Last week the Board met in Springfield and spent a significant amount of time focusing on finances. Staff provided a general overview of Senate Bill 1, legislation aimed at reforming the state’s K-12 education funding formula. In addition, the Board was provided a review of the funding reform efforts in Illinois that was completed by the Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University. Dr. Marguerite Roza, director of the lab, led a discussion of the organization’s recommendations at the meeting. Those recommendations and the staff presentation on SB1 are available, beginning on page 4 of the board packet at [www.isbe.net/board/meetings/2015/mar/packet.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/board/meetings/2015/mar/packet.pdf).

Staff members have also completed their analysis of the impact of SB1 for each district. We have posted these results, along with the impact of last year’s Senate Bill 16 analysis at [www.isbe.net/budget/html/ed-funding.htm](http://www.isbe.net/budget/html/ed-funding.htm).

Regarding our new statewide assessment, we had received inquiries from a number of districts with regard to whether or not students may be “opted out” by their parents. As we have previously stated, there is no opt out allowed under either state or federal law. ISBE does not believe that allowing opt outs is a good policy for our students. In addition, our interpretation of federal law has always been that any opt-out provision in state law would violate federal law. In order to get clarity on this latter issue, we requested an interpretation from the U.S. Department of Education. We have recently received its response, which is posted at [http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/USED-ESEA-asmt-ltr-031315.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/USED-ESEA-asmt-ltr-031315.pdf).

The federal response confirms our previous interpretation that “LEAs must provide for the participation of all students on the assessment.” Among our concerns over the opt outs is that our parents, our districts and our state will not know how all of our students are performing, particularly those students who previously were not tested, including students with disabilities, English Language Learners, students in poverty and minority students. While we expect fidelity in testing at all districts, we know historically that has not always been the case. The state’s waiver from No Child Left Behind has at its core a goal to close achievement gaps. If students are opted out disproportionately, it may raise questions about whether or not those students’ educational needs are being met and whether districts are protecting the civil rights of their students.

The Performance-Based Assessment testing window of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) has been open for several weeks in Illinois. To date, more than 5.8
million tests have been completed throughout the participating states, with more than 1.1 million of those completed in Illinois. While there have been issues that have been quickly resolved, there have not been any large-scale problems.

One issue that has been more prevalent in other states is that students have compromised test security through social media posts. Our testing contractor uses a service, similar to Google Alerts, that scans social media for PARCC test items or copyrighted information. Then, only using the public information from social media, the service notifies us of a possible security breach. We then contact the district and request that the post be taken down. I want to thank you for reminding students that phones are not allowed during testing. If this occurs, please remember it can be a teachable moment for all that what gets posted on social media can reach a much greater audience and have a much greater impact than intended. This has only occurred a few times in Illinois and your efforts to administer the test in accordance to our procedures are appreciated.

Finally, congratulations to students, staff and administrators at River Trails Middle School in SD 26, which has been selected as the Illinois Green Schools recipient. It is among 87 nominees across the nation competing in the U.S. Department of Education’s Green Ribbon Schools awards program. Winners will be announced next month.

You may access more information on the Green Ribbon program and a press release announcing River Trails’ award at [www.isbe.net/green_ribbon/](http://www.isbe.net/green_ribbon/).

Congratulations!

Chris

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**Upcoming ISBE Dates and Deadlines**

Please note this is not a complete list of events, meetings and deadlines. For questions, call the Illinois State Board of Education at (866) 262-6663 or (217) 782-4321 or visit the agency’s official website at [http://www.isbe.net](http://www.isbe.net).

- **National Youth Violence Prevention Week** – March 23-27
- **Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment (DLM-AA) testing window** – March 23-May 1
- **Part 650 (Charter Schools) and Part 1105 (Procurement by the State Board of Education)** – Public comment period ends March 23
- **Deadline to complete the new teacher evaluation system survey** – March 24 ([www.surveymonkey.com/s/PEACImpSur](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PEACImpSur))
- **PARCC Diagnostic Field Test** – April 6-17
- **Part 100 (Requirements for Accounting, Budgeting, Financial Reporting, and Auditing), Part 120 (Pupil Transportation Reimbursement), Part 151 (School Construction Program), Part 365 (Children’s Low-cost Laptop Program), Part 525 (Regional Offices of Education and Intermediate Services), New Part 525 (Intermediate Services) and Part 560 (Parental Participation Pilot Program)** – Public comment period ends April 13
- **Eighth annual Illinois School Wellness Conference** – April 23

