Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

It was my hope that after the first week of Veto Session, we would be closer to a resolution on the lack of salary payments to our Regional Superintendents and their Assistants. As I’ve said many times over, Illinois needs a regional delivery system for professional development, technical assistance and other services to our districts, and the State Board, and I am, to say the least, disappointed this has not been resolved.

Our Regional Offices of Education have roles and responsibilities that can be grouped into three broad and important categories:

1. Regulatory functions as defined by the Illinois School Code;
2. School service functions as defined by statute; and,
3. Advocacy functions that are voluntary leadership roles to meet locally identified needs in the schools and community.

To take just one example, it would cost local school districts several thousand dollars per building for building inspections to ensure they are ready for occupancy if Regional Offices of Education were not available to provide these approvals – which they currently do for no cost.

As you may recall, the statutory “Streamlining Task Force,” which included representation of the Regional Offices of Education, recognized that our regional delivery system needed to be more efficient and accountable; but the recommendation was not that it be abandoned. We, the Regional Offices of Education and our other education stakeholders can work together to reengineer a system that is efficient, effective and accountable.

As the State Education Agency, we are not interested in the source of funds for these important services, but just so we are clear, our Regional Superintendents and their Assistants deserve prompt payment of their back pay and pension credit for work performed from July 1, as well as to be paid their expected salaries going forward.

The State Board and I sincerely appreciate these individuals and the staff in their offices continuing to provide services and hope that the General Assembly can repair this troubling scenario this week.

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

Chris

Legislative Liaisons: For questions or 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.
2011 Veto Session

ISBE is tracking a number of pieces of legislation during the fall veto session, including:

- **HB 605** – Makes changes to the school report card requirements (Support).
- **HB 606** – Amends the School Code to provide greater flexibility for school reorganization, specific to Leepertown CCSD 175 (Support).
- **HB 3793** – Makes changes to the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) so that if the equalized assessed value (EAV) of taxable property in the taxing district is less than the EAV of all taxable property for the previous year, the extension limitation is 0% or the rate of increase approved by the voters (Oppose).
- **SB 634** – Amends the School Code concerning trustees of schools to provide that after the April 5, 2011 consolidated election, the trustees of schools in Township 36 North, Range 13 East shall no longer be elected (No Position).
- **SB 1795** – Transfers jurisdiction of Private Business & Vocational Schools from ISBE to the Illinois Board of Higher Education (Support).
- **HJR 44** – Resolution containing denials and limitations of waiver requests submitted to the General Assembly in the fall waiver report (No position).

No Child Left Behind Waiver

In September, President Obama announced his plans to allow states to apply for waivers from the federal No Child Left Behind Act, also known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. While our preference is to see a new federal law to replace NCLB, Illinois will be putting together a proposal to seek relief.

Superintendent Koch was at the White House when the President made his announcement, and the President made it clear that the goals for ESEA will remain high and stressed the need to have rigorous standards to challenge students and educators alike to increase America’s global competitiveness.

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) has outlined areas specifically in which they want to move education through the waiver process, which include requiring states seeking waivers to:

- Adopt college and career ready standards and assessments;
- Develop a new generation of accountability, recognition and support systems; and
- Improve evaluation of principal and teacher effectiveness.

Waivers are available in several areas, most notably the ability to seek flexibility from the 2013-14 requirement of 100 percent of students meeting and exceeding state standards; district and school improvement requirements; and additional uses of federal funds.

Our waiver proposal, which will be submitted in February, will not back away from accountability, in fact it will include a realistic, measurable accountability system based on growth and individual student progress, rather than a one-time snapshot. In addition, we will continue to build upon the Board’s goals to better prepare every student for success in college and careers, raising the bar for all students and closing achievement gaps. In addition, we need to reward students and schools for taking and
offering rigorous courses and continue work on the implementation of new evaluation systems for teachers and principals.

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**School Report Card Results**

Last month, ISBE released Report Card data on schools, districts and our state assessments. This provides a good opportunity for us to begin digging into data and thinking about what our No Child Left Behind waiver proposal will look like. We know that 80 percent of districts and 65 percent of schools not making Adequate Yearly Progress is not an accurate or realistic reflection of the work going on in our schools.

