Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

This is always an exciting time of year. Family and friends make the holidays special, and trying to tie up loose ends before the end of the year can make times especially frantic. As we say goodbye to 2010 and welcome in 2011, I hope you are able to enjoy your holidays.

It was a very busy year for the agency. We made major progress in moving forward with Illinois’ education agenda and continued to battle budget uncertainty. The state’s budget difficulties continue to be a problem for us and our stakeholders. The backlog of bills in the Comptroller’s office during 2010 was regularly more than $1 billion, forcing local districts to make difficult decisions and some good programs suffered as a result.

Despite the challenges we faced in 2010, we had a very good year. Together we moved education in Illinois forward more than it has come in decades. Here are just a few examples:

- **Illinois State Board of Education adopts new learning standards:** In June 2010, Board members approved new K-12 Common Core State Standards in English and math. These new benchmarks provide “fewer, clearer and higher” standards that will better prepare Illinois students for success in college and the work force in a competitive global economy.

- **Illinois leads efforts to create new student assessment system:** Illinois is one of 11 states serving on the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers’ governing board. These 26 states are pooling resources for an internationally benchmarked assessment system that will greatly increase the number of graduating students who are ready to succeed. The new assessments will be ready for states to administer by the 2014-15 school year.

- **State testing trends show improvement:** The overall average score for all state tests increased to 76.4 in 2010, up from 75.5 the previous year. Students in grades 3-8, who take the Illinois Standards Achievement Test, boosted the overall ISAT score to 80.9 from 79.8. And students with disabilities who take the Illinois Alternative Assessment also showed a combined increase, 68.6 in 2010, up from 66.5 in 2009.
• **Illinois’ Class of 2010 ACT scores leads all universal ACT states:** Of the eight states that test at least 90 percent of their students, Illinois was No. 1 with a composite ACT score of 20.7. In addition, while the national average composite score has seen a slight dip in the past five years, Illinois has seen a slight increase, from 20.5 in 2006 to 20.7 in 2010.

• **Record number of Illinois students take AP exams:** The sixth annual AP Report to the Nation not only showed a record number of Illinois students taking AP exams among all categories (gender, ethnicity and economic status), but also showed the state in the upper half of the nation (18th) for the number of high school seniors who scored a 3 or higher on an AP exam.

• **Illinois among 11 states to pilot 12th grade NAEP; students led the pilot in reading:** Illinois volunteered to take part in a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) pilot in reading and math at grade 12 as we implement the more rigorous Common Core Standards to better prepare students for college and career. Results showed that Illinois 12th graders performed at the national average in math but scored higher than the national average in reading. Out of the ten other states that received scores, only one state, Florida, had similar demographics and size as Illinois. In both math and reading, Illinois performed better than Florida.

• **New, rigorous teacher and principal evaluations:** The Performance Evaluation Reform Act of 2010 implements new teacher and principal evaluations statewide that must incorporate measures of student growth and professional practice. The Performance Evaluation Advisory Council is now working to advance these changes, develop a state template, and develop an evaluator training program.

• **Independent alternative teacher and principal preparation programs:** Gov. Quinn signed a bill into law that amended the School Code to allow for alternative certification programs to be offered by either institutions of higher education, not for profit entities, or a combination of higher education and not for profits. All entities, both higher education and not for profits must meet the same standards and be approved by the State Board of Education.

• **Overhaul of the state’s principal preparation and certification requirements:** A new law provides that, beginning on July 1, 2014, the general administrative endorsement shall no longer be issued and instead individuals completing approved programs shall be issued a principal endorsement. All current programs must be redefined to meet new requirements and be approved by the State Teacher Certification Board and the State Board. No new candidates may be enrolled in current programs after September 1, 2012. Highlights include more rigorous selection criteria and assessments and internship requirements as well as increasing the number of years teaching required prior to attaining principal endorsement.

