



**Feb. 7, 2011**

### Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

This latest blast of wintry weather is a strong reminder that winter does not officially end until March 20. The system that went through last week impacted a huge portion of our state with snow, ice and extreme temperatures. I hope you have been able to dig out and get your operations back to somewhat normal.

Dealing with wintry weather is never easy and cancelling class is a difficult decision. It can be a scheduling nightmare for everyone involved, but conditions such as we had last week can be life threatening. It's always better to error on the side of caution.

Many schools were out for multiple days last week. Add to that days that may have been canceled in January and December, and many of you may need to closely examine your school calendar.

Each district is required to schedule at least five emergency days. These emergency days may be used at the discretion of the district, but they must be made up prior to the end of the school year. Any unused emergency days must be taken off prior to submitting the final school calendar.

Once a district uses all of its 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 to modify their calendar to schedule additional days at the end of the school year. Approved Act of God days do not have to be made up and do not negatively affect the school calendar or General State Aid.

We have a guidance document on the approval process for public school calendars posted at [http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/ps\\_guidelines.pdf](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're 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](mailto:mbeck@isbe.net) or by calling (217) 782-5256.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the following individuals who were selected last week through the Illinois Principals Association and Horace Mann as 2011-12 Principals of the Year:

- Elementary Principal of the Year – Suzanne Hahn, East Richland Elementary School, East Richland CUSD #1
- Middle School/Junior High Principal of the Year – Harold Gries, Belvidere Central Middle School, Belvidere CUSD #100
- High School Principal of the Year – William Burrus, Moline Senior High School, Moline School District #40
- Assistant Principal of the Year – Tim Benka, Emerson Middle School, Park-Ridge Niles School District #64

Congratulations to all of our principals and assistant principals and thank you for everything you do for our kids.

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Have a great week.

Chris

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## Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

- **Econ Illinois' Illinois Personal Finance challenge registration deadline** – Feb. 15
- **Econ Illinois' Economics Challenge registration deadline** – Feb. 15
- **Mathematics and the Common Core: Helping Illinois Educators Prepare for New Standards conference in Chicago** – Feb. 16
- **Part 151 (School Construction Program)** – Public comment period ends Feb. 18.
- **Registration deadline for Econ Illinois' The Stock Market Game** – Feb. 18
- **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Webinar** – Feb. 24
- **PSAE Pre-ID labels sent to ACT for printing** – Feb. 25
- **U.S. Department of Education's Voices in Action: National Youth Summit** – Feb. 26
- **Illinois New Teacher Collaborative's Induction and Mentoring Conference in Springfield** – March 1-2
- **Union League Club of Chicago hosts Lincoln Inaugural Sesquicentennial** – March 4
- **Receipt deadline for ordering PSAE Day 1 State-Allowed accommodations test materials** – March 11
- **Part 226 (Special Education)** – Public comment period ends March 16
- **Illinois Young Authors' Conference** – May 21
- **2010-11 Eye Examination Data Collection deadline** – June 30

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## Funding and Disbursement Services

### Teachers Retirement System 2010-11 Employer Contribution Rates Adjusted

The Employer TRS (Teachers Retirement System) contribution on federally-funded salaries has been adjusted due to Public Act 96-1511. The Teachers Retirement System was required to recertify the appropriation amount to TRS from the state of Illinois for fiscal year 2011. The required 2010-11 state funding rate recertified by the TRS Board of Trustees is 23.10 percent. As a result, the employer TRS contributions on salaries paid from federal funds for the 2010-11 school year has changed from 25.12 percent to 23.10 percent. This change is retroactive to July 1, 2010.

### 2009-10 Federal Grants (FY 2010)

Local education agencies (LEAs) with approved 2009-10 Federal grants need to revise their FY 2010 final expenditure reports submitted to the Illinois State Board of Education if the following conditions exist:

1. The federally-funded TRS rate was paid for those salaries AFTER July 1, 2010, and
2. The higher rate was charged to the grant and reported on the final Fiscal Year 2010 expenditure report.

