



# Illinois State Board of Education

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

## Weekly Message

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Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent

**March 3, 2008**

### Message from State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

The window for Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) administration is open until March 21 which means many of our students will be taking tests over the next several weeks. The agency has put an ISAT sample test online, which is drawing a lot of interest from the field. In just the past two weeks, 360,000 practice tests were accessed online. Having a sample test available was a suggestion from the field, and it is a popular feature that we will continue.

Students, staff and faculty have been working very hard to prepare for the tests, and I have enjoyed reading and hearing about the unique ways you've prepared; my personal favorite is ISAT—The Musical. I wish you all the best of luck and am very proud of the work that our students, teachers and administrators do everyday.

I know there is always a fair amount of anxiety as you prepare for these tests and no doubt there will be even more this year for our English Language Learners (ELLs). I earlier told you about and want to remind you now to review the ISAT guidance document, which is now on the web at [http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/guidance\\_for\\_ell.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/guidance_for_ell.pdf). Some of you have expressed concerns about our ELL students becoming frustrated with this test, a very real concern that as a former special education teacher I understand very well. I would encourage all teachers to exercise their professional judgment once the test has begun to determine whether or not it should continue. As the guidance states: "There is . . . flexibility in terms of how much time students must engage in the testing activity. Once students have indicated that they are done and the administrator makes the professional judgment that the students have truly made the effort to do their best, students should be allowed to stop the test. If students are taking the test in a group, they should be allowed to engage in some other nondisruptive activity at their desks. If they are taking the test individually, the session may be ended. Students should not be forced to continue the test beyond their frustration level." If the teacher discontinues the testing for a student, then the testing of the student will still count toward the school's participation for AYP purposes.

Also, I know some districts have contemplated not testing their ELL students. This is not an acceptable option. Having all students take the assessment is your responsibility under state and federal law. If you do not honor this commitment, then the U.S. Department of Education could withhold some or all of your Title I, Part A funds. In addition, this agency would have no choice but to move, under applicable law, for nonrecognition of the district, effectively cutting off state funds and rendering the district ineligible for participation in some outside associations. These are actions that no one wants to see occur, and I urge every district that may be considering such an approach to rethink its position.

Finally, many of you have been asking about incorporating Response to Intervention (RtI) into your everyday curriculum. This month, we will release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Reading Intervention Professional Development to Support RtI. School districts, charter schools and lab schools approved by ISBE that serve kindergarten through grade 6 will be eligible to apply, provided they meet certain conditions outlined in the RFP. As a part of ISBE's effort to encourage school districts to incorporate RtI into reading instruction, ISBE would like to provide

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training to teachers in the implementation of the “Anna Plan”, one option available to districts, or another RtI model. The “Anna Plan” is a small-group reading intervention model that enables teachers to differentiate instruction. More information about this opportunity will be in next week’s message, or you can contact our Curriculum and Instruction Division at 217-557-7323.

Thanks and best of luck!

Chris

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## Upcoming Deadlines

- **Illinois Textbook Loan Program Orders Due** – March 15, 2008
- **Preschool for All Children Ages 3 to 5 Years RFP** – April 7, 2008
- **Even Start Family Literacy RFP** – April 25, 2008
- **Charter Planning Grant applications & Charter Implementation Grant applications** – April 30, 2008
- **Those Who Excel/Illinois Teacher of the Year Nominations** – May 16, 2008
- **Deadline for waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in Fall 2008** – August 8, 2008

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## Student Assessment

### Severe Weather Preparedness Week

March 2 – 8, 2008, is Severe Weather Preparedness Week. The statewide tornado drill is scheduled for **Tuesday, March 4 at 10 a.m.**

If your school is scheduled to take the ISAT examination at this time, we ask that you reschedule your tornado drill to another date. While a tornado drill is required, there is no specific date or time as to when you must practice (105 ILCS 128/20).

