


Subject: ISBE's Weekly Message - March 26, 2024
From: Illinois State Board of Education <hello@isbe.net>
Date: 3/26/2024, 4:29 PM
To: mcateed@mokena159.org

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 [ISBE's Weekly Message. From Illinois State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tony Sanders. ISBE logo.](#)

March 26, 2024

 Students in a classroom holding up National Geographic books.

Teachers and students at Illini Bluffs High School recently broke the digital norm by embracing a tech-free day. The formation of meaningful connections had priority over looking at screens as activities ranging from vibrant classroom discussions to collaborative team-based learning were explored.

EARLY CHILDHOOD BLOCK GRANT

Dear Colleagues:

Last week, we released Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to award \$75 million in Smart Start Illinois funding to expand access to preschool. The funding is the next step in Governor JB Pritzker's four-year Smart Start Illinois plan to eliminate preschool deserts in Illinois.

The fiscal year 2025 program will build on the [successes](#) of Smart Start's first year, FY 2024, in which the initiative provided 5,866 new preschool seats – exceeding its 5,000-seat goal! The FY 2025 goal is to serve an additional

5,000 children statewide, heading toward the ultimate goal of serving 20,000 additional children and ensuring universal access to preschool across Illinois by FY 2027.

The Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) is funding three RFPs:

- Preschool for All (PFA) Program – Half-day (2.5 hours per day), high-quality preschool for 3-5-year-olds with licensed teachers and standards-aligned curriculum.
- Preschool for All Expansion (PFAE) Program – Full-day (five hours per day), high-quality preschool, along with comprehensive physical and mental health services designed to serve 3-5-year-olds in the highest-need communities.
- Prevention Initiative (PI) Program – Services for children and families prenatal to 3 years old in two options: center-based care and home visiting. The FY 2025 RFP will fund only PI services for children 6 weeks to 3 years of age in child care centers licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The remaining PI funding will go toward raising the base salaries of home visiting and doula employees.

Who is eligible to apply for these grants? If you're in a preschool desert outside the city of Chicago, you're probably eligible (Chicago receives 37% of the ECBG appropriation). Public school districts, Regional Offices of Education, charter schools, vocational centers, and other organizations with experience in early childhood education are eligible to apply. Family child care homes licensed by DCFS can apply in partnership with a Local Education Agency or another eligible applicant.

Priority will be given to PFA and PFAE applicants in early childhood deserts (areas that do not serve at least 80% of eligible 3-and 4-year-old children). You can see a map of preschool deserts on our [ECBG Preschool Desert](#) webpage. Priority will also be given to PI applicants who currently have a PFA or PFAE program and want to add Prevention Initiative. The number of programs awarded will be determined by the number of applications and the amount of funding appropriated.

ISBE will host virtual technical assistance webinars to assist grantees at **4-5 p.m. on March 26, 10-11 a.m. on April 10, 10:30-11:30 a.m. on April 22, and 9:30-10:30 a.m. on May 3.** We will also host virtual technical assistance office hours from **11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. on April 11, and noon-1 p.m. on April 29.** Visit [our website](#) to find more information and [a virtual link for the webinars](#).

We can do this. In fact, we must do this! Early childhood education is where children learn resilience, problem-solving, and social-emotional competence -- skills that are invaluable in navigating challenges in school and beyond. It isn't just preparation for school; it's preparation for life!

All my best,
Tony

UPCOMING ISBE DATES AND DEADLINES

NOTE: ISBE has released a [Data Collections Key Dates calendar](#), which shows a compiled schedule for all data collections managed by the Data Strategies & Analytics department.

March 27: [Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Office Hours](#)

March 29: [Deadline to apply for NBCT incentive grant](#)

March 29: [2023-24 5Essentials Survey administration window closes](#)

March 31: [Deadline to submit public comment on the FY 2025-28 Illinois Perkins State Plan](#)

April 1: [Deadline to submit proposals for 2024-25 Special Education Leadership Academy Administrator Academies](#)

April 1-May 1: [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B State Application Public Review & Comment Window](#)

April 2 | 11 a.m.: [Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Office Hours](#)

April 3: [Annual Autism Conference: Bridging Gaps, Empowering Educators](#)

April 4 | 5 p.m.: [Deadline to apply for the FY 2024 Computer Science Equity Grant](#)

April 5: [Deadline to apply for the FY 2025 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Stronger Connections Grant](#)

April 10: [Deadline to submit nominations for the Engage Every Student Recognition Program](#)

April 10 | 10 a.m.: [Webinar: Early Childhood Block Grant Technical Assistance](#)

April 10 | 3 p.m.: [Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Office Hours](#)

