



# Illinois State Board of Education

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

## Weekly Message

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Dr. Randy J. Dunn, State Superintendent

February 21, 2006

### Weekly Message from State Superintendent Randy Dunn

Good afternoon.

I know many of you either watched or listened to Governor Blagojevich’s budget address to the General Assembly last Wednesday. I was heartened to hear the Governor speak about *Preschool for All*, his initiative to make Pre-Kindergarten available to all three- and four-year-olds starting in 2006-07. *Preschool for All* is an extension of the state’s Pre-K Program for At-Risk Children created by Governor Thompson in 1985 and dramatically expanded under Governor Blagojevich.

The goal of *Preschool for All* is to reach thousands of children who do not have access to quality preschool programs because they are not categorized as “at risk,” but cannot afford quality private programs. The program will be entirely voluntary, though we anticipate that a majority of parents will want their children to participate.

All school districts and qualified community-based programs will be eligible to apply for *Preschool for All* funds. The first phase will encompass \$45 million each year for the next three years to provide preschool to—by our best estimates—32,000 additional four-year-olds and at-risk three-year-olds, expand opportunities for at-risk infants and toddlers and improve both the quality and accountability of our PreK programs.

*Preschool for All* will make Illinois the first state in the nation to offer preschool to all three- and four-year-olds. The return-on-investment is clear here: Children who go to preschool are less likely to need special education, more likely to graduate high school, less likely to encounter the juvenile justice system and will earn more money as adults.

Teachers can clearly see the difference as well; children who get preschool are better prepared to succeed when they start Kindergarten and as they move to the early elementary grades—socially, emotionally and cognitively. To illustrate, in 2002, 59 percent of children who were in one of our state-funded PreK classrooms met or exceeded ISAT standards for reading at both the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades.

Sometimes due to space constraints in our public school facilities, many of these new classrooms may be opened in community-based settings. These community-based providers will be held to the same high standards as our school-based programs. *Preschool for All* will fund 2.5-hour-per-day classroom sections, up to five days per week.

I know that some of you feel that this is an unfunded mandate. But I see this as just the opposite—a “funded non-mandate”. It’s an entirely voluntary program with resources in place for those who choose to access them.

Certainly, preschool is only part of the story. That is why the Governor has recommended a \$400 million overall increase for P-12 education in FY 07 which includes new dollars to support General State Aid, Mandated Categoricals, Bilingual Education and other vital areas. You can review the State Board’s budget proposal for 2006-07 at [http://www.isbe.net/budget/FY07/budget\\_request.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/budget/FY07/budget_request.pdf). I am also urging legislators to support the Governor’s jobs bill for capital expenditures, which includes the \$550 million for school construction and maintenance grants.

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The bottom-line is this: *Preschool for All* is a cost-effective investment that will make a tremendous difference in student learning and put us—here in Illinois—in a leadership role nationally. Bolstering early learning will make the dollars we spend later work more effectively. Those of us at the Agency are ready to take on this challenge that the Governor has put in front of us. I hope you will do what you can as school people to support *Preschool for All* in your community.

Have a great week.

Randy Dunn

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## Upcoming Deadlines

- 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**
- Norwegian National League Scholarships – **March 15, 2006**
- Automated External Defibrillator Grant Applications – **March 30, 2006**
- American Stars of Teaching Award nominations – **April 15, 2006**
- Nature of Learning Start-Up Grants – **April 17, 2006**
- Public Comment on Special Education Rulemaking – **August 10, 2006**




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## English Language Learning

### Identification of students eligible for bilingual education

Each school district is required to take steps to identify students in need of bilingual education services. Pursuant to 23 Ill. Adm. Code §228.15, each district must administer a home language survey to each student entering the district's schools for the first time, for the purpose of identifying students of non-English background.

Each district also has the duty to administer an English language proficiency assessment prescribed by ISBE to each student identified as non-English background. The purpose of the assessment is to determine eligibility for bilingual education services. 105 ILCS 5/14C-3 and 23 Ill. Adm. Code §228.15.

Parents have no statutory basis to refuse to allow students to participate in either step of the identification process and districts have no statutory authority to make exceptions. For more information call the Division of English Language Learning at 312-814-3850 or the Division of Student Assessment at 217-782-4823.

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## School Business and Support

### Severe Weather Preparedness Week

March 5 through 11 is Severe Weather Preparedness Week. The statewide tornado drill is scheduled for Tuesday March 7, 2006, at 10 a.m.

There are a number of severe weather hazards that affect Illinois, including thunderstorms, tornadoes, lightning, floods and flash floods, damaging winds and large hail. Severe weather hazards have the potential to cause extensive property damage, injury and/or death. This week is observed to highlight the importance of knowing what steps to take before, during and after severe weather strikes. The Severe Weather Preparedness booklet is available at <http://www.state.il.us/IEMA/>.

