



Feb. 28, 2011

## Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

This year’s legislative session has the potential to be very dynamic with the introduction of measures that could possibly have far reaching impacts in our education community. The topics being discussed range from broad budgeting issues to high level policy issues. The possible changes to come may range from those that may not impact your daily duties at all to very personal ones that may reduce your paycheck or pension. This will likely be a wild session in Springfield and I encourage each of you to engage your local legislators and remain in close contact with your statewide professional organizations. Both represent you and both will play an important role in whatever happens during this spring legislative session.

The budget is going to continue to be a main issue for legislators this year. I will defend the Board’s budget during committee hearings and have already been meeting with many members of the legislature, explaining the differences between our budget request and the Governor’s. You can see the differences at [http://www.isbe.net/budget/FY12\\_budget\\_compare\\_gov.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/budget/FY12_budget_compare_gov.pdf).

Rank and file legislators are engaged and ready to begin the process. The House Education Appropriations Committee has already scheduled six separate hearings on various components of the agency budget. This is a major departure from previous years when there would be one or possibly two budget hearings per chamber. The focus of the hearings will be on the budget members of the State Board proposed and the topics to be covered include, General State Aid/Mandated Categoricals, Academic Improvement, Special Education/School Reform/After School Matters, District Consolidation, Student Health and Safety and Standards/Assessment and Educator Quality. The time and location of legislative hearings have a tendency to change frequently, but they are typically posted a few days in advance on the General Assembly’s website at <http://www.ilga.gov/house/committees/default.asp>.

There is a very real possibility that we could see movement on pensions to reduce the state’s future obligations to the system and we will all need to be watching this closely. Pension changes could come in a variety of ways, whether decreasing pension payouts for future retirees, increasing the amount current employees must pay toward their retirement or changes to retiree health insurance. An additional proposal would require school districts pay for a portion of pension benefits, greatly impacting the bottom lines of local districts. I encourage you to work with your statewide associations to stay informed on what is occurring on this front and also how you may be able to work with them on this issue that could have major impacts on your district as a whole and you and your colleagues personally.

I would like to clarify the Board’s stance with regards to the Governor’s statements on district consolidation. While the Board recognizes the need to carefully consider district consolidation in certain contexts, the Board has not seen any specific consolidation plan and therefore cannot at this time endorse it. If a Committee is established by the Governor or otherwise to focus on district consolidation, the Board will work with and provide resources and information to that Committee so that the State has the data necessary to make the right decisions about district consolidation.

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Finally, some of you have already begun and many of you are scheduled to begin taking the Illinois Standards Achievement Test. The ISBE is allowing districts to delay their two-week testing window by one week. The ISAT test window remains two weeks and the change only applies to the ISAT. Please review the guidelines on this at <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/listserv/2011/feb7b.htm> .

Have a great week.

Chris

## Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

- **Webinar on USDA’s Proposed Rule on Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs** – March 1
- **Reading Improvement Block Grant FY 10 Performance Reports Due** – March 1
- **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
- **Illinois Coalition for Educating At-Risk Youth spring conference** – March 10, 11
- **Receipt deadline for ordering PSAE Day 1 State-Allowed accommodations test materials** – March 11
- **Part 226 (Special Education)** – Public comment period ends March 16
- **Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision) and Part 350 (Secular Textbook Loan)** – Public comment period ends April 18
- **Illinois Young Authors’ Conference** – May 21
- **2010-11 Eye Examination Data Collection deadline** – June 30
- **Postmark deadline for waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in Fall 2011** – Aug. 12

## Curriculum and Instruction

### Illinois Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Sexual Orientation May Impact Need for Additional Support

Attached is the new Child Health Data Lab (CHDL) Data Brief exploring the mental health-related behaviors of Illinois adolescents in relation to their sexual orientation. The data reported are from the 2009 Illinois Youth Risk Behavior Survey which asked a sample of Illinois high school students about their sexual orientation for the first time. The Illinois Youth Risk Behavior Survey has been conducted since 1995 and queries a sample of approximately 1500 Illinois high school students. The survey is overseen by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Illinois State Board of Education and focuses on areas that are most likely to lead to poor health outcomes for adolescents.