April 11 | 11:30 a.m.: [Early Childhood Block Grant Office Hours](#)

April 13: [Argonne National Laboratory's Middle School Electric Car Competition](#)

April 15 | 5 p.m.: [Deadline to submit nominations for ISBE's 2024 School Nutrition Champion Award](#)

April 18 | Noon: [Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Office Hours](#)

April 22 | 10:30 a.m.: [Webinar: Early Childhood Block Grant Technical Assistance](#)

April 22-23: [2024 Illinois Association of Title I Directors Conference](#)

April 24 | 3 p.m.: [Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Office Hours](#)

April 24: [Regional EL Administrator Spring Training \(Rockford\)](#)

April 29 | Noon: [Early Childhood Block Grant Office Hours](#)

April 30: [Deadline to apply for School Food System Transformation Challenge Grants](#)

April 30: [Regional EL Administrator Spring Training \(Moline\)](#)

April 30: [Regional EL Administrator Spring Training \(Collinsville\)](#)

May 2 | 10 a.m.: [Webinar: 2025 Entity Profile System](#)

May 2 | 11 a.m.: [Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Office Hours](#)

May 2: [Regional EL Administrator Spring Training \(Carbondale\)](#)

May 3 | 9:30 a.m.: [Webinar: Early Childhood Block Grant Technical Assistance](#)

May 3: [Regional EL Administrator Spring Training \(Springfield\)](#)

May 7 | 3 p.m.: [Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Office Hours](#)

May 8: National School Nurse Day

May 14: [Regional EL Administrator Spring Training \(Charleston\)](#)

May 16 | Noon: [Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Office Hours](#)

May 16 | 4 p.m.: [Deadline to submit proposals for the FY 2025 Early Childhood](#)

[Block Grant](#)

May 18: Those Who Excel & Teacher of the Year Awards Banquet

May 22 | 3 p.m.: [Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Office Hours](#)

May 31: [Deadline to apply for the High-Quality CTE for all Students Summer 2024 Cohort](#)

June 13 | 4 p.m.: [Deadline to submit applications for the 2024 Renew America's Schools Prize](#)

June 15: [Deadline to submit nominations for School Social Worker of the Year and Citizen of the Year](#)

June 18: [ISBE Career Connections Conference](#)

June 30 | 5 p.m.: [Deadline to apply for the Teacher Apprenticeship Pilot](#)

July 8-12: [Computer Science PD Week](#)

Sept. 30: ARP ESSER III Grant Programs end



Amplifying Voices: Be Collective and Illinois Affinity Group Network. Illinois Affinity Group logo and photo of affinity group members.

NEW! LEARNING RENEWAL

Amplifying Voices: Be Collective and the Illinois Affinity Group Network

Be Collective, an initiative led by five [Illinois Affinity Group](#) facilitators across different districts, recently concluded its annual conference, emphasizing this year's theme: VOICE. The event provided a platform for educators of color to share their perspectives and experiences, while students voiced their own encounters within their schools and districts. These discussions spurred meaningful dialogue on how educators can better support the learning and belonging of students of color.

Be Collective serves as a microcosm of the broader Illinois Affinity Group Network, fostering collaboration and community at the local level. The statewide affinity groups and the Be Collective conference work in concert to create affirming spaces within schools, empowering educators to navigate and enhance their environments while contributing to systemic change. Notably, the facilitators of Be Collective will also be presenting at the upcoming College Board conference, [A Dream Deferred](#), further extending the reach of their work and sharing the outcomes of affinity groups



Congratulations to Samuel D. Figueroa, far north suburbs regional teacher of the year from Adlai E. Stevenson HSD 125. Those Who Excel & Teacher of the year logo.

NEW! 2024 ILLINOIS TEACHER OF THE YEAR COHORT

ISBE has [announced](#) the members of the 2024 Illinois Teacher of the Year Cohort, including the 13 finalists for [2024 Illinois State Teacher of the Year](#). The annual Teacher of the Year program honors incredible classroom educators who have made lasting impacts on the students, families, and fellow educators in their school communities. ISBE will showcase cohort members in the Weekly Message each week leading up to the announcement of the 2024 Illinois State Teacher of the Year this spring. Congratulations to all this year's extraordinary awardees!

Sam Figueroa

Far North Suburbs Regional Teacher of the Year

Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Adlai E. Stevenson HSD 125

Sam Figueroa is in his 12th year of teaching at Adlai E. Stevenson High School, where he has taught six different Spanish courses, led curricular teams, sponsored a club, coached soccer, co-led committees, chaperoned international trips, mentored first-generation college students, and earned a couple of master's degrees. (He's now working on his doctorate.)