### English Language Learners Guidance Materials

Guidance materials for assessment accommodations for English Language Learners during the 2008 administration of the Illinois Standards Achievement Test and the Prairie State Achievement Exam may be found on the Illinois State Board of Education website at the following address:

[http://isbe.state.il.us/assessment/pdfs/guidance\\_for\\_ell.pdf](http://isbe.state.il.us/assessment/pdfs/guidance_for_ell.pdf)

### ELL Accommodations: Word Glossaries and ISAT Directions

Word glossaries for each of the ISAT content areas and the ISAT directions have been translated into ten (10) different languages and can be found at

<http://www.isbe.net/assessment/translations.htm>. Please share this information with those individuals who will be administering the ISAT to ELLs.

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## Early Childhood

### Even Start Family Literacy RFP Released

The Even Start Family Literacy FY 2009 Request for Proposals (RFP) has been released. School districts, Regional Offices of Education, approved public university laboratory schools, charter schools or area vocational centers, in partnership with a community-based organization, public agency, institution of higher education, or not-for-profit organization may submit a proposal. The purpose of Even Start Family Literacy grants is to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities of low-income families through the integration of early childhood education, adult literacy, parenting education, and interactive parent and child literacy activities into a unified family literacy program for parents and children, primarily from birth through age 7. All four of these components must be present in each Even Start program in order to meet the goals of the program, which are to:

- help parents improve their literacy or basic educational skills,
- help parents become full partners in educating their children, and

- assist children in reaching their full potential as learners.

A bidders' conference will be held by conference call on Wednesday, **March 12 at 2 p.m.** See the RFP for details. Should the conditions of this RFP change as a result of the bidders' conference, the State Board of Education will notify all recipients of the RFP of the changes.

The RFP is available online at [http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/even\\_start\\_family\\_literacy.htm](http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/even_start_family_literacy.htm).

The RFP can also be obtained by contacting Cindy Zumwalt, Early Childhood Division at 217-524-4835 or by e-mail at [czumwalt@isbe.net](mailto:czumwalt@isbe.net).

### **Preschool for All Children Ages 3 to 5 Years RFP Released**

The Preschool for All Children Ages 3 to 5 Years – 09 Request for Proposals (RFP) for new funds has been released. Applicants eligible to submit a proposal for this preschool education program serving 3 to 5 year olds include public school districts, community-based agencies, child care centers and others. Applicants other than public school districts must provide evidence of existing competencies to provide early childhood education programs. The Preschool for All Children program expands the number of young children able to receive high-quality preschool education by focusing not only on children who are determined to be at risk of academic failure but also by serving families of low to moderate income whose children are not considered to be at risk academically and other families that choose to participate. Continuing providers will find the application process for this year's expansion very similar to the process of applying for expanded grants in years past.

The RFP is available online at [http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/block\\_grant.htm](http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/block_grant.htm). The RFP can also be obtained by contacting the Early Childhood Division at 217-524-4835.

Preschool for All Children Bidders' conferences will be held for this RFP. Attendance at a bidders' conference is recommended but is not required. Registration prior to the bidders' conference is not required. Security procedures require photo identification for entry at each location.

#### **Decatur**

- **Monday, March 10**
- 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Decatur Hotel & Conference Center
- 4191 W US Highway 36
- Ballroom

#### **Chicago Heights**

- **Thursday, March 13**
- 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Prairie State College
- 202 South Halsted
- Auditorium
- Park in Lot D

Should the conditions of this RFP change as a result of the bidders' conference, the State Board of Education will notify all recipients of the RFP of the changes.

### **Introduction to the Preschool for All Children Implementation Manual**

The Preschool for All Children Implementation Manual has been released. The manual is available online at <http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/preschool/default.htm>. The implementation manual is designed to serve as a guide for administrators, teachers and other staff of Illinois Preschool for All programs. Programs must adhere to the program guidelines as outlined in the implementation manual.

An introduction to the implementation manual is planned for:

#### **Monday, March 10, 2008**

- 10 a.m. to Noon (before the PFA 3-5 Bidder's Conference)
- Decatur Holiday Inn and Conference Center
- 4191 W. US Highway 36
- Decatur, IL
- Ballroom

#### **Thursday, March 13, 2008**

- 10 a.m. to Noon (before the PFA 3-5 Bidder's Conference)
- Prairie State College
- 202 South Halstead
- Chicago Heights, IL
- Auditorium
- Park in lot D

Please review the Implementation Manual on the ISBE website, print the manual (242 pages), and bring a hard copy to the Implementation Manual training. If you have questions contact the Early Childhood Division at 217-524-4835.