- **Deadline to submit the Truants’ Alternative and Optional Educational Program Request for Proposal and continuation application** – April 28
- **2015 “Now is the Time” Project AWARE-Community Grant application deadline** – May 1 ([www.samhsa.gov/grants/grant-announcements/sm-15-012](http://www.samhsa.gov/grants/grant-announcements/sm-15-012))
- **Spring 2015 PARCC ELA/L Field Test Administration** – May 4-June 5
- **TECH 2015 student showcase** – May 7
- **Part 50 (Evaluation of Educator Licensed Employees under Articles 24A and 34 of the School Code), Part 228 (Transitional Bilingual Education) and Part 600 (Enrollment of and Payment for Nonresident Students at the Philip J. Rock Center and School)** – Public comment period ends May 18
- **Applications for the Exception to the 1.0 Percent Cap due** – May 21
- **ISBE offices closed for Memorial Day** – May 25
- **Deadline to submit data in the Student Health Data –Vision system** - June 30
- **ISBE offices closed for Independence Day** – July 3
- **Postmark deadline for waiver applications to be considered by the General Assembly in fall 2015** – Friday, Aug. 14, 2015 (See [www.isbe.net/isbewaivers/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/isbewaivers/default.htm) for public notice requirements for all waiver requests.)

**Title Grant Administration**

**Illinois Association of Title I Directors Spring Conference Scheduled for April 15**

The Illinois Association of Title I Directors will be hosting its annual spring conference at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. April 15.

Topics will include assessment, fiscal updates and Title Grants updates and any Elementary and Secondary Education Act updates available from the U.S. Department of Education. To see a copy of the draft agenda, visit [www.iatd.net/in-the-news/iatdspringworkshopagenda](http://www.iatd.net/in-the-news/iatdspringworkshopagenda).

- **What**: Illinois Association of Title I Directors Spring Conference
- **When**: April 15, 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
- **Where**: Crowne Plaza Springfield, 3000 S. Dirksen Parkway, in Springfield

**Rules and Waivers**

**Invitation to Comment on Rules**

Two sets of proposed amendments and one set of proposed rules recently reviewed by ISBE are available for public comment. The proposals have been posted on the agency’s website at [www.isbe.net/rules](http://www.isbe.net/rules); choose “Proposed Rules and Amendments.” Please submit any comments or suggestions to rules@isbe.net.

**Part 50 (Evaluation of Educator Licensed Employees under Articles 24A and 34 of the School Code)**: Updates references to the new testing system, per P.A. 98-972, effective Aug. 15, 2014, and emphasizes the responsibility of charter schools to conform to state and federal requirements pertaining to English learners, as is required under P.A. 98-639, effective June 9, 2014. **Public Comment period ends May 18, 2015.**

**Part 228 (Transitional Bilingual Education)**: Updates references to the new testing system, per P.A. 98-972, effective Aug. 15, 2014, and addresses the use of the climate survey results in principal evaluations. **Public Comment period ends May 18, 2015.**

**Part 600 (Enrollment of and Payment for Nonresident Students at the Philip J. Rock Center and School)**: Authorizes the enrollment of students from out of state at the school portion of the Philip J. Rock Center and School, provided that they meet the eligibility requirements and the school has space available that is not needed for eligible students from Illinois. **Public Comment period ends May 18, 2015.**
**College and Career Readiness**

**Fiscal Year 2015 Arts Planning Assistance Grant Available for School Districts**

The Illinois Arts Council Agency and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) are pleased to announce that funding is available for public school districts in fiscal year 2015 through the Arts Planning Assistance Grant.

The Illinois Arts Council Agency has released the Request for Proposals (RFP), and full guidelines and materials can be found at [www.arts.illinois.gov/AFL](http://www.arts.illinois.gov/AFL). The purpose of this RFP is to solicit proposals from eligible applicants who seek resources to develop district-based plans for initiating, strengthening or expanding instruction in the arts. Proposals are due April 30.

An online, interactive informational forum about the RFP, designed to provide technical assistance and answer questions about the process, is scheduled for March 31 at 1 p.m. Registration information is posted at [www.arts.illinois.gov/AFL](http://www.arts.illinois.gov/AFL).

For more information, contact Jerome Grand at jerome.grand@illinois.gov or (312) 814-6766 or visit [www.arts.illinois.gov/AFL](http://www.arts.illinois.gov/AFL).

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**Illinois Teacher of the Year**

**Illinois Teacher of the Year and Students Participate in CTE Rally Day at Capitol**

On March 17, the Illinois Association for Career and Technical Education (IACTE) held a Career and Technical Education (CTE) Rally Day at the state Capitol.

