November 2010

Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

The Illinois State Board of Education released the 2009-10 Report Cards and assessment results on October 29. Overall, student performance on the ISAT increased from 79.8 in 2009 to 80.9, while the average percentage of students meeting and exceeding on the PSAE stayed unchanged this year from last at 53. The overall average for all state tests increased slightly from 75.5 in 2009 to 76.4 in 2010. However, despite the improvements students are making, more schools and districts are failing to meet performance targets that continue to increase under the federal No Child Left Behind law (NCLB).

Students in third through eighth grades took the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) in reading and mathematics while students in fourth and seventh grades were also tested in science, and third, fifth, sixth and eighth grade students were also tested in writing. Students in 11th grade take the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE), which tests students in math, reading, science and writing.

Overall, results show the number of schools and districts that made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) decreased under NCLB performance targets. During 2010, the target for student achievement increased from 70 percent meeting and exceeding state standards to 77.5 percent, and the target high school graduation rate increased from 78 percent to 80 percent. Attendance rates for elementary and middle schools increased from 90 percent in 2008-09 to 91 percent in the 2009-10 school year and from 78 percent last year to 80 percent in 2009-10 for high schools.

Results from 2010 show 1,999 or 51 percent of all schools failed to make AYP in 2010, an increase from 40 percent in 2009. In addition, 309 districts made AYP in 2010 while 559 or 64 percent failed to make AYP, an increase from 49 percent in 2009.

Despite the increasing performance targets, one district and eight schools have been removed from improvement status because they met AYP for two consecutive years and another 55 schools and nine districts currently in status will not advance to further sanctions because they made AYP this year.

As a state, we have undergone a comprehensive review of our Learning Standards and in June, the State Board adopted the new Illinois Learning Standards in math and English based on the

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Internationally-benchmarked Common Core State Standards. Illinois is a governing member of the 26 state Partnership for Assessment for College and Careers (PARCC) that will develop a new generation of tests aligned to the new standards to measure students’ knowledge and skills. The new state tests are expected to be available by the 2014-15 school year.

We look forward to working with all legislators 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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**FY11 ISBE Budget Hearings**

The Illinois State Board of Education has been holding a series of public budget hearings as it prepares its Fiscal Year 2012 education budget recommendation for the Governor and General Assembly. The series began with a hearing Oct. 18 at the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago. Hearings have also been held Oct. 27 in Springfield, Nov. 3 in Mundelein, Nov. 8 in Belleville and Nov. 15 in DeKalb. Nearly 150 individuals and organizations have attended these hearings advocating on behalf of various programs. A final hearing will be held from 4 to 6 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 30 at the Champaign Public Library, Robeson Pavilion, Room C, 200 W. Green St.

Each participant that wishes to speak at the budget hearing will be asked to address three questions as they provide their 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?

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**2011 ISBE Legislative Agenda**

Staff at ISBE continues to work on the Board’s and 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 currently 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;
- 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.

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 Nov. 15, 599 districts had requested $90,534,525 in Ed Jobs funds. This represents 21.79 percent of the total funds Illinois received. One hundred seventy nine of the districts have requested their entire allocation as of Oct. 25. 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. The last date for obligation is Sept. 30, 2012.

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. 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.

FY10 and FY11 Comptroller Backlog to School Districts

As of Oct. 27, the Comptroller has a backlog of $618.5 million in unpaid vouchers issued by ISBE in FY10. The oldest voucher from ISBE is dated March 29, 2010.

The total FY11 backlog for ISBE is already at $579 million. FY10 and FY11 total state backlog of unpaid vouchers if $5.625 billion.

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**2010 Legislation Passed by the General Assembly**


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**Teacher of the Year**

Annice Brave, an English and journalism teacher in Alton Community Unit School District 11, was named the Illinois Teacher of the Year at the 36th annual Those Who Excel/Illinois Teacher of the Year banquet in Peoria. Brave was chosen from eight finalists and was among more than 150 educators who were honored as part of the state’s recognition program for teachers, administrators and school personnel.