• **Illinois awarded second grant for Longitudinal Data System:** The agency was awarded a second competitive grant to continue development of the Illinois Longitudinal Data System. The grant has four major goals: establish a statewide transcript system for middle and high school students, integrate student-level data with teacher and administrator data, continued expansion and development of postsecondary education data system, expansion of the early childhood data collection system.
• **Illinois recognized for collaborative efforts to build student data system:** The Data Quality Campaign singled out Illinois and its education leaders for work toward ensuring the state builds a pre-K through college data system to better prepare students for success after graduation.

• **Illinois takes on education leadership roles at the national level:** In November, State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch was named president of the Council of Chief State School Officers, and Deputy Superintendent Susie Morrison was named to the CCSSO Deputies Leadership Commission, giving Illinois seats at the table during a crucial time of examining education policy across the country. In addition, ISBE Board Chairman Jesse H. Ruiz was picked to serve on a national panel to make policy recommendations on federal education legislation, and Board Vice Chair Dr. Christopher J. Ward and Board Secretary Dr. Vinni M. Hall were named to national task forces on key educational issues.

• **Illinois celebrates the 25th anniversary prekindergarten program:** ISBE marked 25 years since the establishment of the state’s Prekindergarten Program for Children at Risk of Academic Failure. The nationally-recognized program has offered services to more 800,000 3- and 4-year-olds across the state through the years and remains a top priority.

• **Illinois leads nation in bilingual services for Pre-K:** The Illinois State Board of Education approved rules requiring language support services for English language learners in public preschools. The rules stem from a 2009 law that requires bilingual education extend to preschool. Illinois is the first to mandate such services to better prepare English Language Learners for success in school and help bridge the achievement gap.

• **School Improvement Grant helps pave the way:** Illinois, which secured $146 million to help carry out interventions in its lowest-performing schools, is a leading state in a partnership with Mass Insight Education and Research Institute to identify and implement strategies to turn around struggling schools.

• **Nearly 1,000 schools recognized on Illinois Honor Roll:** ISBE recognized 975 high performing schools on the annual Illinois Honor Roll. The Spotlight Schools award went to 425 high-poverty, high-performing schools that are showing gains in overcoming the achievement gap. Academic Excellence awards went to 438 schools that have maintained high-performance over at least three years. And 147 schools were honored for showing substantial gains over three years, earning the Academic Improvement award.

• **Agency distributes nearly $1.5 billion additional federal funds:** The agency distributed more $1.34 billion in funding to schools from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act during 2010, bringing the total additional funds distributed by the agency under ARRA to $3 billion. In addition, staff distributed almost $120 million to schools through the Education Jobs Fund Program.

We look forward to working with all legislators on these issues and more as the 96th General Assembly comes to a close and the 97th General Assembly commences.

Thank you all for your work on behalf of Illinois students.

Chris

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**Legislative Liaisons:** For questions or inquiries, contact Nicole Wills (nwills@isbe.net) or Cynthia Riseman (crisman@isbe.net) in the Governmental Relations Division at 217-782-6510 or by fax at 217-782-3097.
FY11 ISBE Budget Hearings

The Illinois State Board of Education has completed its annual budget hearings in preparation for making a FY 2012 budget recommendation to the Governor and General Assembly. The Board held six hearings throughout the state in Springfield, Chicago, Mundelein, Belleville, DeKalb and Champaign and heard from more than 165 individuals and organizations advocating on behalf of educational programs.

Each participant that addressed the Board was asked to address three questions as they provided testimony:

1) The State Board has prioritized General State Aid, mandated categoricals, such as special education and transportation, and early childhood, as budget priorities in the past. Should this focus continue during tough economic times?

2) The state has been unable to provide timely payments to districts for two consecutive years, thus making local planning difficult. What actions should be taken to address this situation?

