



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

A newsletter from the Illinois State Board of Education



July 2010

## Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

We have developed this Legislative Update as a way to improve our communications with members of the General Assembly. We are publishing the newsletter with existing staff and resources to provide you with useful and timely information about events affecting our public schools. This is an exciting and trying time for education in Illinois and across the country.

Illinois has been singled out as being among the leading states to contend for more than \$400 million in Race to the Top funding, something that would not have happened without your legislative support. At the same time our state is in the throes of a historic economic crisis, providing challenges for districts the likes of which have not been seen in most current educator's careers.

Action taken at the State Board of Education's June Board meeting exemplified the contrast between the promise and the challenge. At the meeting, the members voted to adopt the Common Core State Standards as Illinois' newly revised learning standards for K-12 education. These new standards are fewer, clearer and higher than the previous standards, which were adopted in 1997, and will better prepare Illinois students for success in college and careers.

The Common Core is a state-led partnership, of which Illinois was a leading member, committed to academic rigor and success in the global economy. Our new learning standards are focused on college and career readiness. We have long known our current standards were too broad and not always measurable. These new standards combine both what students need to know and how students would apply that knowledge in real-life situations. No longer can we accept that someone is "book-smart" but can't work in a group or meet a deadline. In just about every field and career, we need people who can apply a depth of knowledge to a broad range of challenges.

These new standards are better for Illinois students, better for Illinois teachers and better for Illinois' future, offering an exciting step forward in preparing students for advancement.

At the same meeting, the Board took action on the FY 2011 budget to allocate the lump sum appropriations in HB 859 and SB 1215. Testimony from stake-holders and students exemplified the difficult budget choices and trying times school districts find themselves in. Before the State Board budget discussion began, ISBE was informed that Governor Quinn would provide nearly \$200 million to Early Childhood and Bilingual Education using discretionary funds available in the budget. Even

## MISSION

The Illinois State Board of Education will provide leadership, assistance, resources and advocacy so that every student is prepared to succeed in careers and postsecondary education, and share accountability for doing so with districts and schools.

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with these additional funds, though, the Board was forced to cut nearly \$300 million (in other words, the FY 2011 budget is \$300 million less than the FY 2010 budget).

The decisions to reduce or cut programs were difficult, but were done in the manner the Board felt best allocated resources to meet federal maintenance of effort requirements for matching federal funds, preserved programs that served the greatest numbers of students and those that provide local districts with flexibility in the use of funds.

The State Board is still determining the impact of the Governor's budget actions on July 1 and will provide additional information about the impact of those changes on ISBE's budget as soon as it is available.

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

Chris

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## Budget Update

On June 24, the State Board made determinations to distribute the lump sum allocations in the FY 2011 education budget. The Board heard testimony and received letters from hundreds of students, teachers and administrators and education advocates on behalf of nearly every program in ISBE's budget. The decisions made by the Board to reduce funding and eliminate some line items were difficult but necessary given reductions totaling \$478 million to the education budget for FY 2011, though this was mitigated somewhat on being told that Governor Quinn would provide \$194 million from discretionary funds to minimize reductions to Bilingual Education and Early Childhood Programs. Unfortunately this necessitated a reduction of almost \$300 million, which caused some line items to be reduced or eliminated. ISBE's administrative budget was decreased by 8 percent overall for FY11.

The Board made decisions on funding based on three priorities that were displayed as far back as last fall when the Board was taking public comment when preparing to submit a FY11 budget recommendation. Those priorities included maintaining federal maintenance of effort requirements to ensure Illinois does not

lose any federal funds, preserving programs that serve the most number of students and those that provide school districts with the most flexibility in use of the funds. The Board was also cognizant of the backlog of bills that the State owes to school districts, which now totals more than \$1.3 billion. The complete FY 2011 Budget, as approved by the State Board, can be found at the following link:

[http://isbe.net/budget/FY11\\_bd\\_alloc.pdf](http://isbe.net/budget/FY11_bd_alloc.pdf).

Additionally, the Board requested the Superintendent relay a request to the Governor and General Assembly for additional funding for specified programs that were eliminated under the reduced funding: Advance Placement Programs, After School Matters, Agricultural Education, Arts and Foreign Language, National Board Certification, Teach for America, Re-Enrolling Students — Alternative Schools Network and Textbook Loans.

Additional information about the impact of the Governor's budget actions on July 1 will be provided as soon as it is available.

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## Race to the Top

On June 1, Illinois submitted a second round

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application for Race to the Top funds to the U.S. Department of Education. Illinois placed fifth out of 41 applications during the first application round but only two winners were selected — Delaware and Tennessee.

Based on the feedback from the federal review team, action by the General Assembly in the late days of session to pass SB 226, which strengthens principal preparation programs and work with our education stakeholders to increase the number of school districts that have signed on to carry out the education reform initiatives, we have improved our application. In total, 523 districts signed on to the Memorandum of Understanding and agreed to carry out certain education reforms. This is an increase of more than 150 from the first round of the application and those districts represent nearly 80 percent of the students in the state.

Under new guidelines for the Phase II application, Illinois applied for \$400 million, the maximum amount available for a state of our size. Finalists for funding will be notified later this summer with award recipients receiving the grants in late August or September.

For more information on Race to the Top and to view the state's application, go to <http://isbe.net/racetothetop/default.htm>.

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## 2010 ISBE Legislative Agenda

The 2010 legislative session was a successful one for ISBE's legislative priorities. Two pieces of legislation — one passed at the beginning of the legislative session and one passed at the end — were major initiatives designed to increase teacher and administrator effectiveness and both pieces were highlighted in the State's Phase II Race to the Top application. The Performance Evaluation Reform Act established by PA 96-0861 implements new, rigorous teacher and

principal evaluations statewide that must incorporate measure(s) of student growth and professional practice. PA 96-0903 strengthens principal preparation programs by making the focus of preparation programs more on curriculum and leadership as opposed to management.

