



Illinois State Board of Education

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Weekly Message

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State Superintendent

January 21, 2008

Message from State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

Last week the Illinois State Board of Education held its monthly meeting at the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences. On behalf of the State Board members, I want to thank Principal William Hook and his staff and students. I would also like to thank instructor Joe Smith from Hyde Park High School and the students from Julian High School, who assisted us by providing audio during the meeting. We always look forward to getting out to schools and seeing the great things our students do, but it's especially rewarding for us to have this type of professional interaction with students, faculty and staff.

During the meeting, the Board approved its Fiscal Year 2009 budget request that we will soon forward to the Governor and General Assembly for consideration. The Board's recommendation includes an additional \$300 million above last year's budget, which will allow for an estimated increase in the foundation level of \$125 per pupil and would fully fund mandated categoricals.

In addition to the budget discussion, we had a thorough discussion of the testing of students who are English language learners (ELL) who will be taking this year either the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) or Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) with accommodations instead of the Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English (IMAGE). A number of advocates and educators addressed the Board with their concerns about this change, and I wanted to take this opportunity to provide you with an update on this important topic.

As I told you a couple weeks ago, we have finalized the list of accommodations for this year, which is available at <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/listserv/2008/jan7.htm>. In addition to the accommodations, I have made a formal request for flexibility to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), for which the USDE has yet to respond, on a number of policy issues related to our testing of ELLs, including:

- Maintaining the current status level for schools and districts that do not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) solely because of the ELL subgroup,
- Including ELL students in participation calculations only,
- Not including ELL students' scores on the reading or math tests in AYP calculations for up to two years from the time the student enters the Illinois school system (as opposed to the current system which allows such students to be excluded for only one year),
- Exempting ELL students who have a composite score of 3 or less on Illinois' English language proficiency assessment (ACCESS) from the state content assessments for one year, and
- Allowing Illinois to apply the 2% proxy flexibility to be utilized for schools and districts that did not make AYP based solely on the ELL subgroup scores.

Previously we requested, and were denied, permission to exclude the scores of students who took the IMAGE in 2006 and 2007 from AYP calculations and recalculate school and district AYP determinations. We have also had a number of inquires as to what would happen if we decided to reject the direction of the USDE and continue to administer the

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IMAGE. The USDE informed us that if we did not make the change from IMAGE to administering the ISAT and PSAE with accommodations, then some of the possible consequences could include:

- Conditions being placed on Title I, Part A grants;
- Entering into a Compliance Agreement with USDE, which would involve a heightened level of federal scrutiny with respect to various aspects of state and local administration;
- Exclusion from participation in pilot programs and other flexibility e.g., no longer being able to use 2% proxy when calculating AYP; and
- Withholding of administrative funds.

Not administering IMAGE this year is not a situation that anyone likes, but it is the reality that we all face. As we move forward, we will be reviewing the effectiveness of the accommodations used this year and exploring additional options for assessing these students next year. We are also exploring the development of a native language assessment, which we will be discussing in more detail at next month's Board meeting in Springfield.

In addition, ISBE staff will be providing a presentation about the new alternate assessment at this week's Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education meeting. The new assessment, which was piloted last fall, replaces the portfolio assessment which was widely criticized by practitioners. The differences in the new assessment address many frustrations experienced by special education teachers and allows for online data entry and more accurate reporting. Additionally, it allows for teachers to spend more time on students and less time collecting assessment information for review.

The pilot test this fall was well received, and teacher feedback was used to further refine the Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA). Additional items have been added to more accurately measure the Illinois Learning Standards and the IAA will be rolled out in full this spring. I believe that once you see and administer this new assessment, you will be pleased.

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

Funding & Disbursements

HB 4148 Signed into Law

HB 4148 was signed by the Governor on January 8th (P.A. 95-0705). The bill makes changes to Section 14-7.02b of the School Code (Funding for Children Requiring Special Education Services), previously

known as and referred to in ISBE’s budget as “Special Education Extraordinary.” The language added to Section 14-7.02b states that, for fiscal year 2008 and each fiscal year thereafter, individual school districts must not receive payments under that Section totaling less than they received for fiscal year 2007 (commonly referred to as a “hold harmless” provision). However, the language further states that any “hold harmless” funding is to be “computed last and shall be separate calculation from any other calculation set forth in [Section 14-7.02b].” The “other calculation” referenced in the new language is the existing split of the entire appropriation--85% based on each district’s average daily attendance and 15% on poverty which were used in General State Aid. Thus, under the new statutory scheme, the Agency in FY 2008 for example would complete the 85-15 calculation for each district and, if the amount calculated for any district is less than what the district received in FY 2007, the Agency would request a supplemental appropriation to bring such districts back to their FY 2007 level.

The sponsor of HB 4148 initiated the legislation because when the formula for extraordinary funding was changed in August 2004, a “hold harmless” provision was inserted to last for three years (with the base year being FY 2004). In FY 2008, the original “hold harmless” ended and funds were to be distributed completely on the basis of the 85-15 formula split. Consequently, in FY 2008, 614 districts would experience an increase in “Special Education Extraordinary” funding, but 255 districts would receive less funding than they did for FY 2007.

The cost of a supplemental appropriation in FY 2008 for the 255 districts that received less funds would be \$21M; however the appropriations bill that accompanied HB 4148 (which was HB 4149) did not pass the Senate. Without the additional appropriation, the Agency has no ability to pay the “hold harmless” funding to the 255 districts that would otherwise lose funds.

2005 Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax for FY 2009 GSA Available

The 2005 Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax figures to be used in the calculation of the 2009 GSA Entitlements are now available on the General State Aid website at <http://www.isbe.net/funding/html/gsa.htm> under the header "Reports".