3) In each of the last two years, the state budget has been supplemented by $1 billion from federal stimulus funds. How should education expenditures change in the future with likely reduced federal spending, but no decrease in federally mandated programs? Should the state impose cost savings due to these reduced federal funds or leave cuts to the discretion of local districts?

The Board had preliminary discussions on the FY 2012 budget recommendation at the Finance and Audit Committee meeting on Dec. 15 and will continue those discussions at the January Board meeting before making a recommendation. Preliminary FY 2012 budget materials considered at the December Board meeting can be accessed at http://isbe.net/board/meetings/2010/dec/fy12_budget_discussion.pdf.

2011 ISBE Legislative Agenda

Staff at ISBE continues to work on the agency’s potential 2011 legislative agenda. As part of the September Board retreat, Board members discussed several initiatives ranging from revamping certification requirements to changing the way the General State Aid is calculated. These initiatives are being discussed both internally at ISBE and externally with education stakeholders:

- Revamping the Educator Certification System (Article 21 of the School Code);
- Aligning State and Federal Accountability Standards;
- Further alignment of Financial Oversight Panels and School Finance Authorities;
- Revisions to the Textbook Loan Program;
- Removing bilingual education from the Educational Services Block Grant for Chicago;
- Permanently terminating the General State Aid Hold Harmless program;

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• Applying the Alternate Double Whammy formula to all Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) to school districts statewide;

• Less Red Tape/Clean-up; and,

• Elimination or Modification of Unfunded Mandates.

For further explanation of the legislative proposals, please see http://isbe.net/gov_relations/pdf/leg_proposals_11.pdf.

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**Principal Preparation Program Rules**

PA 96-0903 made changes to the School Code with respect to principal preparation programs. The purpose of the legislation is to strengthen the individuals that enter into principal preparation programs, in addition to strengthening the requirements of the actual programs themselves.

The law charges ISBE with establishing standards and requirements for principal preparation programs developed by higher education institutions and not-for-profit entities. The law also directs each principal preparation program to determine criteria for admitting candidates, to require that candidates complete an internship and receive training in evaluation of staff; and to establish partnerships with one or more school districts or certain recognized non-public schools. The act authorizes ISBE to adopt rules necessary to implement and administer such programs.

Proposed rules were published Oct, 8, 2010, in the Illinois Register for public comment. There were over 140 comments and five key issues were raised through the public comment process. Based on the public comment, some changes were made to the rules and at the December Board meeting, the Board heard further public comment, discussed the written comments submitted, and made changes based on the comments and concerns. The five primary issues raised include: curricular requirements, prior experience of building principals serving as mentors, prior experience of teachers entering principal preparation programs, the use of adjunct faculty by principal preparation programs and funding issues.

The State Board discussed the rules and the public comment at the December Board meeting. Based on the Board's discussion on the analysis of the public comment, staff will make final review of the rules and bring to the Board at the January Board meeting for action.

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**Education Jobs Funds**

On Aug. 30, 2010, Illinois received an approved grant award for the new federal Education Jobs (Ed Jobs) Fund program in the amount of $415,397,841. These funds may be used for compensation and benefit costs to retain, rehire or hire new employees and will be distributed to local education agencies (LEAs) on a reimbursement basis per federal guidance.

As of Dec. 10, 805 districts have requested $119,652,019 in Ed Jobs funds. This represents 28.8 percent of the total funds Illinois received. One hundred eighty of the districts have requested their entire allocation as of Dec. 10 and most, but not all districts, have requested at least some funds. LEAs are encouraged to request funds for eligible costs in the 2010-11 school year but federal guidance allows LEAs to use unexpended funds in the 2011-12 school year.
year. The last date for obligation is Sept. 30, 2012.

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**Basic Skills Cut Scores**

Last year, the State Teacher Certification Board recommended that the State Board of Education raise the score needed to pass the Illinois Test of Basic Skills, an assessment individuals are required to pass in order to be admitted into an educator preparation program. The recommendation by the Certification Board was made after a panel of experts comprised of teachers, administrators and higher education officials was convened to review basic skills test questions to determine the minimum number an individual would need to get correct.