Other successful pieces of legislation ISBE initiated or partnered on included legislation to remove a requirement that a state offer a consumer education proficiency exam, thereby saving the state approximately \$120,000 a year (SB 3608), legislation to allow ISBE and the Comptroller additional flexibility in distributing General State Aid funds between the Common School Fund and Education Assistance Fund (SB 3609), legislation establishing a School Bullying Prevention Task Force to look at the effects of bullying and ways to prevent it (SB 3266) and legislation that will allow ISBE additional avenues to certify a school district in financial difficulty if it is not able to meet payroll (SB 3681). SB 3681 also contained several provisions to clean up duplicative areas of the School Code or to eliminate or reduce mandates on school districts by repealing or changing various reporting requirements.

This concluded a successful legislative session that goes along with previous ISBE legislative initiatives the last several years that has included major policy changes like reforming educator misconduct issues, increasing the state graduation standards, providing additional options and reducing barriers to school consolidation and the creation of a P-20 Longitudinal Data system, as well as a number of small legislative initiatives.

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## 2010 Legislation Passed by the General Assembly

A full list of legislation impacting ISBE or school districts passed in the spring legislative session can be found at

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[http://www.isbe.net/gov\\_relations/pdf/public\\_act\\_summary\\_10.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/gov_relations/pdf/public_act_summary_10.pdf). This document will be updated as the Governor takes action on the legislation.

We have already begun working to implement certain pieces legislation. For example, ISBE staff has been working diligently with the three Intermediate Service Centers (ISC) in Suburban Cook County to transition to them the responsibilities of the now abolished Suburban Cook County Regional Office of Education. The transition became effective July 1, 2010, under Public Act 96-0893.

The three ISCs serving the area have assumed all responsibilities that the ROE office previously was responsible for overseeing and staff from ISBE has been working with the ISCs to aid in this process.

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## Board Members

Governor Quinn appointed three new Board members, two of which have been confirmed by the Senate, to fill vacancies left by Ed Geppert (Belleville), Dean Clark (Glen Ellyn) and Brenda Holmes (Springfield). New Board members James Baumann (Lake Forest), Melinda LaBarre (Springfield) and Steven Gilford (Evanston) join Chairman Jesse Ruiz (Chicago), Chris Ward (Lockport), Vinni Hall (Chicago), Andrea Brown (Marion), Dave Fields (Danville) and Lanita Koster (Chicago) as the State Board of Education.

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## General Assembly Scholarships

The General Assembly Scholarship Program, as provided by Section 30-9 of the School Code (105 ILCS 5/30-9), provides each member of the General Assembly annually with two four-year scholarships to award to residents of their respective legislative district. These scholarships may be alternatively designated to two or four nominees for a 2-year or 1-year waiver of

tuition. Scholarships can be awarded to students attending Chicago State University, Eastern Illinois University, Governors State University, Illinois State University, Northeastern Illinois University, Northern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University, University of Illinois and Western Illinois University.

Section 30-12.5 of the School Code (105 ILCS 5/30-12.5) requires all General Assembly scholarship recipients to complete and sign a notarized waiver of confidentiality document. This document must accompany the nomination form when members of the General Assembly submit the form to ISBE. Please note that, according to the law, nominations must be received by ISBE no later than the opening day of the semester or term.

In general, General Assembly scholarships are awarded on a school year basis for a tuition waiver covering Fall, Spring and/or Summer semesters. If a student chooses not to use all or part of his or her scholarship, the scholarship becomes vacated. Once ISBE is notified by the university that a scholarship has been vacated, we will notify the awarding legislator that he or she may re-issue the remainder of the scholarship.

Scholarships are not transferrable from one university to another. Should a student going to one state supported university choose to change to another state supported university during the time he or she has been awarded a General Assembly scholarship, he or she must vacate the scholarship. A legislator may then choose to award the student a new scholarship at a new university by submitting a new nomination form and waiver.

Scholarships for which no nominations were made prior to the start of the academic term do not immediately lapse. A member may nominate a resident of his or her district at anytime prior

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to the expiration of his or her current elected term. There is no carryover of scholarships from legislative term to legislative term. All scholarships for which no nomination has been made prior to the end of elected term shall lapse.

Please contact Kim Clarke at ISBE with any questions on the General Assembly Scholarship Program (217-782-4648).

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## Strategic Plan

The State Board recently submitted a progress report to the Strategic Plan required by Public Act 93-1036. In 2005, ISBE was required to develop a five-year Comprehensive Strategic Plan for Elementary and Secondary Education in Illinois and to update that plan annually. The Plan focuses on three primary goal areas: enhancing literacy; improving educator quality for all education; and expanding data-driven management and school support practices. The Progress Report for 2010 was submitted in June and can be viewed at [http://isbe.net/reports/strategic\\_plan10.pdf](http://isbe.net/reports/strategic_plan10.pdf).

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## Going Green

In an effort to be more environmentally conscious, ISBE will be sending out communications, including budget updates and letters from the Superintendent, via e-mail instead 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 email address used for this message will be the one used for all ISBE communication from the Superintendent, Board and Governmental Relations staff. If you have an alternative email address you would like this information sent to, or if you change e-mail addresses, please contact Nicole Wills ([nwills@isbe.net](mailto:nwills@isbe.net)) or Cynthia Riseman ([criseman@isbe.net](mailto: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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