Please send an e-mail to the appropriate contact person listed below in the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services and request that they remove the final expenditure report indicator so that a revision can be transmitted due to the TRS rate change. The reduction will result in a greater carryover amount into FY 2011 projects that allow carryover. Please include in the e-mail, the Project Number (fiscal year, program code AND the Region-County-District-Type code).

### 2010-11 Federal Grants (FY 2011)

LEAs with approved 2010-11 Federal grants may have to submit an amendment if the difference of the TRS rate is needed for another expenditure and the additional expenditure is greater than the allowed variance of 20 percent or \$1,000, whichever is greater. An amendment is NOT required if the only change is to adjust the rate as described in the breakdown/budget details.

For further information regarding this change in the law, please communicate with TRS, via e-mail at [employers@trs.illinois.gov](mailto:employers@trs.illinois.gov) or call (888) 877-0890.

If a specific program is not listed or further information is needed regarding expenditure report and/or budget amendment changes, please call the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services at 217-782-5256.

- Title I, Title I Neglected, Delinquent, School Improvement: Diann Gragg, [dgragg@isbe.net](mailto:dgragg@isbe.net)

- Title IIA, IID, IV, 21st Century: Ernie Barrow, [ebarrow@isbe.net](mailto:ebarrow@isbe.net)
- IDEA Flow Through and Preschool, Special Ed Discretionary: Sharon Conrath, [sconrath@isbe.net](mailto:sconrath@isbe.net)
- Title III (LIPLEP, IEP), Migrant: Judy Conboy, [jconboy@isbe.net](mailto:jconboy@isbe.net)
- Perkins Secondary, State Leadership: Jodi Whitlow, [jwhitlow@isbe.net](mailto:jwhitlow@isbe.net)
- Even Start, McKinney Homeless: Jamie Johnson, [jjohnson@isbe.net](mailto:jjohnson@isbe.net)

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## School Business Services

### School District Annual Financial Report Review Process Under Way

All district superintendents should have received an e-mail 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, the comments must be submitted no later than Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2011.

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 e-mail 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 e-mail 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, 2010.

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.

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## Early Childhood

### Webinar on Preschool for All FY 12 Competitive Application Process

The registration link for the Preschool for All FY12 Competitive Application Process webinar is <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/178406536>. Space is limited for the webinar, which is set for 10 a.m. to noon CST on Thursday, Feb. 17.

This webinar provides guidance and instruction for completing a proposal for Preschool for All funding for FY 12. After registering, you will receive a confirmation e-mail containing information about joining the webinar.

Only school districts and agency/entities that were eligible for funding in FY 10 and/or FY 11 and are currently in good standing may submit a proposal for funding in FY 12. Funding for parental training will not be available. If you have questions, contact the Early Childhood Division at 217-524-4835.

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## English Language Learning

### FY 12 ELL Programs Consolidated Application and Workshops

The FY12 ELL Enrollment Summary and Ceiling Calculator for this year will incorporate several components in addition to what was collected in the FY11 application. This includes staff qualifications and assignments; program models for each attendance center; and the Immigrant Education Program (IEP) private school student count.

In light of these additions, the Division of English Language Learning (DELL) has scheduled a series of training workshops to provide guidance for districts in accessing and completing Part 1 of the FY12 consolidated application. Please visit <http://www.isbe.net/bilingual> under "Hot Topics" for more information.

New TBE/TPI program directors or anyone with additional questions who may have participated in training provided for the completion of the FY11 consolidated application are strongly encouraged to attend.

If you have any question(s), please contact the Division of English Language Learning at 312-814-3850.

- Part 1 of the FY12 Consolidated Application, the Enrollment Summary and Ceiling Calculator, will be posted online through IWAS on or before Feb. 15, 2011. The ELL Enrollment Summary and Ceiling Calculator are due March 18, 2011.
- Part 2 of the FY12 Consolidated Application, the TBE/TPI and Title III Application, will be posted online through IWAS May 1, 2011, and is due June 30, 2011. Any district applying for federal Title III funds must submit applications by this deadline to be considered for federal Title III funding.