The Certification Board also recommended that the State Board of Education break the test into smaller subject areas to better inform candidates and their schools about their strengths and weaknesses. A candidate who passes one subject area but fails another will only be required to test again in the subject area they have failed. Breaking these tests into smaller subject areas and allowing a candidate to “bank” those that they have passed allows the candidate the opportunity to improve his or her skills (and score) in the area(s) in which he or she has a weakness.

The State Board of Education reviewed and approved the Certification Board’s recommendations. As the State moves toward new, more rigorous standards for students and raises the bar for teacher and principal preparation programs, we need to do the same with respect to those entering the teaching profession. Research shows that many students graduating from high school today require substantial remediation once they enter college and our goal is to ensure that the prospective candidates entering teacher preparation programs have the necessary skills to succeed.

The Basic Skills test provides students with a benchmark they can use to measure their progress and preparedness, which in some cases will allow them to save time and money by not beginning a course of study for which they have not been properly prepared.

There are some who are advocating that we roll back the increased rigor of this test or eliminate basic skills requirements altogether. ISBE thinks the standards for basic skills should be maintained given that student expectations, particularly in the elementary grades, are being raised through the adoption of the Common Core Standards.

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**FY10 and FY11 Comptroller Backlog to School Districts**

With the tobacco settlement funds available, the Comptroller has paid all of ISBE’s FY 2010 vouchers as of the middle of December. As of Dec. 13, the Comptroller has a backlog of $706 million in ISBE vouchers for FY 2011. There are over 13,000 vouchers dating back to July 7, 2010.

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**NCLB Survey**

ISBE is conducting a short survey on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), commonly referred to as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

The survey we have developed is at [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NCLBSurvey](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NCLBSurvey). It asks for details on the most pressing issues that should be changed in the next version of the
law and also asks for the level of support or opposition to a number of broad proposals that may impact reauthorization.

This survey is open to anyone and will allow ISBE to gain a broad understanding of viewpoints on potential changes to ESEA as Congress and the Administration contemplate reauthorization.

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**2010 Legislation Passed by the General Assembly**


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**Milken National Educator Award**

Dexter Chaney, a third-grade teacher at Martin A. Ryerson Elementary School in the Chicago Public School District, has been chosen as the Illinois recipient of the Milken National Educator Award.

Chaney is known for his pursuit of professional development activities and opportunities that help good teachers become better teachers. His dedication to continuously seeking methods that will best help students succeed has earned him the reputation of an outstanding mentor who has earned high levels of respect from colleagues, administrators, students and families.

A teacher for six years, Chaney is known for his dedication to helping students succeed. Although school doesn’t officially begin until 9 a.m., Chaney is always at Ryerson by 7:30 a.m. to let children in any grade come to his classroom. Chaney provides tutoring if needed but more often, he provides an ear and a safe environment for the students of Ryerson.

The Milken National Educator Award is given annually to teachers demonstrating exemplary skills and a personal commitment to education. Each winner receives $25,000 from the Milken Family Foundation, which they can use however they wish.

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**Thomas Lay Burroughs Award**

The Illinois State Board of Education presented Paula Dupont, president of the Burr Ridge School Board, with the 2010 Thomas Lay Burroughs Award.

ISBE created the award in 1991 to honor Thomas Lay Burroughs who served as chairman of the State Board of Education and the Board of Education for the Collinsville School District. The award is given to local school board members and recognizes extraordinary educational leadership on behalf of improved student learning and educational excellence, in resolving a crisis or major difficulty, and on behalf of equal education opportunities.

