MEMORANDUM

Date: December 12, 2013

To: Superintendents, Regional Superintendents, Special Education Directors, and Special Education Cooperative Directors

SUBJECT: ISTAC / SSOS COLLABORATION

In partnership, we would like to take this opportunity to share information regarding the collaborative vision for Illinois between the Illinois Statewide Technical Assistance Collaborative (ISTAC) work and the Statewide System of Support (SSOS) work.

Federal IDEA funding requires each State Education Authority (SEA) to develop a State Performance Plan (SPP) and provide an Annual Progress Report (APR) on Indicators outlined in the SPP (for more information see [link]). The Illinois State Board of Education partners with school districts to provide programs and services aligned with this yearly APR for all students, including those with specialized educational needs. The ISBE Center for Specialized Instruction, Division of Special Education Services assures that these programs and services meet state and federal requirements. This involves both compliance and technical assistance functions. In Illinois, technical assistance functions involve providing information and guidance on promising and evidence-based practices in educating students with disabilities, including the operation of the Illinois Statewide Technical Assistance Collaborative (ISTAC) initiative. In November 2011 (FY12), the School Association for Special Education of DuPage County (SASED) was awarded the ISTAC IDEA Discretionary grant to coordinate, deliver and administer a regionalized system of statewide technical assistance and training as outlined in the RFP.

The primary purpose of the ISTAC is to improve educational outcomes for all children in Illinois, including those with significant challenges and disabilities. This is accomplished through a coordinated statewide effort within a regionalized delivery system of training and technical assistance. ISTAC promotes a prevention-based systems'-change approach, which includes data-based decision-making and research-based instructional practices and interventions.

The five (5) Technical Assistance Focus Areas under the ISTAC IDEA Discretionary-funded umbrella are:

- Behavior
- Educational Environment (Least Restrictive)
- Family & Community Engagement
- Special Populations (Autism, Behavioral Health, etc.)
- Transition

The Focus Areas previously were known by various acronyms for their individual projects. ISBE, looking to become more efficient and effective with providing our training and technical assistance, is taking each individual siloed project and integrating the Evidence-based/Evidence-informed Practices into a comprehensive service delivery entity called the ISTAC.
ISTAC Statewide Collaboration

The ISTAC and other existing ISBE initiatives/partners (Statewide System of Support (SSoS)), the Illinois Center for School Improvement (Illinois-CSI), Illinois Association of Regional State Superintendents (IARSS), the Illinois Response to Intervention (I-RtI) Network, etc. maintain a collaborative relationship. This collaborative relationship provides a statewide foundation for training content, technical assistance, and instructional coaching to build the capacity of schools to promote social, emotional, behavioral, physical and academic success of all students. Such collaboration facilitates the sharing of resources and expertise across initiatives, thereby increasing the statewide reach of all projects. This relationship also leverages resources, reduces duplication of services, and increases cost effectiveness while providing high quality and consistent professional development on a regional basis.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), reauthorized and signed into law as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), requires every state to have “a statewide system of intensive and sustained support and improvement for districts and schools.” ISBE’s Center for Innovation and Improvement designed the Statewide System of Support (SSoS) to supply a continuum of research-based services and resources for student improvement at the district and school level.

In September 2012, ISBE established the Illinois Center for School Improvement (Illinois-CSI) in partnership with the American Institutes for Research (AIR). Illinois-CSI will lead and coordinate the existing regional system to increase its capacity to deliver consistent, coherent services statewide. One of Illinois-CSI’s overarching goals is to ensure all Illinois districts receive expert, timely, and relevant assistance to increase district leadership capacity, improve student performance, and close achievement gaps.

ISBE envisions one fully coordinated and comprehensive system of professional development, instructional coaching, and other practical support to the LEAs. To that end, continuing during the 2013-14 school year, Illinois-CSI will lead and coordinate a statewide system of support to LEAs while ISTAC and SSOS are partnering to integrate and transition their work to effectively address each initiative’s purpose and funding requirements. Data-based decisions will be made regarding how ISTAC’s services will be utilized most efficiently and with the highest impact to support all students, especially those with disabilities. The use of federal funds for this work is limited to the applicable allowable use of funds as outlined in federal regulations. On-going updates regarding this statewide collaboration will be provided in the weekly Superintendent’s Message.

Sincerely,

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