### **Applications for Migrant Supplemental Education Services Funding Available**

The Division of English Language Learning is accepting applications for migrant supplemental education services funding for the summer of 2011 in districts with qualifying migrant children under Title I, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act. The application is available at <http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/htmls/migrant.htm>. The application deadline is Tuesday, March 15, 2011.

Students who are 0-21 years old and have not graduated from high school may be eligible if they have moved within the past three years due to economic necessity across state or school district lines with a parent or guardian or on their own to obtain temporary or seasonal work in agricultural production, fishing or food processing industries. A certified recruiter must document that children qualify as migrant students.

The State Board can assist districts in identifying eligible migrant children. Information about how to request assistance is available at [http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/pdfs/migrant\\_survey.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/pdfs/migrant_survey.pdf). For more information, contact Beth Robinson at 312-814-3850.

### **FY 2011 Final Title III Allocation Amendments**

Final allocations (including carry-over funds from the previous year) for FY11 Title III Language Instruction Programs for Limited English Proficient Students (LIPLEPS) have been posted. School districts awarded initial LIPLEPS funding through the FY11 Consolidated ELL Application must now revise their budgets to reflect these amounts. Please note that carry-over funds and pre-payments will only show up when an amendment is created in IWAS.

Districts with returned applications must revise the LIPLEPS budget to include the entire amount shown on the allotment.

Districts with approved applications must create and submit an amendment.

Please be certain to revise the Payment Schedule, the Proposed Program Activities and all other relevant sections of the application to ensure that they align with the amended budget.

Should you require IWAS technical assistance, please contact the ISBE Helpdesk at 217-558-3600. Any questions related to Title III programs should be directed to your Principal Consultant, who can be reached at (312) 814-3850.

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## **Charter schools**

### **Winter Charter School Design Institute Scheduled for Feb. 25-26**

Registration is open for the Illinois Network of Charter Schools' Winter Charter School Design Institute, which will be held Feb. 25-26 at Southland College Prep Charter High School in Matteson.

The two-day event will feature tours and training and presentations from charter school experts. Institute topics include charter design and the application process, financial planning for charter schools, building community and district support and more.

The registration fee is \$250 per attendee. Additional attendees from the same charter design team receive a \$50 discount. All meals are included. Reimbursements for transportation and lodging are available depending on distance of travel for event.

Visit [http://incschools.org/start\\_a\\_charter.html](http://incschools.org/start_a_charter.html) to register and for details. The deadline to register is Feb. 18. If you have questions, contact Anne Levy Brown at [alevybrown@incschools.org](mailto:alevybrown@incschools.org) or 312-235-0798, ext. 18.

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## **Illinois Student Assistance Commission**

### **ISAC Issues Financial Aid Awareness Month Challenge**

February is Financial Aid Awareness Month, and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission is challenging



Illinois students and families to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) early, seeking 800,000 completed applications in 2011, an increase of 7 percent over last year. ISAC wants to help your students complete this important step toward college.

ISAC representatives are participating in more than 170 financial aid events throughout the state during the month of February. Highlighting Financial Aid Awareness Month is College Goal Sunday, a series of events that help students and families complete financial aid forms. College Goal Sunday has grown into a nationwide volunteer program. The College Goal Sunday program was created by the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc., and with supplemental support from Lumina Foundation for Education. The locations for local events can be found at <http://www.collegeillinois.org>. Please encourage your students and their families to participate in their local events.

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## Nutrition

### School Garden Grant Deadline Approaching

Feb. 11 is the deadline to submit an application to win a school garden. Two elementary schools in each state will be awarded a school garden through the Scholastic and National Gardening Associations and Welch's Harvest Grant.

The winning schools may select from either an outdoor or an indoor garden package. The garden packages include a variety of tools, seeds and educational materials valued at \$1,000 or \$500. Complete the application at <http://www.scholastic.com/harvest/pdfs/learnmore.pdf>.

### Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Webinar Scheduled for Feb. 24

We are ready to kick-off the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) grant application process for School Year 2011-12. Staff with the Nutrition Programs Division of the Illinois State Board of Education will present a webinar for National School Lunch Program sponsors that are interested in applying for the FFVP grant for school year 2011-12 on Feb. 24, 2011, from 9 to 10:30 a.m. Reserve your Webinar seat now at <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/232121505>.

The webinar will provide an overview of the FFVP and details about the grant application. The webinar is highly recommended for schools that would like to apply for the FFVP grant for the first time and for schools that have participated in the FFVP previously, as the application process has changed. There will be limited time for questions during the webinar. The FFVP grant application will be available online ([http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/ffv\\_program.htm](http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/ffv_program.htm)) Feb. 23, 2011. The deadline to apply for FFVP (School Year 2011-12) is March 31, 2011.

If you have any questions regarding the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, please contact Lindsay Blough ([lblough@isbe.net](mailto:lblough@isbe.net)) or Roxanne Ramage ([rramage@isbe.net](mailto:rramage@isbe.net)) at 800-545-7892.

### Nominations Sought for Interagency Nutrition Council Award for Wellness

The Interagency Nutrition Council (INC) is celebrating National Nutrition Month by commemorating those that are doing great things on wellness with the Robin A. Orr Community Partnership Award.

INC is taking nominations for outstanding work in the areas of nutrition, physical activity, wellness and food access. INC wants to hear about the programs and people that work to promote healthy eating; regular physical activity; food access, build positive partnerships; and/or include a community, family or school wellness component that can be replicated as a model program across the state. These programs may be schools, food banks/food pantries, senior/congregate feeding sites, Head Start programs, child care programs, food delivery systems, community programs, and/or local businesses.

For more information and to access the nomination form, please visit INC's website at <http://inc.aces.illinois.edu/>. If you have any additional questions, contact Lindsay Blough at [lblough@isbe.net](mailto:lblough@isbe.net) or 800-545-7892.

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## Data Analysis and Progress Reporting

### Administrator and Teacher Salary and Benefits – School Year 2011 Report

Sections 10-20.47 and 34-18.38 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/10-20.47 and 5/34-18.38] require school districts to report administrator and teacher salary and benefits to the Illinois State Board of Education:

“Each school board shall report to the State Board of Education, on or before July 1 of each year, the base salary and benefits of the district superintendent [or the general superintendent of schools or chief executive officer] and all administrators and teachers employed by the school district. For the purposes of this Section, “benefits” includes without limitation vacation days, sick days, bonuses, annuities, and retirement enhancements.” To comply with this law, school districts are required to submit to ISBE the following data for each individual employed as an administrator and/or teacher during school year 2011:

- **Name:** Legal last name, first name, and middle name
- **Position:** Main position, i.e., District Administrator, Other Administrator, or Teacher
- **Title:** Title for main position (optional)
- **Base Salary:** Dollar amount of base salary for all positions combined
- **FTE (Full-Time Equivalency):** FTE for all positions combined, counted in hundredths
- **Vacation Days:** Number of vacation days awarded this school year
- **Sick Days:** Number of sick days awarded this school year
- **Bonuses:** Dollar value of bonuses
- **Annuities:** Dollar value of employer-provided qualified and nonqualified annuities
- **Retirement Enhancements:** Dollar value of employer-provided retirement enhancements
- **Other Benefits:** Dollar value of other benefits provided by employer

The data must be submitted via the “Administrator and Teacher Salary and Benefits” system in IWAS. The system will be open for school year 2011 data entry starting Thursday, June 16, and the deadline to submit is Friday, July 1 (11:59 p.m.). The salary and benefits data you report are to include known payments through June 30, 2011, on all forms of compensation received by an individual.

District administrators and other authorized users can access the system March 1 through June 15 to visit a “Preparing for Submission” page. The page contains specific information about the data to be submitted and the required file upload process. ISBE strongly suggests downloading and using the Excel spreadsheet template that includes the proper headers and cell formatting required for your file to upload. You can use the Excel spreadsheet to gather and compile your data. After saving

as a CSV file, you can upload to ISBE once the system opens for data entry.