Under Dupont’s tenure, the district has emphasized providing supplemental assistance to those who need it with the addition of both summer and after school programs, along with opportunities for eighth grade students who excel to attend advanced classes at the high school. The district has also enhanced the gifted and talented program, re-instated a full-day kindergarten program, revived the middle school musical and football programs, and pushed for an increase of technology use in the curriculum.
In addition, the district has established a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program and a Character Counts program that has created positive changes in student attitudes and behavior, including a drop in suspensions. During Dupont’s tenure, both schools have been recognized for their implementation of these programs and have received DuPage County’s Outstanding School Culture Awards for 2009.

**ISBE Board Meetings**


**School District Reorganization Feasibility Studies Funding**

ISBE is accepting agreements for the FY 2011 School District Reorganization Feasibility Studies. Feasibility studies are a tool to be used by school districts that wish to investigate the advantages and/or disadvantages of reorganization options. Interested school districts may submit a proposed agreement with an independent contractor(s) to their Regional Office of Education (ROE). The ROE will submit the agreement to ISBE for approval.

State funding is available on a “first come-first served” basis. Each study will be funded between $4,500 and $8,000 based on the number of school districts involved in the study and the combined student enrollment of the districts involved in the study. Any study cost above the state funding will be the responsibility of the participating districts. In order to receive reorganization feasibility study funds in FY 2011, agreements must be approved by both the ROE and ISBE, and studies must be completed and approved for payment no later than June 30, 2011.


**Energy Efficiency Grant Applications Available**

The FY 2010 Capital Bill provided $50 million for Energy Efficiency Grants. The grants will be distributed over the next two fiscal years, with $9 million released this fall. Grants can be used for insulation, windows, doors, energy controls, lighting, energy recovery, energy conservation, alternative energy systems and other projects designed to reduce energy consumption.

The grants are a dollar for dollar state matching grant for up to $250,000. All school districts, charter schools, vocational center or public university laboratory schools are eligible to apply. Applications must be submitted to the Regional Office of Education by Jan. 15, 2011.

**Going Green**

In an effort to be more environmentally conscious, ISBE will be sending out communications, including budget updates and letters from the State Superintendent, via e-mail instead of through the mail. This effort will both reduce administrative time within the agency and provide cost savings for printing and mailing. In the future, the e-mail address used for this message will be the one used for all
ISBE communications from the State Superintendent, Board and Governmental Relations staff. If you have an alternative e-mail address to which you would like this information sent, or if you change e-mail addresses, please contact Nicole Wills (nwills@isbe.net) or Cynthia Riseman (criseman@isbe.net) in our Governmental Relations Division so that your information can be updated and so that you can receive this information in a timely manner.

**Parent Involvement Webinar Series**

The Illinois State Board of Education’s Innovation and Improvement Division has planned a series of four 90 minute Parent Involvement Webinars as part of a statewide parent involvement initiative. The webinars will examine areas of best practices pertaining to parent involvement and provide tools and resources for implementing evidence-based strategies. These sessions are open to district staff, school staff, parent facilitators and parents. Here is the description of the first session:

**School-Home Communication**, 3:30 to 5 p.m. Jan. 27, 2010: The reliability of a three-legged stool depends on each of its parts and if you were to remove the seat, the function of the remaining pieces becomes subject to speculation. The seat is the piece that joins the three legs and gives it value in its purpose. School-Home Communication is like the seat of the stool – it is the piece that brings the student, the family and the school together in a purposeful relationship. This webinar will offer evidence-based tools, strategies and resources that help schools to develop better communication with families and help to build relationships that support student success.


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**Legislative Liaisons and GA Scholarship Questions**

For all constituent or bill inquiries, contact Nicole Wills ([nwills@isbe.net](mailto:nwills@isbe.net)) or Cynthia Riseman ([criseman@isbe.net](mailto:criseman@isbe.net)) in the Governmental Relations Division at 217-782-6510 or by fax at 217-782-3097.

If you have any questions or paperwork concerning General Assembly scholarships, those should be directed to Kim Clarke at [kclarke@isbe.net](mailto:kclarke@isbe.net) or 217-782-4648.