



Feb. 4, 2014

Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

Last week, we hosted a webinar that touched on several topics that will be at the forefront of the education community during 2014. This builds on our efforts to improve our dialogue and follows our successful Back to School webinar from August. We had nearly 450 attendees for the webinar and covered a variety of topics including:

- Education Funding/ The Board’s Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Request
- Educator Development
- Illinois Learning Standards Implementation and Resources
- Assessments
- 2014 School Report Card and 5Essentials Survey

The webinar is posted online and you may access it at http://www.isbe.net/asx/2014/Supt_Koch_01_29_14.asx. We have also posted the accompanying PowerPoint at <http://www.isbe.net/board/supt/ppt/winter-webinar-2014.pdf>. Thank you for the many thoughtful questions.

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There is a lot of interest in the upcoming Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) field test. We have developed several materials to help you engage staff, parents and your communities so that they have a better understanding of what we’re doing. We have posted a one-page summary, frequently asked questions document and a letter for parents. Just like any of our other materials, please feel free to use in whatever way works best for you. You may print on our letterhead and send out or take the content and personalize it for your own district. You may access these materials at <http://www.isbe.net/hot-topics.htm?col7=open#CollapsiblePanel7>.

I also want to remind you that PARCC sample items are posted for every grade on the testing platform students will use when taking the field test. PARCC also released online tutorials demonstrating how students will navigate the test and use computer-based tools. The sample items have been reviewed to ensure they are of high quality and are similar to the types of items students will see when the test is fully operational in spring 2015. The sample items are available at www.parcconline.org/computer-based-samples.

Finally, thanks to all of you who have agreed to participate in the PARCC field test. We expect there will be some glitches and issues, which is why we are running the field test. I appreciate you stepping up and leading the way for our move to the new assessments. We have requested flexibility for districts that

are participating in the field test this spring but have not heard back from the U.S. Department of Education. Once we do receive their answer, we will let you know.

Thanks and have a great week!
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>.

- **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 submit 2014 School Maintenance Project Grant (Round 2) application** – Feb. 28 (http://www.isbe.net/sbss/smp_grants.htm)
- **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
- **Illinois 5Essentials Survey** – To be conducted March 17 through April 25
- **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
- **Postmark deadline for waiver applications to be considered by General Assembly in Fall 2014** – Friday, August 15, 2014 (See <http://www.isbe.net/isbewaivers/default.htm> for public notice requirements for all waiver requests.)

Assessment

Input Sought for IAA Standards Setting

ISBE's Assessment Division is currently undertaking a standards setting process to assist in determining the appropriate performance standard cut scores for the 2013-2014 Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA), which is now aligned to the Common Core Essential Elements (CCEEs).

Teachers that administer the IAA now have the opportunity to provide input on the performance level of their current students based on their professional observations of student achievement during the instructional process prior to testing. This feedback will then be compared to the actual performance of students once IAA scores are finalized and will be used to help advise policy makers regarding the most appropriate placements of cut scores.

At no time will any data be reported or identified by individual student, teacher, class, grade, school or district. All data and results will be analyzed and reported for the state at large. The anonymity and confidentiality of all data is assured.

Testing coordinators for the IAA and Special Education directors should receive the information to share with teachers this week via email.

Illinois Youth Survey

Survey Shows Trends in Substance Abuse, Violence, Other Student Risk Conditions

ISBE encourages district and school administrators to take advantage of the 2014 Illinois Youth Survey, a valuable resource that allows them to track physical, social and mental health indicators for students.

The IYS survey is funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services and is free to all Illinois schools for

grades 6, 8, 10 and 12. Participating school administrators receive local IYS reports that document trends in substance abuse, violence and other risk conditions that often impede a conducive and productive learning environment for students. This comprehensive data can be used to support school, district and community-wide planning as well as to develop grant applications for needed resources to promote a healthy learning environment.

In addition to grounding local assessment needs, school participation in the IYS assures that Illinois can continue to report state and community-level performance measures to federal funders of both block grants and discretionary grants to our state that benefit students, families and schools.

The survey is administered through online or paper format and is available in English and Spanish. Schools may also include up to 30 questions of their choice. A survey date may be selected any time from January to May 2014, at the convenience of each school. Detailed information about the survey is available on the IYS website at iys.cprd.illinois.edu, via email at cprd-iys@mx.uillinois.edu or by calling the IYS contractor, the Center for Prevention Research and Development at the University of Illinois, toll free at (888) 333-5612.