The main findings of the current CHDL Data Brief are:

- (1) Students who report that they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or who are unsure of their sexual orientation (GLBU) are more than three times as likely as heterosexual youth to report being

threatened at school. They are more than twice as likely to have skipped school at least once in the previous 30 days because they felt unsafe at school.

- (2) GLBU youth are two to four times as likely to report having depressive feelings as are heterosexual youth, depending on the measure:
  - a. Over half of the GLBU youth report having been sad for two or more weeks in the previous 12 months (compared to 25.5 percent of heterosexual youth).
  - b. More than 40 percent of GLBU youth report considering suicide in the previous 12 months (compared to 12.8 percent of heterosexual youth).
  - c. Thirty percent of GLBU youth report having attempted suicide in the previous 12 months (compared to 7.2 percent of heterosexual youth).
  - d. Ten percent of GLBU youth report having gotten injured while attempting suicide (compared with 2.3 percent of heterosexual youth).
- (3) GLBU youth are two to three times more likely to report using extreme weight control methods

(fasting, taking pills, or vomiting) than heterosexual youth.

There has been a great deal of media attention about the heightened risk gay, lesbian and bisexual youth face from bullying by peers, and the poor mental health that many of these youth develop over time. This CHDL Data Brief indicates that Illinois youth are no different than those highlighted in the media. These youth may benefit from supports and services to cope with these challenges. The CHDL Data Brief provides resources that some of these youth, their families, and schools may find helpful. The full report can be found here:

[http://www.childrensmrc.org/uploadedFiles/Research/Smith\\_Child\\_Health\\_Research/Child\\_Health\\_Data\\_Lab\\_\(CHDL\)/2011%20%20YRBS%20sexual%20orientation.pdf](http://www.childrensmrc.org/uploadedFiles/Research/Smith_Child_Health_Research/Child_Health_Data_Lab_(CHDL)/2011%20%20YRBS%20sexual%20orientation.pdf)

### **Reading Improvement Block Grant FY 10 Performance Reports Due**

All school districts receiving Reading Improvement Grant funds for FY 10 must submit an annual performance report. The Reading Improvement Performance Report was due 30 days after the project end date. Since the extension for FY 10 funds was until December 31, the due date for the report was Jan. 30, 2011. The FY 10 Annual Performance Report must still be submitted upon completion of your FY 10 grant activities in order to remain in compliance with the program rules and be eligible for any future funding.

Please complete this report and submit by March 1, 2011. If you have any additional questions, contact Sarah McCusker in the Curriculum and Instruction Division at 217-557-7323 or [smccuske@isbe.net](mailto:smccuske@isbe.net).

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## **Early Childhood**

### **Preschool for All Children Ages 3-5 Request for Proposals Webinar Set**

The electronic Preschool for All Children Ages 3-5 Request for Proposals (eRFP) is available through IWAS for school year 2011-12 (FY 12). Entities that have a Prekindergarten At-Risk of Academic Failure (ECBG Continuing 3-5) and/or Preschool for All Children 3 to 5 Years (PFA 3-5) program and/or received an initial allocation for one of these programs in FY 2010 are eligible to apply. This year all the ECBG Continuing 3-5 and Preschool for All 3-5 will be combined into one proposal.

The PowerPoint for a webinar is on the Early Childhood website, <http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/default.htm>, as the first bullet under “What’s New.” All Requests for Proposals must be submitted electronically to ISBE by April 14. If you have questions, contact the Early Childhood Division at 217-524-4835.

The webinar, Preschool for All FY12 Competitive Application Process, is set for 9:30-11:30 a.m. Thursday, March 3. Space is limited. Register at <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/509136193>. This webinar provides guidance and instructions for completing a proposal for Preschool for All funding for FY12.

After registering you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the Webinar.

