



# Illinois State Board of Education

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

## Weekly Message

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Dr. Randy J. Dunn, State Superintendent

*February 14, 2006*

### Weekly Message from State Superintendent Randy Dunn

Good afternoon.

Like many of you, one of the concerns I've had with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is the target for all students to meet or exceed the Illinois Learning Standards by 2013-14. While I believe that every child can learn and show progress over time, it is NCLB's lockstep approach that makes me uncomfortable.

As I mentioned to you last year when I commented on the changes we had proposed in the Illinois Accountability Workbook, we are encouraged by continually improving test scores and the progress schools have made in beginning to close the minority achievement gap. As we work to implement NCLB in Illinois, we know there are needs throughout the state to make the assessment and accountability systems as fair as possible for every school and district.

Certainly, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) recognizes this issue and is showing more flexibility around this aspect of the law.

Toward that end, last November Education Secretary Spellings invited states to participate in a ten-state pilot project where growth models would determine whether schools had demonstrated adequate yearly progress (AYP) for Title I purposes. USED staff provided details about the core principles and issued guidance last month about specific characteristics a growth model should have to be consistent with the principles. The Department announced that eligible states are free to develop and propose their own models. These models would be applicable to only grades three through eight at this time. Some alternative would need to be considered for high schools.

I know that many of you hoped that Illinois could be one of the ten pilot states for the growth model. However, Illinois doesn't meet the eligibility to participate as a pilot state at this time. Only those states that have had an assessment system for grades three through eight in place since at least 2004-2005 and an assessment and data system that tracks individual student progress (i.e., our SIS project) will advance to the next step of peer review. Given that only ten states will be selected for the pilot, and Illinois doesn't meet the minimum eligibility criteria yet, it's not likely that we would be chosen for the pilot.

I am sending a letter to USED shortly, expressing our interest in this process, including details on our progress toward getting our systems in place to support a growth model.

Like many of you, I am anxious to explore the potential for a growth model to give a clearer, fairer picture of individual student progress. That being said, this may be an instance where it's better to wait, watch and learn from the experience of other states as we develop our own request to participate in 2007-2008.

If you are interested in being a part of the planning process, please contact **Becky McCabe**, our Division Administrator in Student Assessment by email at [rmccabe@isbe.net](mailto:rmccabe@isbe.net) or by phone at 217-782-4823, toll-free 1-866-262-6663. We are putting together a work group now to ready our proposal for next year.

Have a great week.

Randy Dunn

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## Upcoming Deadlines

- National Youth Science Camp Applications – **February 17, 2006**
- Rulemaking Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision), Deadline for Public Comment - **February 20, 2006**
- Rulemaking Part 25 (Certification), Deadline for Public Comment - **February 20, 2006**
- Rulemaking Part 305 (School Food Service), Deadline for Public Comment - **February 20, 2006**
- Early Reading First Grant pre-applications due – **February 21, 2006**
- National Center for Urban School Transformation Awards – **February 27, 2006**
- Grow Your Own Teacher Grants – **March 1, 2006**
- Fordham University National School Changes Awards applications – **March 3, 2006**
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Proposals – **March 15, 2006**
- Automated External Defibrillator Grant Applications – **March 30, 2006**
- American Stars of Teaching Award nominations – **April 15, 2006**
- Public Comment on Special Education Rulemaking – **August 10, 2006**

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## Professional Development

### Attracting and Retaining Quality Teachers: Local and Statewide Solutions

The Illinois New Teacher Collaborative (INTC) encourages district and building teams and cross-institutional partnership teams from across the state to attend a working conference to create and share plans for attracting and retaining teachers. Keynote speakers include **Richard Ingersoll**, **Brooke Haycock**, **Mary Clement**, and **Jim Burgett**. In addition participants will learn more about resources available for new teachers, mentors, and programs.

#### *Attracting and Retaining Quality Teachers: Local and Statewide Solutions*

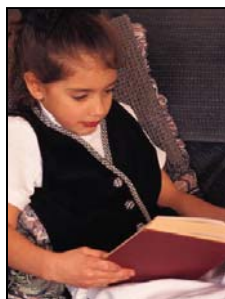
February 28 through March 1, 2006  
Hilton Hotel - Springfield, Illinois

To register visit: <http://intc.ed.uiuc.edu/conference>. For more information call the INTC office at 217-244-7389. Registrations will be accepted up to February 17, as space is available.

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## Curriculum and Instruction

### Early Reading First Program



The Federal Register recently published a notice inviting new award applications in Fiscal Year 2006 for the **Early Reading First** program. The deadline for transmittal of pre-applications is February 21,

2006. Eligible applicants are those Illinois school districts that were eligible to write proposals for Round 3 Reading First funding. The electronic grant application for the Early Reading First program may be accessed at:

<http://www.grants.gov>. Search for the downloadable application package for this program by the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number 84.359A (pre-application) and CFDA number 84.359B (full application).

Information and application details can be found at <http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do?mode=VIEW&oppId=7630>.

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## ISBE employment opportunities

### 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



Highlights from last week's education news clips are posted at: <http://www.isbe.net/news/2006/newsclips/060210.htm>.