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## Curriculum and Instruction

### Nature of Learning Start-Up Grants available for environmental education programs

**Deadline: April 17, 2006**

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuge and other program partners, invites applications from organizations interested in initiating the Nature of Learning Program in their communities.

The Nature of Learning, a community-based environmental education initiative, seeks to use National Wildlife Refuges as outdoor classrooms to promote a greater understanding of local conservation issues; encourage an interdisciplinary approach to learning that seeks to enhance student academic achievement; utilize field experiences and student-led stewardship projects to connect classroom lessons to real world issues; and involve a partnership among local schools, community groups, natural resource professionals and local businesses.

Grants of up to \$5,000 will be awarded on a competitive basis to support start-up expenses associated with new programs. In addition, grants of up to \$3,000 will be awarded to provide continued support to existing Nature of Learning Programs.

Schools or nonprofit organizations, including "Friends" groups, Cooperative and Interpretive Associations, Audubon Chapters, are eligible to apply for funding. Programs must involve a partnership among a local school(s), community group (e.g., Refuge Support Group) and National Wildlife Refuge.

Programs must be designed to meet all the key elements of the Nature of Learning framework over time. Moreover, programs must promote an understanding of local conservation issues, improve scientific literacy and conform to appropriate academic standards of learning.

Programs are expected to include an outdoor classroom experience for students and teachers at a National Wildlife Refuge and must also include a community stewardship project.

The RFP is available online at:  
<http://fconline.fdncenter.org/pnd/10000594/nfwf/tnol>.

Additional RFPs are available at:  
[http://fdncenter.org/pnd/rfp/cat\\_environment.jhtml](http://fdncenter.org/pnd/rfp/cat_environment.jhtml)

### **Excellence in Sustainability Awards**

Students that document and submit any environmentally sustainable activities conducted between September 1, 2005 and April 1, 2006, will be entered in the Excellence in Sustainability Awards Program. All entrants have a chance to receive a plaque, be recognized for their environmentally sustainable project and have lunch at the Executive Mansion on May 11, 2006.

For more details, visit:  
[http://www.illinoisbiz.biz/dceo/Bureaus/Energy\\_Recycling/Education/ISTEP\\_Sustainability+Awards.htm](http://www.illinoisbiz.biz/dceo/Bureaus/Energy_Recycling/Education/ISTEP_Sustainability+Awards.htm).

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## **Special Education**

### **State Board seeks public comment on IDEA Part B application**

The Illinois State Board of Education, Division of Special Education Services has completed the grant application under Part B of IDEA as amended in 2004, for FFY 2006 funds which will become available to States on July 1, 2006. Upon receipt and approval of the required assurances, certifications and information in the Application, the State will be eligible to receive FFY 2006 Part B funds.

The General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) requires that States must publish their Part B Application for at least 60 days and accept public comment for at least 30 days. The Illinois State Board of Education's state plan for federal fiscal year 2006 is published from **February 21, 2006 through April 21, 2006**. The plan includes a checklist of assurances that Illinois has policies and procedures in effect to comply with the requirements of the amendments to IDEA in December 2004. Where Illinois is not in compliance with the IDEA amendments of 2004, a date is given by which Illinois assures that policies and procedures will be in effect. The plan for expenditure of state-level IDEA funds by category is also a component of the state plan.

A copy of the plan is available at:  
[http://www.isbe.net/pdf/part\\_b\\_application.doc](http://www.isbe.net/pdf/part_b_application.doc). If you wish to submit a written comment regarding the State's plan, you may utilize the comment form at that website. A copy of the plan and comment form may also be reviewed at the Illinois State Board of Education, 100 North First Street, Springfield, Illinois 62777 in the Information Center, One South.

Written comments will only be accepted from **February 21, 2006 – March 31, 2006**. Please address comments to:  
Christopher Koch, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent  
Division of Special Education Services  
100 North First Street – N-243  
Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001  
Phone 217-782-5589, Fax 217-782-0372  
Email: [IDEA@isbe.net](mailto:IDEA@isbe.net)

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## Professional Development

### NASA MESSENGER fellowship opportunities

MESSENGER is a NASA Discovery mission that was launched in 2004 and will reach Mercury in 2011. NASA is recruiting 30 practicing teachers or teacher trainers to become the next cadre of MESSENGER Educator Fellows. These Fellows help bring the excitement of this challenging mission to classrooms nationwide by training teachers on the Solar System-focused education materials written in support of the mission. The Fellowship includes an all-expense paid five-day training workshop in Washington, DC, in June 2006.

Applications are due March 31, 2006. The Announcement of Opportunity can be viewed at <http://btc.montana.edu/messenger/teachers/fellows.php>. Please contact the MESSENGER Educator Fellowship Coordinator **Ken Pulkkinen** at [messenger@usra.edu](mailto:messenger@usra.edu) or 202-689-1238 for more information.