Nearly 180 nominations for Those Who Excel were reviewed and scored three times by a selection committee comprised of administrators, teachers and school board members. The eight finalists for Teacher of the Year were interviewed and videotaped and those interviews were scored again before making the final recommendation. Principals, faculty, parents and students submit letters on behalf of candidates as part of the nomination process.

As Illinois Teacher of the Year, Annice Brave will have opportunities to share her knowledge and expertise outside the classroom. Beginning in the 2011 spring semester, Brave will be available to speak at teaching workshops, educational conferences, and civic and community meetings. She will receive a lifetime tuition waiver to state universities and will represent Illinois at the NASA Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala., and in the National Teacher of the Year program sponsored by Council of Chief State School Officers, ING and Target.

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**ISBE Board Meetings**


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**School Bullying Prevention Task Force**

The School Bullying Prevention Task Force is charged with exploring the causes and consequences of bullying in schools, identifying promising practices in school districts that reduce incidences of bullying and evaluating the effectiveness of schools’ current policies and bullying prevention programs.

A report on the task force findings is due to the Governor and General Assembly on or before March 1, 2011. The State Superintendent finalized appointments to the Task Force in late August.

The first meeting of the Illinois School Bullying Prevention Task Force took place on Oct. 7 in Chicago; three additional meetings have been scheduled (Dec. 13, Jan. 10 and Feb. 14). Relevant meeting materials are posted on the Task Force website located at [http://www.isbe.net/SBPTF/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/SBPTF/default.htm).

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Low-cost Laptops

PA 96-421 sought to provide low-cost laptops to school children, and SB 1221, the capital bill, correspondingly included funding for this purpose. In September, ISBE filed emergency rules as well as a regular rulemaking to establish a program to this effect. The public comment period for the regular rulemaking closed on Oct. 18, and the State Board adopted the regular rulemaking at its October Board meeting.

A request for proposal for grants was released on Nov. 16 and must be submitted by applicants by 5 p.m. Dec. 17. Grants are available for schools serving grades 3-8 who meet additional criteria. A bidders’ conference webinar for districts will be held on Nov. 30 at 11 a.m. Districts can sign up for the webinar at http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/pdf/low_cost_laptop_rfp11.pdf.

Student Advisory Committee

In early November, the Illinois State Board of Education announced that 15 outstanding high school students from across Illinois have been selected to represent their peers on the ISBE Student Advisory Council for 2010-11. The new council will help lead a study on physical education for high school districts and the impact on school district budgets.

The Student Advisory Council was originally formed in 1975 to bring student concerns to the attention of ISBE. The students who comprise the Student Advisory Council are diverse, representing different parts of the state, types of school settings and ethnic backgrounds. As SAC members, the students also may review and critique ISBE exists or proposed programs, policies and regulations, as well as inform Illinois students of SAC activities. The 15 members of the Student Advisory Council are:

- Conor Reilley, sophomore, Belvidere North High School in Belvidere
- Maryann Thompson, junior, Barrington High School in Barrington
- Michael Rice, senior, Dundee-Crown High School in Carpentersville
- Maisie Mahoney, junior, Oregon High School in Oregon
- Catherine Hixson, senior, Monticello High School in Monticello
- Abhinav Brahmamdam, junior, Springfield High School in Springfield
- Alexander Hinch, senior, Naperville Central High School in Naperville
- Myles Gearon, junior, Walter Payton College Preparatory High School in Chicago
- Erin Martell, junior, Maine South High School in Park Ridge
- Kelsea Battefeld, senior, Meredosia-Chambersburg High School in Meredosia
- Peyton Bernot, senior, Gillespie High School in Gillespie
- Abigail Horan, senior, Rolling Meadows High School in Rolling Meadows
- Brittany Kendrick, senior, Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences in Chicago
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- Daniel Lopez, senior, Mundelein High School in Mundelein
- Julie Sauls, senior, Highland High School

Photographs of each of the student advisory members are at http://www.isbe.net/news/2010/nov4.htm.

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.

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**Legislative Liaisons and GA Scholarship Questions**

For all constituent or bill inquiries, contact Nicole Wills (nwills@isbe.net) or Cynthia Riseman (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 or 217-782-4648.