants to be part of the group of 104 student delegates who will attend the program's 46th Annual Washington Week.

The USSYP was created by Senate Resolution 324 in 1962 and has been sponsored by the Senate and fully funded by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation since inception. Originally proposed by Senators Kuchel, Mansfield, Dirksen and Humphrey, the impetus for the program as stated in Senate testimony was “to increase young Americans’ understanding of the interrelationships of the three branches of government, the caliber and responsibilities of federally elected and appointed officials, and the vital importance of democratic decision making not only for America but for people around the world.”

Rustin Fakheri is a Delegate to Twin Cities (Bloomington and Normal) Teen Council and attends Illinois State University High School. He is a National Merit semi-finalist, Key Club Vice President, Treasurer of Interact club, and organizer of the "Far From Normal Film Festival" which supports the Heifer Foundation. Rustin plans to pursue a degree in political science.

Jonathan Koch is Student Council President at Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. His leadership activities include: member of Synergy Leadership Team, President of Residential Life and National Consortium of Specialized Secondary Schools of Mathematics, Science and Technology, Volunteer with the Tremont Turkey Festival, and Captain of freshman football and junior varsity volleyball. Jonathan plans to pursue an interdisciplinary course of studies integrating math and science with politics.

Chosen as alternates to the 2008 program were Rachel Higgins, a resident of Morris, who attends Morris Community High School and Karina Mendez Keil, a resident of Skokie, who attends Niles West High School.

Entries now being accepted for 'Poster, Poetry and Prose Contest'

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) is now accepting submissions from fifth and sixth grade writers and artists from around Illinois to compete in the Agency's 2008 Poster, Poetry and Prose Contest.

This year's study and contest focus on the importance of clean air and what individuals can do to help prevent global warming with the theme: "Global Warming – What Can We Do?" Special emphasis is given to air, land or water on a rotating basis.

Each school can enter up to 12 (six posters and six written) works. Entries must be postmarked and sent in to the Illinois EPA by **February 8, 2008**.

All finalists, together with their families and teachers, are invited to an awards ceremony and reception that will be held on Saturday, April 5 at the Hall of Flags in Springfield. Finalists receive a certificate and ribbon. In addition, the top twelve finalists will be given special recognition and will each receive a \$50 U.S. savings bond and an environmental reference book for his or her school library.

For more information, contact **Kristi Morris-Richards**, environmental education coordinator for the Illinois EPA, at 217-558-7198, or by mail at 1021 North Grand Avenue E., P.O. Box 19276, Springfield, IL 62794-9276.

Essays about Lincoln contest

The Illinois State Archives, the Illinois State Library, and ISBE have partnered with the Illinois Center for the Book to present a statewide reading and writing contest celebrating Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday. This contest is open to students in grades 5-12 and focuses on Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

Today, the nation is again divided and at war. Contestants are asked to put themselves in Lincoln's place and, using 300 words or less, tell what their ideals are for a nation of freedom, democracy and equal opportunity.

Winners will read their essays at an awards ceremony, tour the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and receive a plaque and cash award: \$200 first-place; \$150 second-place; \$100 third-place.

If you have a student interested in participating in this contest please visit http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/publications/pdf_publications/lincolnsessay.pdf for more details. The deadline for entries is **May 31, 2008**.

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/2008/newsclips/080111.htm>