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## **Assessment**

### **Online Survey Seeks Opinions on ISAT From Principals and Teachers**

The Illinois Assessment Consequences Evaluation (IACE) is conducting an online survey to learn about the consequences of ISAT testing from principals’ and teachers’ perspectives. Information gathered from this study may contribute to the development of a long-range strategic plan for the Illinois Assessment and Accountability Program. A randomly selected sample of principals and teachers (grades 3-8) will be receiving an e-mail with the survey link and are strongly encouraged to participate.

All survey results are confidential. For more details, please contact Katherine Ryan, Principal Investigator, at 217-333-7177 or e-mail [iace@illinois.edu](mailto:iace@illinois.edu).

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## **Certification**

### **Educators Asked to Update Email Address in ECS**

The Certification Division would like to encourage all school administrators to instruct educators in their district/school to update their email address in the Educator Certification System (ECS) when their district email has changed.

The Certification Division’s primary method of communication with Illinois educators is through email. Recently we have had hundreds of emails bounce back as undeliverable due to changes in district email addresses.

Any email change should be reported whether it reflects a district email or a personal email. The email address is especially important when an advanced degree is reported to ISBE.

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## Rules and Waivers

### Invitation to Comment on Rules

Two proposed rulemakings recently reviewed by the Illinois State Board of Education are available for public comment. The proposals have been posted on the agency's website at <http://www.isbe.net/rules>; choose "Proposed Rules and Amendments." Please submit any comments or suggestions to [rules@isbe.net](mailto:rules@isbe.net).

#### Part 1 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision)

Addresses annual measureable achievement objectives for progress for English language learners, as well as the process to appeal the regional superintendent of schools' decision relative to a statutory or regulatory exemption pursuant to P.A. 96-1441, effective August 20, 2010; technical changes also are proposed in sections dealing with the state assessment and supervisory qualifications. *Deadline for Public Comment: April 18*

#### Part 350 (Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision)

Updates the definition of "textbook" to include electronic textbooks and technological equipment necessary to gain access to and use electronic textbooks, as per P.A. 96-1403, effective July 29, 2010. *Deadline for Public Comment: April 18*

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## P-20 Council

### Education Recommendations Established in First Report

The Illinois P-20 Council has delivered its first set of recommendations to Gov. Pat Quinn and the General Assembly. The council's report includes a goal to increase the proportion of Illinoisans with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by the year 2025. Currently, about 41 percent of the state's nearly 7 million working-age adults (ages 25-64) hold at least a two-year degree. The report states that reaching this goal will require coordination of efforts at all levels of the state education system.

The full report and an executive summary of the report can be viewed on the P-20 Council website at

<http://www.P20Council.Illinois.gov>. The site also includes meeting agendas and minutes, research tools and links to other agencies involved in the process.

The P-20 Council is a statewide coordinating body composed of government officials, business executives, university administrators and others in the education community. Chicago City Clerk Miguel del Valle serves as chair. The group is charged with the responsibility of making recommendations at all levels of education in Illinois – from pre-kindergarten through grade 20 (graduate and professional school).

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## Nutrition

### Webinar Planned on USDA's Proposed Rules on Lunch and Breakfast Programs

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 learning about the USDA's proposed rules on the nutrition standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs on March 1, 2011, from 2-3:30 p.m. (CST).

In January 2011, the USDA published proposed rules in the Federal Register to align school meals with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, as recommended by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in the report *School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children*. The webinar will summarize the proposed changes and key provisions of the rule while identifying for school personnel how to provide comments to USDA on these proposed rules by the deadline of April 13, 2011.

A copy of the proposed rules is available online at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/regulations/2011-01-13.pdf>

Reserve your webinar seat now at <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/972630816>.

### Salad Bar Grant Opportunity Offered to K-12 Schools

The United Fresh Association and the Let's Move initiative are offering a salad bar grant opportunity for K-12 schools. Schools that are certified as USDA's HealthierUS School Challenge received top priority. The Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools initiative has a goal to fund and award 6,000 salad bars over the next three years. Apply at <http://saladbars2schools.org/guidelines>.