### School Specialty Educators' Symposium 2006: Celebrating the Art and Science of Teaching

**August 2-3, 2006**  
**Rosemont Theatre, Chicago**

The School Specialty Educators' Symposium is an annual event for K-12 educators, education students and administrators. It is a two-day symposium combining the very latest educational technology and techniques, with the motivational energy created by an inspirational environment. The Symposium provides educators with accredited professional development learning and is designed to elicit the same level of excitement and enthusiasm for teaching that originally motivated attendees to choose education as a career.

The Symposium 2006 will be held live at the Rosemont Theatre, Chicago and will also be broadcast to 35 cities across the U.S., making it very accessible and affordable to all. For more information, visit: <http://www.educatorsymposium.com/>.

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## Scholarships and Awards

### Norwegian National League of Chicago offers scholarships

The Norwegian national League of Chicago offers scholarships to deserving students of Norwegian heritage residing in Cook, Lake, DuPage, Kane, McHenry and Will Counties.

A \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded to a high school senior with a minimum 3.0 grade point average (GPA) who has been accepted by a college or university. Cash prizes will be awarded including a \$100 cash prize to a student in grades nine through 11, a \$50 cash prize to a student in grades five through eight and a \$25 cash prize to a student in grades one through four.

To qualify, students in grade five and above must submit an original essay on a Norwegian topic. Students in grades one through four must submit an original drawing depicting a Norwegian topic. Entries must be postmarked by March 15, 2006.

For more information visit <http://www.nnleague.org> or contact **Tom Maxon** at 847-297-1656 or [sovmax@earthlink.net](mailto:sovmax@earthlink.net).

### National D-Day Museum 2006 Online Essay Competition

The National D-Day Museum in New Orleans, designated America's National WWII Museum by the U.S. Congress, is holding an online essay contest for all high school students in the United States.

The first place winner will receive \$500 with a \$250 prize and \$100 prize for second and third places, respectively.

Essays must be 1,000 words or less and each student may submit only one essay. Entries must be emailed to the National D-Day Museum by March 31, 2006 at 5 p.m. Central Standard Time. For more information, visit: <http://www.ddaymuseum.org/education/studentessays.html>.

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## Nutrition

### School Wellness Policy Task Force to hold second meeting

The School Wellness Policy Task Force established through Public Act 94-0199 will hold



its second meeting on March 22. The focus of this meeting will be to investigate statewide school nutrition standards in preparation for the report on recommendations due to the General Assembly and Governor by January 1, 2007. Please visit [http://www.isbe.net/news/pdf/school\\_wellness\\_task\\_force.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/news/pdf/school_wellness_task_force.pdf) for a complete list of the task force members.

The National Food Service Management Institute has posted a webcast of the Local Wellness Policy: A Team Approach program. Check out the following website to view the two-hour program at [http://www.nfsmi.org/Education/Satellite/ss37/program\\_info.htm](http://www.nfsmi.org/Education/Satellite/ss37/program_info.htm) to hear the most current school wellness policy information. The program featured local school districts that have health and wellness efforts under way.

### School Food Safety Inspections

Beginning with the 2005–2006 school year, all schools participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs are required to obtain a minimum of two food safety inspections each school year. Previously, participating schools were required to obtain a minimum of one food safety inspection per school year or comply with the frequency required by local standards. This is a result of the passage of Section 111 of the Child Nutrition and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-265).

The required inspections must be conducted by a State or local governmental agency responsible for food safety inspections. More frequent inspections may still be required by State or local governments. In addition, schools must post, in a publicly visible location, a report on the most recent food safety inspection and provide a copy of the food safety inspection report to a member of the public upon request. If you have questions about this change, please contact your local public health department.

### Communication requirements with households

Section 104 (b) (1) of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 requires that *any communication with a household shall be in an understandable and uniform format and, to the maximum extent practicable, in a language that parents and legal guardians can understand.*

Whenever Local Education Agencies (LEAs) communicate with households applying for or

participating in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program, this communication must be as accessible to the household as possible.

Updated English and Spanish application materials are available online at

[http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/household\\_eligibility.htm](http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/household_eligibility.htm).

The United States Department of Agriculture currently provides translated application packages for 19 different languages online at

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Translations/Default.htm>.

In addition, USDA plans to include translations for new languages prior to the beginning of school year 2006–2007 with additional translations added annually. In the meantime, the translated application packages currently available on their website are still valid.

### National School Breakfast Week materials available

March 6–10, 2006

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service has compiled a new *Bright Ideas for Using Eat Smart. Play Hard.*<sup>TM</sup> materials. This resource includes suggestions for contests, lesson plans and activities to make any breakfast celebration complete. Breakfast-promoting posters, bookmarks, activity sheets and more are available on the [Eat Smart. Play Hard.](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Translations/Default.htm) web site.



Do not hesitate. Order your free items now!

## 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>.

## In the News

### Weekly news clips

Highlights from last week's education news clips are posted at:

<http://www.isbe.net/news/2006/newsclips/060217.htm>.