School Business Services

Funds Available for Round 2 of the 2014 School Maintenance Project Grant

As the 2014 School Maintenance Grant (SMG) Round 1 is nearing the end of the review and approval process of more than 600 applications, ISBE will release the remainder of funds for another round of grant awards.

The 2014 SMG (Round 2) application will open in ISBE Web Application Security (IWAS) on Monday, Feb. 3, 2014 and close on Friday, Feb. 28, 2014. All applications and required paper work must be submitted no later than the Feb. 28 deadline, **no exceptions**. All Health Life Safety (H/LS) Amendments required for the H/LS priority level B must be submitted no later than Feb. 28, **no exceptions**.

All grant awards will be awarded to Emergency and H/LS priority first, then to the other priority levels as funding allows. All applications will be ranked and awarded first by their priority level. Within the priority level, where it is estimated that the funding will be less than the application requests, applications will be ranked

and awarded by in accordance to each district's calculated need index within that priority level.

The 2014 SMG (Round 2) is a dollar for dollar state matching grant program providing awards up to \$50,000 for the maintenance or upkeep of buildings or structures. There is approximately \$18 million available for this round. As this round will have a shorter turnaround application period, some requirements have changed. See the following website for the requirements and further details: http://www.isbe.net/sbss/smp_grants.htm.

Contacts for the program are Kimberly Beachy and Debbie Hemberger in the School Business Services Division. Both may be reached by phone at (217) 785-8779 or email at kbeachy@isbe.net and dhemberg@isbe.net.

2014 School Energy Efficiency Project Grant Program Awards 95 Applicants

ISBE has completed the application review process for the 2014 School Energy Efficiency Project Grant (SEEG), (Round 1) and awarded 95 applicants out of 405. Notification was sent to all awarded grant applicants on Friday, Jan. 24, 2014 via email.

Applications were ranked in accordance with the calculated needs index and approved accordingly to obligate the \$20 million in released funds. For the list of applicant rankings and further information, please see the following link: http://www.isbe.net/sbss/ee_grants.htm.

Contacts for the program are Debbie Hemberger and Kimberly Beachy in the School Business Services Divisions. Both may be reached by phone at (217) 785-8779 or email at dhemberg@isbe.net and kbeachy@isbe.net.

Resource Offers Tips for How to Prepare for Severe Winter Weather Conditions

Extreme cold, ice, sleet and snow are not only dangerous for students and faculty but can also wreck havoc on school buildings and property. ISBE's School Business Services Division has put together a list of tips to help school districts prepare for the hazards of severe winter weather.

Helpful precautions include having licensed professionals inspect and perform routine maintenance on all heating units prior to and during the cold season, sprinkler pipes/lines, roof structures, roof drains, gutters,

downspouts, storm sewers, generators, electrical lines and panels. Districts should also stay up-to-date on routine maintenance such as the caulking of windows, doors, roof connections, masonry gaps and expansion joints, etc, to help save energy and prevent water from entering the building and causing more damage, especially during extreme weather conditions.

Districts are also urged to educate all staff on the location of all emergency shut-off valves/switches and to have a plan in place for faculty/staff to routinely maintain and check school buildings. Districts should also review, exercise and update their School Emergency and Crisis Response Plan.

For the full list of “Extreme Weather Preparedness Tips for Schools,” go to http://www.isbe.net/construction/health_safety/pdfs/hls-emergency-winter-planning.pdf.

School Safety

IEMA’s School Security Grant Program Provides \$25 Million for Enhanced Safety

The Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) has announced the availability of \$25 million in funds for eligible public elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools to make designated safety improvements through the competitive Illinois School Security Grant Program.

The program aims to establish a baseline security level at each eligible public elementary, secondary and post-secondary school in the state.

Last week, IEMA emailed information about the grant program to the chief official for each eligible public K-12 school district, inter-district special education cooperative, community college and university system in Illinois. The emails contained secure access information so school officials can develop and submit their grant application. Only one application from the eligible entity will be accepted.

Based on a review of national crisis situations and consultation with key security experts, Illinois has prioritized protective measures, such as installing reinforced doors, shatter-resistance glass and physical locks for the primary public entrance at schools, to protect students and staff. Schools that have achieved this baseline capability will be able to implement other security measures for public elementary and secondary school districts.