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## Innovation and Improvement

### Seventh-graders Eligible for Jack Kent Cooke Young Scholars Scholarships

The 2011 Jack Kent Cooke Young Scholars application for seventh-graders is available. The national scholarship program is designed to guide exceptional students who have demonstrated, through academic excellence and extracurricular activities, that they have the potential to excel.

The Young Scholars Scholarship Program offers these students individualized educational guidance and financial support for various educational programs and opportunities from advanced online and summer programs to music and art instruction. JKC may even pay the costs for some students to attend private high schools if their public school cannot meet their academic potential. Financial support is provided to students during grades 9 through 12 and continues through college and graduate school.

The Young Scholars Program Scholarship application is available at <http://www.jkcf.org>. Applicants must have a grade-point average of above 3.5 or mostly “A” grades and have unmet financial need (low to moderate income). The application deadline is April 25.

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## Professional Development

### Program Offers Opportunity for Teachers to Explore in Costa Rica

Full-time classroom teachers and teacher-librarians for grades 7 – 12 are eligible for the 2011 Toyota International Teacher Program to Costa Rica. (Note: Teachers who teach 6th grade as part of a Junior High or Middle School may be considered for the program. However, elementary school teachers are not eligible.)

The fully-funded opportunity, which is administered by the Institute of International Education, aims to advance environmental stewardship and global connections in U.S. schools and communities. Selected teachers will travel to Costa Rica this year from Nov. 19 to Dec. 3, where they will visit schools and museums, experience the rainforest first-hand and meet with local experts.

For eligibility details, application instructions and addition information, visit <http://iie.org/toyota>. The

deadline to apply is May 4. For questions, call 877-832-2457 or e-mail [toyotateach@iie.org](mailto:toyotateach@iie.org).

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## Student Opportunities

### Illinois High Schools Selected for Program That Aims to Improve Teen Driver Safety

Two Illinois high schools are among the 26 selected from the United States and Canada for the teen driver safety initiative Project Ignition, which is sponsored by State Farm and coordinated by the National Youth Leadership Council. ROWVA High School in Oneida and Fieldcrest High School in Minonk will each receive \$2,000 to implement student-led campaigns this school year.

The two Illinois schools join two Project Ignition National Leader Schools in Illinois: Gibson City-Melvin-Sibley High School in Gibson City and Harry D. Jacobs High School in Algonquin. Ten National Leader Schools were chosen from last year’s selections to extend their projects for a second school year.

The student projects vary from public service announcements, classroom-based physics lessons, community events, interactive demonstrations and more. They aim to save lives; car crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers in the U.S. For more information, including what our Illinois schools are doing to make a difference, visit <http://www.sfprojectignition.com>.

### Poster Contest for Fifth-Graders Promotes Benefits of Bicycling

The Active Transportation Alliance, League of Illinois Bicyclists and others are teaming up to offer a poster contest for fifth-graders. The theme is “Bicycling is fun ... and healthy too!”

Before students pick up their art materials, visit <http://www.bikelib.org/2011/02/poster-contest-to-promote-bicycling-launched/> for complete rules and additional information.

One winner from each school will be eligible to compete in a statewide contest, with the winning student winning a mountain bike, a helmet and a bike light. The winning student’s school wins a bicycle parking rack. The state winner will compete in a nationwide contest for a trip to the 2012 National Bike Summit in Washington, D.C.

Entries are due by April 22.

## **International Green Lifestyle Creative Contest for High School Students**

High school students from around the world are invited to participate in the International Green Lifestyle Creative Contest organized by Taiwan's Feng-Chia University and the International Association for Hydrogen Energy Taiwan Chapter.

Teams of up to five students and two advisers will present creative concepts with green-related topics. For more information, visit <http://iglcc.coiee.fcu.edu.tw> or e-mail [iglcc@fcu.edu.tw](mailto:iglcc@fcu.edu.tw). Advance registration is required with the project deadline April 30.

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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/110228.htm>