## Funding & Disbursements

### Public School Calendar issues regarding Interrupted, Delayed Start, Emergency and Act of God days

Recent severe weather has been a major cause for many districts throughout the state to alter the approved proposed calendar. The information below is being provided as a reminder for completing an Amended Public School Calendar via the IWAS system.

Section 18-12 of the School Code **requires** that an Amended Public School Calendar be completed and submitted for approval within 30 days of the occurrence for an Interrupted or Delayed Start Day. Approval is granted by the respective regional office of education as well as the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

Section 10-19 of the School Code states, “*The calendar for the school term and any changes must be submitted to and approved by the regional superintendent of schools before the calendar or changes may take effect.*”

Although there is no specific deadline for submitting changes other than Interrupted or Delayed Start Days, the ISBE recommends that an Amended Public School Calendar be completed and submitted within 30 days prior to the occurrence of an anticipated calendar change (e.g. changing the date for a half-day school improvement, parent-teacher conference or teacher institute day) or within 30 days after an unanticipated calendar change (i.e. Emergency or Act of God Day). Timely completion of an Amended Public School Calendar ensures that the most up-to-date approved Public School Calendar is on file and reflected in the ISBE School Calendar Inquiry website that can be accessed by external constituents.

An **Interrupted Day** occurs when the district has provided a least one hour of instruction but must close due to adverse weather conditions or a condition beyond the control of the school district that poses a hazardous threat to the health and safety of pupils prior to providing the minimum hours of **instruction** required for a full-day of attendance (i.e. 300 minutes). When completing the Amended Public School Calendar, the calendar code for

this day is XID and requires completion of the student attendance time for the interrupted day and a brief explanation describing the circumstances for the Interrupted Day. Interrupted days may be counted as a full-day of attendance for students enrolled full-time who were present for the full instruction provided for such day. Students enrolled part-time or who were not present for the full instruction time provided must have their attendance reported accordingly for the actual instructional time received (e.g. 1/6 for each 40 minute period attended).

A **Delayed Start Day** occurs when the district must delay the start of the school day due to adverse weather conditions that prevents the district from providing the minimum hours of **instruction** required for a full-day of attendance (i.e. 300 minutes). When completing the Amended Public School Calendar, the calendar code for this day is XDS and requires completion of the student attendance time for the delayed start and a brief explanation describing the circumstances for the Delayed Start Day. Delayed Start days may be counted as a full-day of student attendance for students enrolled full-time who were present for the full instruction provided for such day. Students enrolled part-time or who were not present for the full instruction time provided must have their attendance reported accordingly for the actual instructional time received (e.g. 1/6 for each 40 minute period attended).

An **Emergency Day** is used at the discretion of the district for a circumstance locally determined as an emergency. The calendar code for this day is ED and does not require student attendance or a brief explanation, but does require that a Proposed Emergency Day built into the Proposed Public School Calendar be converted to a Pupil Attendance Day.

An **Act of God Day** may only be used after all Emergency Days (ED) have been coded on the Amended Public School Calendar and proposed Emergency Days (XED) have been converted to Pupil Attendance Days (X). The calendar code for an Act of God Day is AOG and requires a brief explanation when completing the Amended Public School Calendar.

Guidelines for completing the public school calendar can be accessed at [http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/ps\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/ps_guidelines.pdf). If you have further questions regarding completion of the Amended Public School Calendar please contact your Regional Office of Education for assistance or you may

contact **Marj Beck**, Funding & Disbursements Division, at 217-782-5256 or [mbeck@isbe.net](mailto:mbeck@isbe.net).

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## Accountability

### Release of the Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program (TAOEP) Request for Proposal (RFP)

The TAOEP RFP is available at [www.isbe.net/accountability/html/.htm](http://www.isbe.net/accountability/html/.htm). Click FY 2009 Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program (TAOEP) RFP. Two Bidders' Conferences will be held one on February 29 and the other March 5, 2008. Locations and times of the Bidders' Conference are in the RFP. The deadline for submission of the RFP is April 14, 2008. If you have questions about the TAOEP RFP please contact **Sally Veach**, Accountability Division, at 217-782-2948 or [sveach@isbe.net](mailto:sveach@isbe.net).