New Census Estimates Affecting FY09 Title I Released for 2005 Income Years

The U.S. Census Bureau has released the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) for income year 2005. The estimates will likely be used to calculate FY09 Title I Allocations.

The file of 2005 Poverty Data by Local Education Agency (LEA) is an alphabetical listing of LEAs, Poverty Count, 5-17 Population, Poverty Percent and Total Population. [Illinois Census 2005 with Poverty %](#)

From this data, LEAs can determine their potential eligibility for Basic, Concentration, Targeted and Education Finance Incentive Grants (EFIG). To be eligible for a **Basic Grant**, an LEA must have at least 10 poverty children and the number of Poverty children must be greater than two percent of the LEA population of children ages 5-17. To be eligible for a **Concentration Grant** an LEA must have at least 6,500 Poverty children or the number of formula children must exceed 15 percent of the LEA's 5-17 population. To qualify for **Targeted** and **EFIG** grants, an LEA must have at least 10 Poverty children and that number must be at least 5 percent of the 5-17 population.

Superintendents and Business Managers should carefully examine the data for their district as this will be the first indication as to whether you may be gaining or losing eligibility for Title funds in 2008-09.

The following link to the Census Bureau, www.census.gov/hhes/www/saipe/, provides a site explaining various aspects of the SAIPE count including information on challenge procedures. The challenge period for the 2005 estimates ends on April 7, 2008. **The Illinois State Board of Education neither controls nor generates the data.**

Note: These numbers do not include other non-census data such as foster, neglected or delinquent counts which may be used to calculate Title I allocations.

If you have questions on information in this message, you may contact Sally Cray or Kim Lewis in the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services at 217-782-5256.

Final FY 2008 Mandated Categorical Prorations

Final prorations have been calculated for all 2006-07 school year categorical claims that are reimbursed in FY 2008. A history of special education categorical appropriations, claim amounts and prorations is online at

http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/sped_appro_pro.pdf. If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services at 217-782-5256.

- Special Education Personnel 99.4 percent
- Special Education Private Facility 100 percent
- Special Education Extraordinary 100 percent
- Special Education Summer School 100 percent
- Special Education Orphanage 100 percent
- Special Education Transportation 99.4 percent
- Regular/Vocational Transportation 100 percent

Final Medicaid Rule Impacts School Transportation

The Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) finalized a rule that eliminates an important aspect of school-based claiming as it relates to transportation services.

The final rule eliminates Federal Medicaid payment for the costs of certain school-based administrative and transportation activities because the Secretary of CMS found that these activities are not necessary for the proper and efficient administration of the Medicaid State plan and are not within the definition of the optional transportation benefit. Based on these determinations, under this final rule, Federal Medicaid payments will no longer be available for administrative activities performed by school employees or contractors, or anyone under the control of a public or private educational institution, and for transportation from home to school. In addition, this final rule responds to public comments received on the September 7, 2007 proposed rule. The final rule can be accessed at <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20071800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2007/pdf/07-6220.pdf>.

The changes were announced December 21, 2007 the Friday before Congress and many school districts went on break before the winter holidays. However, before Congress closed session for the year, it approved a provision that freezes the implementation of the new reimbursement rules until June 30. President Bush signed the bill Dec. 29.

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.

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.

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.

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.

\$3500 School Breakfast Start Up Grants Available. Apply Today!

School Breakfast Start UP Grants are available up to \$3,500 to begin a school breakfast program. Visit http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/breakfast_state.htm to download the simple application. Do not delay, apply today.

Teacher Resources

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Program

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) has four (4) upcoming regional Student Drug Testing Summits.

Summit dates are as follows:

- **Jacksonville, FL** -- January 29, 2008
- **Oklahoma City, OK** -- January 31, 2008
- **Albuquerque, NM** -- February 6, 2008
- **Indianapolis, IN** -- February 13, 2008

Background on Summits:

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy will be hosting four regional Random Student Drug

Testing Summits in 2008. Random student drug testing is a valuable prevention strategy that can help deter children from initiating drug use. It can also identify children who have just started using drugs as well as children who have a dependency so that they may be referred to treatment. Student drug testing programs are developed by the schools in which they are implemented so that the program is specifically tailored to the needs of the community. All random student drug testing programs are designed to act as deterrent and are not by format or nature punitive.

The Random Student Drug Testing Summits will address relevant legal and program development issues and serve as an introduction for schools that would like to learn more about student drug testing. Participants will also be provided with information on Department of Education grants for the program. For schools that already have a program in place, new information will be available. Attached is the ONDCP Director's official invitation letter containing the website link for free registration to the upcoming regional Student Drug Testing Summits

For additional information regarding the Department of Education's 2008 grant announcement and application for School-Based Student-Drug Testing, please visit <http://www07.grants.gov/search>. Again, there is **no cost** to attend the summits but, because space is limited, we encourage you to register as soon as possible at <http://summits.csrincorporated.com>

BP's 2008 A+ for Energy Grant Program Announced

The BP's A+ for Energy Grant Program was created to support and reward teachers who implement innovative energy education activities in their classrooms.

Grants in the amounts of either \$5,000 or \$10,000 are available to teachers in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties who develop creative energy programs that foster a love for learning in their students and prepare them to make informed decisions about the energy opportunities and challenges that we face in the future.

To date, BP has awarded \$11.5 million in grants and scholarships to over 13,470 teachers in Alabama, California, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, New Mexico, Texas, and Canada. These grants supported 1,015 winning energy projects and benefited over 411,000 students.

Visit www.aplusforenergy.org for more information.

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 Fakheri** 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.

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/080118.htm>