The deadline to apply is Friday, March 14. Applications will be evaluated on a number of criteria, including known hazards, threats and risks; ability of the project to enhance student safety; existence of a current Emergency Operations Plan at the facility where the project is planned; ability to complete the project within the grant period; and more.

More information about the Illinois School Security Grant Program is available at www.Ready.Illinois.gov.

U.S. Senate Youth Program

High School Students From Elmhurst and Sherman Selected to Represent Illinois

Mary-Margaret Koch of Elmhurst and Austin Tuttle of Sherman were selected as delegates to the 52nd annual U.S. Senate Youth Program. They will represent Illinois for a weeklong educational visit to Washington, D.C., in March.

Mary-Margaret Koch attends York Community High School in Elmhurst Community Unit School District 205, where she is the student body president. Mary-Margaret also serves as president of Model United Nations and co-captain of Science Olympiad. In addition, she is an active community volunteer and is the recipient of her school’s Citizenship Award.

Austin Tuttle, a junior at Williamsville High School in Williamsville-Sherman Community Unit School District 15, serves as the treasurer for his Youth and Government delegation and is co-editor of the Youth and Government newspaper. Tuttle is a member of National Honor Society and his school’s scholastic bowl and golf teams. He is also a recipient of his school’s Citizenship Award and volunteers in his community.

Alexander Feltes of Oswego High School in Oswego Community Unit School District 308 was chosen as an alternate to the 2014 program. Vinay Basti of Willowbrook, a Hinsdale Central High School student, was originally chosen as a delegate but was unable to attend.

The U.S. Senate Youth Program was created in 1962. The Hearst Foundations fund the program and provide state delegates with a \$5,000 undergraduate college scholarship and encourage them to continue coursework in government, history and public affairs.

PARCC

Sample Test Questions Now Ready for Computer Practice

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers recently posted sample test items for every grade on the testing platform students will use when taking the field test later this spring.

This means teachers, students, parents and others will be able to engage with the sample items using computer-based tools such as drag-and-drop, multiple select, text highlighting, and an equation builder. PARCC also released online tutorials that demonstrate how students will navigate the test; how to use the computer-based tools; and features that make the test more accessible for all students, including those with disabilities and English learners.

The sample items were available previously as downloadable printouts. The sample items have gone through a rigorous review process to ensure they are of high quality and are similar to the types of items students will see when the test is fully operational in spring 2015.

The sample items are available at www.parcconline.org/computer-based-samples. To get a true understanding of the range of rigor, item types and functionalities, users are encouraged to try out items across all grades and to provide feedback. The sample items will not be scored.

Read more at <http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-sample-test-questions-now-ready-computer-practice> or visit the main page at <http://www.parcconline.org> for a variety of resources.

Winter Reminder

Guidance on Emergency Days and the School Calendar Approval Process

As a reminder, each district is required to schedule at least five emergency days in their school calendar. These emergency days may be used at the discretion of the district, but must be made up prior to the end of the school year. Any unused emergency days must be removed prior to submitting the final school calendar.

Once a district uses all of its five proposed emergency days, if they must close the district due to a weather emergency or other condition beyond the control of the district that poses a hazardous threat to the health and

safety of students, they may request approval for an Act of God day or modify their calendar to schedule additional days at the end of the school year. An Act of God Day must be approved by the appropriate Regional Superintendent and the State Superintendent of Education. Act of God Days reduce the required number of student attendance days in the school calendar, but do not negatively impact General State Aid.

ISBE has a guidance document on the approval process for public school calendars posted at http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/ps_guidelines.pdf. Please take some time to review the guidance document and your calendar now to make sure you are in compliance.

If you have any questions about completing your school calendar, please contact Marj Beck in our Funding and Disbursement Division at mbeck@isbe.net or by calling (217) 782-5256.

Illinois Virtual School

IVS Schedules ‘Planning for Online and Blended Learning Symposium’

Illinois Virtual School will host the “Planning for Online and Blended Learning Symposium” for district superintendents, boards and staff on Feb. 26 in Lisle. The symposium is in partnership with the new Illinois CoSN chapter, Education Technology Council of Illinois, Kane County Regional Office of Education and the Illinois Association of School Business Officials (IASBO).