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## Educator Preparation & Recertification

### Master Principal Update

Applications are now available for entities interested in applying to be a provider of the Illinois Master Distinguished Principal Institute leading to a Master Principal Designation. Applications are available for download from the following website:

<http://www.isbe.net/certification/default.htm>

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## Federal Grants & Programs

### Local Gifted Education Program data

The Illinois State Board of Education has developed a brief survey via IWAS to collect local gifted education program data. This requested data includes:

1. whether the district currently provides a gifted education program, and
2. if the district offers a gifted program, the numbers of students served, grade levels served, curriculum areas, and program delivery format(s).

Please complete this survey by **Friday, March 28**.

If you have questions regarding this gifted survey, please contact the Federal Grants and Programs Division at 217-

524-4832. If you need technical assistance, please contact the helpdesk at 217-558-3600.

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## Fiscal and Procurement

### Illinois Textbook Loan Program

There are approximately two weeks left in the 2008 ITLP ordering period. The deadline for ordering is **Saturday, March 15, 2008**. To date, only 24% of eligible participants have initiated orders in the 2008 ITLP system. In comparison, by this same time in the 2006 ITLP ordering system, approximately 42% of eligible participants had entered orders. It is suggested that schools and districts expedite their ordering to allow sufficient time for technical assistance if needed.

This year, material orders are limited to grades K-6 and access to the ITLP order entry system is through IWAS (ISBE Web Application Security). You can access IWAS by clicking on the IWAS link at the top of the ISBE homepage. For those of you new to IWAS, you can create an IWAS account by clicking on the 'Sign Up Now' link on the IWAS homepage.

If you require assistance with your IWAS account or in gaining access to the ITLP system, please contact the ISBE Call Center at 217-558-3600. If you have questions regarding the ordering process please contact the ITLP staff at 217-782-0734.

**A Note to Local IWAS Administrators:** For the ITLP system in IWAS, it is very important that you assign the correct access level to staff who sign up for the ITLP system to represent your organization. When assigning access rights in IWAS, Public School Districts (except for Chicago 299) should assign staff 'District Doc Author' access. All other organizations (including Chicago 299) should assign staff 'School Admin' access.

General information on the ITLP is located in the Textbook Loan Program website <http://isbe.net/htmls/textbook.htm>.

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## Miscellaneous

### Severe Weather Preparedness Week

March 2 – 8, 2008, is Severe Weather Preparedness Week. The statewide tornado drill is scheduled for **Tuesday, March 4 at 10 a.m.**

If your school is scheduled to take the ISAT examination at this time, we ask that you reschedule your tornado drill to another date. While a tornado drill is required, there is no specific date or time as to when you must practice (105 ILCS 128/20).

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/>.

### **Celebrate Local Government Week 2008 at Your School!**

Illinois has 8,400 local governments, and an estimated 70,000 elected officials, and 100,000 appointed officials, who provide critical services to its citizens and communities. Local Government Week will be celebrated March 2 – 8, 2008.

Local Government Week focuses on the need for strong, independent and active local government in Illinois. Celebrating the valuable contributions of citizens serving their communities in public office allows local officials to highlight the many effective programs and services provided by local government.

You can bring your students closer to local government with some of these ideas;

- schedule a government official to speak on local government jobs,
- schedule a tour of local government buildings, parks, police and fire stations,
- sponsor a poster, essay or coloring contest involving a local government services theme,
- set up voter registration booths at local high schools to register young voters for the 2008 election, and
- tour the Local Government Exhibits at the State Capitol in Springfield on **Thursday, March 6** where local governments will highlight their accomplishments and services.

For more information contact your Local County Extension office.

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## **Professional Development**

### **EOL Informational Meeting**

In Summer 2008, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Educational Organization and Leadership (EOL) Department will begin a new Educational Administration cohort based at Oak Brook.

There will be an informational meeting on **Wednesday, March 12** at the Oak Brook Multi-University Center, Room B, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. for teachers and school administrators interested in learning more about this program. The center is located at 1010 Jorie Boulevard. Faculty from EOL will be present to discuss the purpose and structure of the Oak Brook-based program, which will be taught on site during evenings and weekends.