Questions can be directed to Mark Hobneck in the ISBE Data Analysis and Progress Reporting Division at 217-782-3950. Please note that this is a separate data collection from the Teacher Service Record (TSR), which has different data requirements and reporting timelines.

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## Curriculum and Instruction

### Deadline Coming Up to Submit New Technology Integration Plan

Several federal and state funding programs for schools and districts in the state of Illinois require an approved Technology Integration Plan (TIP). The Illinois State Board of Education serves as the approving entity of Technology Integration Plans for public schools and/or districts outside of the city of Chicago.

Schools and/or districts with a Technology Integration Plan expiring June 30, 2011, have until 11:59 p.m. Monday, Feb. 28, 2011, to submit a new three-year Technology Integration Plan for FY11 approval. Plans will only be accepted for approval if submitted online, via the proper Illinois Interactive Report Card (iirc) template, available online at <http://iirc.niu.edu>, by the deadline. Districts that are not able to submit a plan by the deadline due to extenuating circumstances must request an extension, in advance of the deadline, by contacting Marica Cullen at [mcullen@isbe.net](mailto:mcullen@isbe.net).

Special Notice to Schools and Libraries applying for E-Rate reimbursements and/or discounts only: “Beginning with FY2011, technology plans are required only for Priority 2 services (Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections).”

Read more about these changes online at <http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/step02/>. Mid-course corrections in response to an annual review of a currently approved tech plan written to support E-Rate services expiring in 2012 or 2013 must be submitted online no later than 11:59 p.m. Feb. 22, 2011, for review and approval.

Districts are advised to contact their local LTC director for technical assistance as needed. For more information, contact Faith Bishop at 217-557-7323 or [fbishop@isbe.net](mailto:fbishop@isbe.net).

## Free Workshop Kit on Preventing Suicide Among Gay Youth Available

Suicide Prevention among LGBT Youth: A Workshop for Professionals Who Serve Youth is a free workshop kit to help staff in schools, youth-serving organizations and suicide prevention programs take action to reduce suicidal behavior among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth. It is being developed by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center at Education Development Center Inc.

Topics covered include suicidal behavior among LGBT youth, risk and protective factors for suicidal behavior, strategies to reduce the risk, and ways to increase school or agency cultural competence.

The kit contains everything you need to host a workshop: a leader's guide, sample agenda, PowerPoint presentations, sample script and handouts. The workshop includes lecture, small group exercises and group discussion. All these can be adapted to meet the needs of your audiences.

Download the LGBT youth Workshop kit at <http://www.sprc.org/LGBTYouthWorkshopKit.asp>.

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## Assessment

### Amendments to Rules Governing the State Assessment (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.30)

The Illinois State Board of Education has amended its rules governing the State Assessment to define “grade 11” for the purpose of administering the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) or the Illinois Alternative Assessment (IAA). The text of the revised rule is presented below; ISBE anticipates the rule becoming effective on Jan. 20, 2011.

Section 1.30(b)(4) Districts shall administer the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) or the Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA), if applicable under subsection (d) of this Section, to students in grade 11. (See Section 2-3.64 of the School Code.) For the purpose of this subsection (b)(4), “grade 11” means the point in time when a student has earned the number of credits necessary for enrollment in grade 11, as determined by his or her school district in accordance with Sections 1.420(b) and 1.440 of this Part. A district shall not promote a student to grade 12 status until that student has taken either the PSAE or IAA, as applicable.