The symposium is designed to assist superintendents, staff and school boards in planning fully online or blended learning solutions for students. John Watson, founder of the Evergreen Education Group, will be the keynote speaker, sharing data and trends regarding online learning. The symposium’s agenda will include:

- Leadership and Policy Panel to discuss Online Learning
- Status of Charter School Commission Report on Virtual Schooling due to the Illinois Legislature March 1, 2014.
- Remote Education Act
- Tools and Strategies to Begin Planning a Local Online/Blended Program.

“Planning for Online and Blended Learning Symposium”

- **When:** 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 26
- **Cost:** \$50 (includes lunch)

- **Online registration through IASBO:**
https://www.iasbo.org/eweb/DynamicPage.aspx?Site=IASBO&WebCode=EventDetail&&evt_key=f79b3552-7b82-4f53-89d3-e2e1d087d63c
- **Location:** Hilton Lisle/Naperville, 3003 Corporate West Drive, Lisle, IL 60532

Early Childhood Division

Reminder: New ISBE Bilingual Rules and Early Childhood Teacher Preparation

In an effort to strengthen and support the academic achievement of English language learners in Illinois, new administrative rules went into effect in July 2010 that expanded bilingual services to preschool programs administered by a school district. In accordance with 23 Ill Administrative Code Part 228, effective July 1, 2014, preschool teachers who provide native language or ESL instruction to ELL students must also hold the English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual endorsement that corresponds with the teaching assignment.

For more information, contact the ISBE Division of English Language Learning at (312) 814-3850 or the ISBE Division of Early Childhood at (217) 524-4835. An explanation of the rules can be found in the PowerPoint “Overview: The New ISBE Bilingual Rules and Early Childhood Teacher Preparation,” located at http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/ec_bilingual_rules_webinar_pres.pdf. For additional resources to support your preschool English Language Learners, go to http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/preschool/preschool_ell.htm.

Upcoming Events

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 Gopak, 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 can be found at http://www.thecenterweb.org/irc/pages/f_events-nclb.html.

In Brief

Professional Development

- **Illinois Reads** is statewide reading initiative that will be launched on March 12 by the Illinois Reading Council. Jesse White, the Illinois State Librarian, has agreed to be the honorary chair. The Illinois Reads concept is to encourage Illinoisans to read books by Illinois authors. For more information or to become an Illinois Reads Ambassador, visit www.illinoisreads.org or call (888) 454-1341.
- The Illinois Reading Council is planning the 46th annual **Illinois Reading Council Conference** March 13-15 in Springfield. The conference will feature many well-known authors, nationally recognized reading professionals and Illinois educators that will be presenting over 400 breakout sessions. For more information, visit www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org or call (888) 454-1341.

In the News

- Rebecca Wattleworth, a math and science teacher at Warrensburg-Latham High School in Warrensburg, has been selected as a **Hope Street Group 2014 National Teacher Fellow**. She is one of only 13 educators nationwide to be invited to participate in this fellowship program and is this year's representative from Illinois. To read more go to <http://www.hopestreetgroup.org/news/releases/hope-street-group-announces-2014-class-national-teacher-fellows>.

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>.

Student Opportunities

- 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>.
- The American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division is sponsoring the **2014 Law Day Art Contest** for students in grades 9-12. Group and individual entries are welcome. This year's theme is "American Democracy and the Rule of the Law: Why Every Vote Matters." The deadline to enter is March 7. For details, visit www.ambar.org/lawday.

Grant Opportunities

- The **Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation** is offering grants to promote the installation of 1 kW photovoltaic (PV) systems at educational institutions serving grades K-12 throughout Illinois. Schools must meet certain criteria in order to be considered. More information, including the application, is available at <http://www.illinoiscleanenergy.org/hta-k-12-solar-schools/>. The deadline to apply is Feb. 20.
- Video Insight, a developer of enterprise IP video surveillance software, will donate more than \$250,000 in video surveillance software and hardware to schools and colleges nationwide in 2014 via a new **Video Insight School Security Grant**. For each month throughout the year, a school or college will be selected to receive the software and equipment. To apply, visit <http://www.video-insight.com/schoolgrant.php> or call (713) 621-9779.

Special Events

- Jonathan Kozol, a nationally known education author and activist, will speak at **Blackburn College in Carlinville** on Feb. 4, at 7 p.m. in Bothwell

Auditorium. Elected officials and educators will have the opportunity to listen to Kozol in an intimate setting. Admission is free for the general public, but seats must be reserved by calling the Blackburn College Public Relations Office at (217) 854-3231, ext. 4336.

Employment Opportunities

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