The 2015 Illinois Teacher of the Year, Steve Elza, who is an applied technology teacher at William Fremd High School in Township High School District 211, and five of his students set up a display and demonstrated their knowledge and skills in the Capitol’s rotunda. The students also gave a brief presentation, telling the audience how important vocational classes and training are to them.

After the rally day concluded, Steve and his students were introduced by Sen. Dan Kotowski on the Senate floor. They also spent time talking with state representatives and other senators.

Steve is available for speaking engagements and presentations. Since he didn’t follow the conventional path to becoming a teacher, his experiences of being mentored and being a mentor are valuable stories for teachers and students considering teaching as a profession. He can provide excellent insight into preparing students for rewarding careers.

To request Steve for your next event, please visit [http://adc.d211.org/teacher-of-the-year-steve-elza/](http://adc.d211.org/teacher-of-the-year-steve-elza/) and complete the speaker request form.

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**Illinois Amistad Commission**

**Illinois Amistad Academy Provides Free Online Course Series for Students**

The Illinois Amistad Commission invites school leaders and classroom instructors to enroll sixth- through eighth-grade students in the Illinois Amistad Academy.

The academy is a free and innovative four-part online course that uses select exhibits from the DuSable Museum to increase students’ knowledge of key aspects about the African and African American experience.

The Illinois Amistad Academy uses digital technology and diverse media to build strong content knowledge of the African and African American experience in addition to emphasizing important concepts such as entrepreneurship, social advocacy and community building. Each session includes lesson plans, surveys and advanced instructor and student support.

Course topics include:

- April 20 – A virtual tour of the DuSable Museum
- April 27 – The Legend of Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable and Early Chicago
- May 4 – Africa Speaks: Exploring Ghana through Artifacts
- May 11 – Red, White, Blue and Black: Blacks and the United States Civil War
For more information or to register your class, contact Jomo Cheatham at jcheatham@dusablemuseum.org, (773) 420-2723 or fax to (773) 947-0677, attention Illinois Amistad Academy. The deadline to register is April 3.

**Standards and Assessment**

**PARCC College Acceptance Policy**

The Illinois Council of Community College Presidents (ICCCP) recently approved a policy to accept a performance level of 4 or 5 in math or English language arts on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) to place students directly into credit-bearing classes without requiring remediation.

Institutions can also develop policies for math that allow a 3 on PARCC in combination with having passed a higher-level high school math class to qualify a student to enroll directly into credit-bearing math classes. This decision on the part of the ICCCP represents a significant first step toward the use of PARCC as a placement exam within higher education.


The policy was developed with the support and endorsement from the Illinois Community College Chief Academic Officers and Illinois Council Community College Chief Student Services Officers. Additionally, this policy was developed in consultation with the Board of the Illinois Math Association of Community Colleges (IMACC) and endorsed by the Curriculum Committee of the IMACC.

**Nutrition and Wellness Programs**

**Summer Food Service Program Seeks Sponsors and Feeding Sites**

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP or Summer Meals) is targeting 15 counties for outreach in an effort to increase access to free meals by eligible children 18 and under.

The federally funded program provides nutritious meals when school is out. However, the program is

underutilized. Statistics show that out of 100 children who eat lunch during the school year in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), only 13.8 receive a meal in SFSP or Seamless Summer Option (SSO).

SFSP is open to schools, other government entities (such as towns, ROEs, park districts or libraries) and nonprofits. Targeted counties for 2015 include:

- North - Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake and Will
- Central – Fulton, Logan, Peoria, Sangamon and Tazewell
- South – Clinton, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and St. Clair

While 15 counties are targeted, almost every county in the state needs more sites in addition to ones that participated last year. Some counties had no sites in 2014.

Organizations interested in serving as sponsors should attend an SFSP training. Information and registration is available online at [www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/sfsp_training.htm](http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/sfsp_training.htm) at the bottom of the page. Organizations wishing to participate as meal sites will be referred to a current sponsor.

Please remember that school districts that have a summer school program operating during the summer months in a school where 50 percent or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals must serve breakfast and/or lunch to those students. Schools must also open their doors and serve meals to children in their community.

For more information or to refer organizations, please call the Illinois State Board of Education’s Nutrition and Wellness Division at (800) 545-7892.

**Special Education Services**

**“Now is the Time” Project AWARE-Community Grant Applications Available**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is accepting applications
for its fiscal year 2015 “Now is the Time” Project AWARE-Community Grants.

Local school districts are eligible to apply.

The purpose of this program is to support Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)/Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training for a diverse group of adults involved in the lives of children and adolescents.