### Guidance for Spring 2011 Testing:

1. For the 2011 Spring PSAE and IAA administration only, home school districts are not required to pull back (reclassify) grade 12 students who have already been promoted to grade 12 prior to the administration of the PSAE or IAA. However, any students who take the PSAE or IAA in spring 2011 will be counted as grade 11 for the purposes of computing Adequate Yearly Progress for participation and performance, as appropriate.
2. Home School Districts are allowed to promote a student to grade 12 if the student was exempt from the state assessment while in grade 11 (Exemptions include: Medically Exempt, Homebound Exempt, In Jail/Locked Facility, Out of State/Country [See 2010-2011 Guidance – PSAE and Receipt of a Regular High School Diploma]). These exempt students would be eligible for a regular high school diploma, even though they would not take the PSAE or IAA.
3. Home School Districts are allowed to maintain a student as grade 12 if the student was exempt from state assessment while in grade 12 (Exemptions include: Medically Exempt, Homebound Exempt, In Jail/Locked Facility, Out of State/Country, Non-Regular Diploma Recipient, or New to IL Public School in Grade 12). These exempt students would be eligible for a regular high school diploma, even though they would not take the PSAE or IAA.
4. For the 2011 Spring IAA administration only, Home School Districts are allowed to maintain a student as grade 12 if the student was IAA eligible and absent from the assessment while in grade 11 or were IAA eligible last year but not tested due to error. These students would be eligible for a regular high school diploma. However, upon the effective date of the new rule, students for whom the IAA is the appropriate state assessment may not be promoted to grade 12 status until they take IAA.
5. Home School Districts are allowed to maintain a student as being in grade 12 if they are new to the school and had achieved grade 12 status in their previous school that is a non-public school or is located out of the state or country. These transfer students would be eligible for a regular

high school diploma, even though they would not take the PSAE or IAA.

6. Students who have completed all coursework but must take the PSAE in the spring to fulfill the PSAE Diploma Requirement should continue to be enrolled in the Student Information System until May 13, 2011, to ensure their inclusion in the Assessment Correction file.
7. Students who are classified by the district as being in grade 11 multiple years (due to credit status) must participate in the state assessment each spring that they maintain grade 11 status.

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## U.S. Department of Education

### Voices in Action: National Youth Summit Scheduled for Feb. 26

As part of President Barack Obama's goal for the United States to lead the world in college completion by 2020, the U.S. Department of Education will host a youth summit in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 26. The Voices in Action: National Youth Summit aims to get ideas from high school and middle school student leaders.

Space to attend is limited. The registration link is <http://usdoedregistration.ed.gov/profile/web/index.cfm?PKWebId=0x4958291>. Details are available at <http://www.ed.gov/college-completion/youth-summit#desc>, including information on organizing a watch party to view a live webcast of the summit.

Over the summer, the Department of Education conducted a National Youth Listening Tour, meeting with more than 1,800 middle and high school students across the country. The day-long summit will address many of the key issues that were raised during the tour, including family engagement, high quality teaching, mentors and school climate.

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## Educator Certification

### Division's Initiatives Put Technology to Use and Improves Efficiency

ISBE's Educator Certification Division has made giant strides in recent years to eliminate paper and make better use of technology. Under the leadership of division administrator Linda Jamali, the division has eliminated the need for many filing cabinets with the scanning of paper applications and corresponding documentation. All applications are currently scanned at the point of intake.

Prior to this, original paper copies filled many file cabinets which have all now been scanned and documents have been archived. This achievement has never before been accomplished in certification. This has helped to streamline the process, provide additional work space for evaluators, and remove a backlog in processing applications. In 2004, the division had an 18-month backlog, which had been as much as 3 years in prior years and currently most processing is completed in less than 60 days.

The division also implemented a new phone system to better handle the hundreds of calls they receive each day, eliminated mailing new certificates when endorsements are added which has reduced mailing costs, and have worked with higher education so that they would support adding endorsements rather than individuals requesting evaluations directly from the ISBE. This last initiative is an effort to move staff from evaluating transcripts to becoming providers of support and guidance to institutions. Since requirements are based on standards, institutions have a strong understanding of what courses meet specific standards rather than evaluators having to study course catalogs, review transcripts and make decisions based on course titles.

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## 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>.

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## In the News

### Weekly News Clips

ISBE has posted highlights from last week's education news clips at <http://www.isbe.net/news/2011/newsclips/110207.htm>.