Participants can pursue either a Master's of Education or a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Educational Administration. The program meets the degree requirements of the University's College of Education and the certification requirements for the State of Illinois General Administrative (Type 75) Endorsement.

For more information about this program, please go to [www.ed.uiuc.edu/eol/edadmin/home.html](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eol/edadmin/home.html), or e-mail [EOL-info@uiuc.edu](mailto:EOL-info@uiuc.edu).

### **Great Lakes Teen Safe Driving Conference**

Harry D. Jacobs High School in Algonquin has been awarded a grant from State Farm Insurance Company to host a free conference for Midwest students and teachers on safety issues affecting teen drivers.

The conference will be held on **Friday, April 18** in Crystal Lake at the Crystal Lake Holiday Inn, 800 S. Route 31. The opening session will begin at 9 a.m. with check-in starting at 8 a.m.

Each school may register one advisor and up to four students. Attendees will be provided with breakfast, lunch and conference materials at no charge. Mileage reimbursement will also be available at the rate of \$ .485 per mile.

For conference details, registrations forms and information concerning lodging please refer to the conference web-site at [www.hdprojectignition.com/glc](http://www.hdprojectignition.com/glc).

Questions about the conference can be addressed to Karin Unruh at [karinunruh@yahoo.com](mailto:karinunruh@yahoo.com) or Terri Dawson at [terri.dawson@d300.org](mailto:terri.dawson@d300.org) or call 847-658-2500, ext. 179.

### 19th Annual School Law Conference

The 19th annual school law conference will be held on **Friday, March 7** at the University Union on the WIU-Macomb campus. “Contemporary Legal Issues in Illinois” will feature school attorneys and WIU educational leadership faculty will shed light on a variety of issues facing schools today.

The conference will provide the latest information and analysis of some of the most important issues facing public school leaders in Illinois.

Registration is \$75 for non-students and \$35 for students. Checks should be made payable to Western Illinois University School Law Conference. The fee includes all sessions, conference materials, breakfast and refreshments. Checks should be mailed to Robert Hall, Horrabin Hall 81, 1 University Circle, Macomb, IL 61455-1390. For more information, call 309-298-1070. The School Law Conference flier (PDF) is available at [www.wiu.edu/adminroundtable](http://www.wiu.edu/adminroundtable).

### First Midwest Regional Conference on Autism Spectrum Disorders

The First Midwest Regional Conference on Autism Spectrum Disorders and Inclusion is being sponsored by the Autism Society of the Quad Cities and supported by Augustana College. The conference will be held April 19, 2008 on the campus of Augustana College, in Rock Island, IL.

Several nationally and regionally recognized speakers will be presenting on topics ranging from early childhood to support at the high school and college level, and from genetic research to classroom and community inclusion. Speakers include Dr. Temple Grandin, Dr. Paula Kluth, Dr. Tom Wassink, Mr. Dennis Debbaudt, and more!

For a full list of speakers, registration information, and more, see the website of the Autism Society of the Quad Cities at [www.autismqc.org](http://www.autismqc.org).

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## Grant & Award Opportunities

### Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation Grants

The Foundation's seven indoor lighting programs have assisted **schools, libraries, child care centers, park districts, colleges & universities, county historic courthouses, and public safety facilities** in hundreds of communities throughout Illinois embrace cleaner energy and lowered utility bills by the simple act of replacing old lights with high efficiency light bulbs and controls.

The Foundation's indoor lighting programs for K-12 Schools, Park Districts and Public Libraries ended in 2007. For 2008, the Foundation is launching new indoor lighting programs to upgrade lighting systems in public safety and historic county courthouses. The Foundation's only outdoor lighting program also ended in 2007. The LED Traffic Signal Programs provided municipalities higher quality, more energy efficient LED traffic signals at a lower cost to taxpayers.

Every Foundation dollar granted to support lighting upgrades has leveraged nearly another dollar of energy efficiency investment from other sources.

- Benefits of upgrading to efficient lighting systems:
- Improved lighting quality
- Reduced operating and maintenance expenses
- Saved energy, leading to less pollution in Illinois communities

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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/2008/newsclips/080229.htm>.

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