The grants will award up to $125,000 per year for up to three years, and no matching funds are required. Application information is available online at www.samhsa.gov/grants/grant-announcements/sm-15-012. The deadline to apply is May 1.

For additional information, please contact Michele Carmichael at mcarmich@isbe.net.

Illinois Learning Standards

‘Creating High-Quality Mathematics Assessments’ Webinar Scheduled

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is hosting a “Creating High-Quality Mathematics Assessments” webinar on March 24.

Presenters Anita Reid and Linda Brissenden will lead participants in sharpening their assessment literacy skills as they review standards from ISBE’s Guiding Principles for Classroom Assessment and then analyze representative assessment plans from the Model Math Curriculum units. K-12 educators interested in extending their assessment literacy as applied in mathematics are encouraged to participate. Presenters will share other online and print resources for deepening understandings of effective assessments and rubrics.

Title: “Creating High-Quality Mathematics Assessments” webinar
Date: March 24
Time: 3:30 p.m.
Register:
https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1079674604088708354

After registering, participants will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Alignment Workshop Spring Sessions Scheduled Across the State

ISBE is once again sponsoring a one-day alignment workshop, “Detecting Evidence in Quality Lessons/Units: 4 Dimensions of Alignment in a ONE-Page Tool.”

The workshop, which is a repeat of the fall series held last year, will take place in the following cities:

- April 14 – Carterville
- April 15 – Effingham
- April 21 – Lisle
- April 22 – Moline

Each event will introduce teachers to a one-page tool, Educators Evaluating Quality Instructional Products (EQuIP) Rubric, that helps identify all of the necessary criteria of quality lessons/units.

Teachers will learn about resources that specifically address the four dimensions: alignment to the depth of the standards, key shifts, instructional supports and assessment.

Details and registration information are available online at www.isbe.net/common_core/pdf/workshop-spring-2015.pdf.

Collaboration and Student Engagement Workshops in Belleville and Naperville

ISBE is hosting a hands-on workshop in two locations to provide teachers the opportunity to explore the use of collaborative techniques in all grade levels incorporating the Illinois Learning Standards.

“Collaboration in the Classroom: Increasing Student Engagement” is scheduled for April 17 in Belleville and May 12 in Naperville.

Classroom teachers are invited to attend. Each participant will receive a kit with resources, including techniques, randomizing, structure and examples, to use in their districts.
Seating will be limited. For more information and to register, go to www.isbe.net/common_core/pdf/workshop-CollaborationPresentation15.pdf.

School Survey

Survey on Student Transitions from High School to Postsecondary Education

Northern Illinois University (NIU) and Advance Illinois are in the process of assessing Illinois high school, community college and university practices to better align student transitions from high school into postsecondary education.

This assessment is intended to inform a potential private grant program for Illinois public education institutions to support successful student transitions from high school to college and into employment. ISBE has been cooperating with NIU and Advance Illinois and fully supports this assessment.

As part of this review, we ask that high schools complete the survey at the following link to provide information on current practices across the state: https://www.research.net/s/redefiningILhighschooltocollegetransition.

The deadline to complete the survey is March 24.

Responses will be treated as confidential, and none of the survey responses will be reported in a way that identifies a particular school district or postsecondary institution.

Illinois Reading Council

Illinois Reads Essay Contest for Students

The Illinois Reads program invites students to participate in its “I Love Reading” essay contest.

The contest asks students to write an essay of 500 words or less explaining why they love to read. The contest has two divisions, one for kindergarten through fifth-grade students and one for sixth- through 12th-grade students.

Award winners will be honored at the annual Illinois Reads launch event, scheduled for April 18 at Westmont High School. Winners will receive an overnight hotel stay at the Chicago Oakbrook Hilton Resort, a VIP meeting with Illinois authors and transportation to and from the hotel to the event.

To sign up for the contest, go to https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1UTj_sPr4WE7A5TmRss0XJXdyRa2z3ep4qF1ldoLyuOk/viewform.

All essays must be submitted by 5 p.m. April 10. All participants will be notified regarding contest results by April 13.

Illinois Reads is a statewide reading advocacy program sponsored by the Illinois Reading Council.

For more information about the program and its 2015 launch event, visit www.illinoisreads.org.

In Brief

Upcoming Events

- National Youth Violence Prevention Week is March 23-27. Striving To Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere (STRYVE) is a national initiative, led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, that takes a public health approach to preventing youth violence before it starts. Learn more about ways to help prevent youth violence at http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/stryve/.