The average score on the ISAT increased to 82 percent meets/exceeds (m/e) this year from 80.9 m/e last year. There were increases in all ISAT tests except for sixth- and seventh-grade math and seventh-grade science, which had slight declines. The composite score on the PSAE dropped 2.5 points from the previous year and all subject scores were down as well. We believe that reduction is primarily due to an administrative rule we adopted to better ensure that for 2011, and all future years, all 11th-graders take the state assessment. The rule resulted in an increase of about 12,500 PSAE test takers from 2010 to 2011.

I continue to be concerned about the disconnect between the ISAT and the PSAE. Simply put, we know the PSAE is a much more difficult test measuring college and career readiness goals and the ISAT is not as challenging. The vast majority of our high schools did not make AYP this year; only eight high schools and one high school district did make AYP based on PSAE scores. As we move to implement the rigorous Common Core learning standards and the new assessments based on those standards, the alignment between elementary and high school assessments will be more congruent. In the meantime, we must find a bridge in our assessment system to better align these tests. Any waiver application we submit to the U.S. Department of Education will include some type of back mapping to offer a more accurate comparison of our current ISAT and PSAE scores.

As we have been reviewing the report card results I want to share some positive findings. Even as we have seen the performance benchmarks increase under No Child Left Behind, some schools are making incredible progress. Nine schools that were previously placed in improvement status based on performance have been removed from status because they were able to meet Adequate Yearly Progress for two consecutive years.

It is also worth noting that we have seen some closure of the achievement gap at the elementary level at the same time that we see an increase in our minority and low-income populations. Since 2006, black students have made substantial gains, with a 14.3 percent increase in black students meeting and exceeding proficiency in ISAT math and a 13.0 percent increase in ISAT reading. The percent of Hispanic students meeting and exceeding proficiency also increased, by 4.7 percent in ISAT math and 5.2 percent in ISAT reading. The percent of students with an IEP meeting and exceeding proficiency has increased by 7.6 percent in ISAT math and 7 percent in ISAT reading since 2006. The percent of low-income students meeting and exceeding proficiency has increased by 10.8 percent in ISAT math and 10.4 percent in ISAT reading since 2006.

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**ISBE Budget Hearings**

The State Board of Education has held a series of budget hearings in Springfield, Edwardsville, Champaign and Wheeling to receive public input.
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on budget priorities as the Board begins to craft its FY 13 budget recommendation for the Governor and General Assembly. Participants speaking at the hearing have been asked to address how proposed programs align to the State Board of Education’s Strategic Goals:

**GOAL 1:** Every student will demonstrate academic achievement and be prepared for success after high school.

**GOAL 2:** Every student will be supported by highly prepared and effective teachers and school leaders.

**GOAL 3:** Every school will offer a safe and healthy learning environment for all students.

A final budget hearing will be held from 3-6 p.m. Nov. 29 in Chicago.

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**Transportation Funding and Other Mandated Categoricals**

The preliminary 2010-11 claim amount for regular/vocational transportation for school districts is $315 million (funds for CPS are not included in this figure since the district receives 3.9 percent of the appropriation). The proration of regular/vocational transportation funds is currently 74 percent of eligible costs based on preliminary data if the General Assembly chooses not to override the Governor’s reductions in PA 97-0060. The final claim amount and proration for all categorical programs including transportation will not be calculated until December after local education agencies have had an opportunity to submit corrections. The final proration is expected to decrease slightly once claims are finalized.

All other mandated categorical, with the exception of Special Education-Private Tuition, are estimated to be reimbursed at 100%. Special Education-Private Tuition is currently being prorated at 89.6 percent.

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**Early Learning Challenge and Race to the Top Phase III**

In May, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (ELC), a $500 million state grant competition to improve childhood care and early education for children from birth to five.

In October, Illinois submitted an application to the U.S. Department of Education for the Race to the Top — Early Learning Challenge. ISBE worked with the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS), Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Illinois Early Learning Council (IELC) and outside consultants to develop the application seeking $70 million in grant funds.

Our application is designed to provide consistency and ensure improvement in the quality of Early Childhood programs by focusing on educational and developmental components, family support and staff competency. By working collaboratively with DHS, DCFS and the IELC, we will ensure that Illinois has a coordinated system of high-quality early learning and development services available, particularly for children and families considered to be at risk.