Curriculum Resources

- The Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation’s Character Development curriculum uses the recorded oral histories of medal recipients and supporting lesson plans to incorporate the values of courage, commitment, sacrifice, patriotism, integrity and citizenship to educate middle and high school students. Information about the curriculum is available at www.cmohedu.org.

Student Opportunities

- Latino Art Beat has partnered with SPORTAMY, a youth sports-oriented website, to present the “What Sports Mean to Me” visual arts competition. Students can enter drawings or paintings in all media accompanied by a related essay of 350 words or less to compete for $1,000
(minimum) scholarship awards. Latino Art Beat is also offering its “2015 Youth Short Film Competition” to students under 21 who attend a high school or college in Illinois. Films must be original, with an original score and 15 minutes or less total running time. Film winners will qualify for scholarship support and screenings of their film. The deadline for all entries is May 25. No entry fees are required. For more information, contact Latino Art Beat at (773) 291-6901, visit www.latinoartbeat.com or contact SPORTAMY at essaycompetition@sportamy.com.

- The Illinois Department of Natural Resources’ Division of Education’s Kids for Conservation® program seeks photos, observations and stories/poems/artwork from Illinois youth under age 18. For more details, visit www.dnr.illinois.gov/outreach/kidsconservation/Pages/default.aspx.

- The Energy Education Council (EEC) and Illinois Broadcasters Association are co-sponsoring a new contest to help raise awareness about outdoor electrical safety in Illinois. The “Safe Electricity High School Challenge” gives high school students the opportunity to create video content for an EEC educational campaign. Teams or individual students are asked to design and produce a short television public service announcement. Up to five winning entries will be named, with cash prizes for the creators and sponsoring high school. Students or teams of students must have a faculty sponsor and register by 5 p.m. on May 15 to participate in the contest. Registration information and other details are available at http://bit.ly/hsChallenge.

Educator Opportunities

- The Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts (AISWCD) is accepting applications for the 2015 Conservation Teacher of the Year award for both an elementary (grades K-8) and high school teacher in the state who make outstanding efforts to educate their students about conservation, environmental education and/or agricultural literacy. The application form and instructions are posted at http://www.aiswcd.org/programs/awards/. For more information, contact the AISWCD at (217) 744-3414 or gina.bean@aiswcd.org.

Professional Development

- The second annual Half Day Conference for School Nurses, sponsored by Advocate Children’s Hospital-Park Ridge, will take place from 7:30 a.m. to noon on April 15 at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital, 1775 Dempster St., in Park Ridge. The conference is free and will feature pediatric specialists discussing the latest information on management and clinical practices of medical issues typically seen in a school setting. Participants will receive 3.66 contact hours upon completion. Registration is required by calling (855) 312-KIDS by April 8. Use code # 8P27.

- The annual Illinois School Health Association conference is scheduled for April 10 at the Hyatt in Lisle. For more information and to register, visit http://ishaweb.com/state_conference.html.

- The 2015-16 ENTICE (Environment and Nature Training Institute for Conservation Education) workshop schedule for educators is posted at https://www.enticeworkshops.com. The workshops are designed with learning standards as their foundation, and targeted grade levels are listed in the descriptions. Professional development hours are available.

- The Coalition of Schools Education Boys of Color (COSEBOC) will convene its ninth annual Gathering of Leaders in Memphis, TN, on April 22-24. The University of Memphis is hosting the event, which will offer workshops led by district leaders who have prioritized their resources to support the educational achievement of their boys and young men of color. For more information and to register, visit http://coseboc.org/annual-gathering.

- The Illinois Association of Aggregate Producers’ (IAAP) Illinois Teachers Workshop is a three-day event designed to inform Illinois educators about the importance of rocks, minerals and mining in everyday life. The IAAP has partnered with the Illinois Science Teachers’ Association to put on the event, which is scheduled for July 13-15 at Brehm Preparatory School in Carbondale. A registration form detailing workshop fees is available for download at www.iaap-aggregates.org/workshop.htm.

- Registration is open for Wired Wednesday Webinars, a unique collaboration that focuses on the Common Core State Standards in speaking
and listening. The Illinois Reading Council has partnered with the Wisconsin State Reading Association to provide the webinars. All webinars begin at 7 p.m. For more information or to register, please visit www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org or call (888) 454-1341. Upcoming presenters include:
- Matt Copeland: Facilitating Student Discussion with Socratic Circles on April 15.

**Employment Opportunities**

- Watch for vacancy lists and find instructions for applying on ISBE’s Human Resources webpage at http://www.isbe.net/hr/Default.htm.