Additionally, a portion of the grant will be used to continue the agency’s efforts to develop and implement a kindergarten readiness survey to continually measure a student’s progress during the kindergarten year. The survey is meant to provide parents and schools with information about a student’s development and will not be a
timed, bubble filling exercise. Our Board has proposed administrative rules for public comment whereby, starting in the 2014-15 school year, any school district that offers kindergarten (whether full or half day) would be required to administer the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey, or KIDS, as long as sufficient funding is provided by the State for both administration and professional development.

Grants for the Early Learning Challenge will be awarded no later than Dec. 31, 2011. For a full review of ISBE’s application, go to http://www2.illinois.gov/earlychildhood/Pages/EarlyLearingChallenge.aspx.

Illinois will also soon also be submitting a proposal for Race to the Top Phase III funds. ISBE is only one of nine states eligible and expects to receive at least $28 million so that the State and its school districts can execute some of the initiatives included in our Race to the Top application. Additional information is available at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase3-resources.html.

Teacher of the Year

On Oct. 22, Josh Stumpenhorst, a sixth-grade language arts and social science teacher at Lincoln Junior High School in Naperville Community School District 203 and was chosen from nine finalists as the 2012 Illinois Teacher of the Year. Stumpenhorst received the honor at the 37th annual Those Who Excel/Illinois Teacher of the Year banquet, which was held in Bloomington.

Stumpenhorst graduated from North Central College and holds a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction. He is also National Board Certified in Early Adolescent Social Science and coaches basketball and track and works closely with the student council and computer club.

Nearly 200 nominations for Those Who Excel were reviewed and scored three times by a selection committee comprised of administrators, teachers and school board members. The nine finalists for Teacher of the Year were interviewed and videotaped and those interviews were scored again before a final recommendation was made.

As Illinois Teacher of the Year, Stumpenhorst will have opportunities to share his knowledge and expertise outside the classroom. Beginning in the 2012 spring semester, Stumpenhorst will be available to speak at teaching workshops, educational conferences and community meetings. He 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. Stumpenhorst will also receive products from SMARTer Kids.

FY 11 and FY 12 Comptroller Backlog to School Districts

As of Nov. 1, the Comptroller has a backlog of $1000 in ISBE vouchers for FY 2011 (in administrative payments, not grants to districts) and 8664 vouchers totaling $572.4 million for FY 12. Total state backlog at this time stands at $735,100 for FY 11 and $2.7 billion for FY 12.

Student Advisory Council

On Oct. 18, the Illinois State Board of Education announced the selection of 15 high school students from across the state to serve on the Student Advisory Council (SAC), which brings student concerns to the attention of ISBE.
For the 2011-12 school year, five students are returning to the Student Advisory Council, and 10 new students were selected through a competitive application and review process.

The 10 new members of the Student Advisory Council are:

- Emily Chesser, senior, Williamsville High School in Williamsville
- Austin Evans, senior, Lovington High School in Lovington
- Kristin Ishmael, junior, Litchfield High School in Litchfield
- Aaron Jackson, senior, Grayslake Central High School in Grayslake
- Cameron Jodlowski, junior, Olympia High School in Stanford
- Paige Logan, junior, Altamont High School in Altamont
- Neshal Patel, senior, Neuqua Valley High School in Naperville
- Sarah Reising-Rechner, senior, Athens Senior High School in Athens
- Andrew Van Treeck, senior, Batavia Senior High School in Batavia
- Jolie-Grace Wareham, junior, Glenbard East High School in Lombard

The five returning members of the Student Advisory Council are:

- Abhinav Brahmadam, senior, Springfield High School in Springfield
- Myles Gearon, senior, Walter Payton College Preparatory High School in Chicago
- Maisie Mahoney, senior, Oregon High School in Oregon
- Erin Martell, senior, Maine South High School in Park Ridge
- Conor Reilley, junior, Belvidere North High School in Belvidere

The State Board will hold its next meeting Nov. 18 in Chicago at the Hyatt Hotel. The December meeting will be held Dec. 14-15 in Springfield. A calendar of all the 2012 meeting dates is at http://isbe.net/board/pdf/2012_board_meetings.pdf.

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.

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