A career changer who was originally in finance, Sam realized his passion for working with students while teaching English in Italy. Understanding that education was his calling, he returned stateside and worked for two years as a substitute in Title I schools for School District U-46 and then two years as an aide in a therapeutic day school. Sam took night classes during this time at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago to become a certified Spanish teacher.

He has since led a shift to standards-based grading, developed articulation with district middle schools, led facilitated the incorporation of social-emotional learning and culturally-relevant-and-sustaining practices, and created a curriculum called Diversity Friday to highlight underrepresented groups within Spanish-speaking countries.

Sam credits much of his success with his students, curricular teams, division, and school on the skills he refined during his diverse work experiences. The skills of being open-minded, forgiving, accommodating, and genuinely interested in others are integral to his goal of helping others become better because if they know they are valued then they will reach their full potential.

NEW! COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

Fiscal Year 2025-28 Illinois Perkins State Plan Public Comment Period Ends March 31

ISBE and the Illinois Community College Board will submit the fiscal year 2025-28 Illinois Perkins State Plan to the U.S Department of Education on May 10. We value your feedback on the Secondary Performance Measures and the state plan for the next four years. Please provide your thoughts on the revisions of the current plan and any changes you would suggest in our state plan for FY 2025-28. The [PowerPoint](#) and [state plan](#) shared in the Feb. 27 webinar is posted on the [ISBE Perkins webpage](#). The [public comment](#) period closes **March 31**.

2024 Summer Professional Learning Calendar

ISBE and the Northern Illinois University Illinois CTE Project Team invite you to participate in a variety of online and regional professional development opportunities this summer, including:

- Team-Based Challenge Writing Workshops
- CTE & Equity Promising Practices Series - Eliminating Barriers to Dual Credit
- CTE & Equity Promising Practices Series - Culturally Responsive Teaching in CTE
- Administrator Academies
 - Forming Relationships with Community and Business Partners
 - Work-Based Learning in Illinois
 - PaCE Framework Overview

All sessions are open to all Illinois educators; most of the sessions are free. Participants who complete workshops will earn Illinois professional development hours or, when applicable, Administrator Academy credit (based on the workshop and one's position). Check out the full (and growing!) [ISBE CTE professional development calendar](#).



Save the Date and register for Career Connections Conference on June 18 at Tinley Park Convention Center. Image of Save the Date graphic.

Register for the Career Connections Conference

ISBE's [Career Connections Conference](#) is a premier event that offers collaboration, innovation, and inspiration to educators throughout Illinois. The 2024 conference will be held from **8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. June 18** at the Tinley Park Convention Center. At Career Connections, educators come together to exchange ideas, share best practices, and foster meaningful connections with their peers. It is a space where the CTE community can engage in discussions and networking that enhance the quality of education and help to best prepare our students for successful futures.



Webinar. 2025 Entity Profile System at 10 a.m. on May 2. Icon of calendar.


NEW! DATA, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND ASSESSMENT

2025 Entity Profile System Webinar

Join us for the [2025 Entity Profile System \(EPS\) webinar](#) at **10 a.m. May 2** to learn about the following topics:

- How to update and verify your organization's information in EPS (e.g., grade changes, personnel changes, and building additions and closures).
- Changes in EPS for the upcoming school year.
- Overview of RCDTS codes.
- What constitutes grades served in a school.

There will be a question-and-answer session at the end of the webinar. Please send

 Early Childhood Block Grant Technical Assistance Webinars and Office Hours.
Children in preschool.

NEW! EARLY CHILDHOOD

Early Childhood Block Grant Technical Assistance Webinars


ISBE recently released the Requests for Proposals to award [\\$75 million in Smart Start Illinois funding](#) to expand access to preschool, pending appropriations. The grant is the next step in Governor JB Pritzker's four-year Smart Start Illinois plan to fully eliminate preschool deserts in Illinois. Proposals are due by **4 p.m. May 16.**

ISBE will host virtual technical assistance webinars to assist grantees with the Early Childhood Block Grant application process:

- [10-11 a.m. | April 10](#)
- [10:30-11:30 a.m. | April 22](#)
- [9:30-10:30 a.m. | May 3](#)

There also will be virtual technical assistance office hours:

- [11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. | April 11](#)
- [Noon-1 p.m. | April 29](#)

 ISBE seeks evaluators for Early Childhood Block Grant. Submit an application!
Illustration of early childhood.

Potential Early Childhood Block Grant RFP Evaluators/Readers

ISBE is seeking evaluators/readers for the FY 2025 Early Childhood Block Grant Requests for Proposals. Potential evaluators/readers must have experience working with early childhood programs and should complete an [application](#) to be included in ISBE's reader pool. There is no need to reapply if you have already submitted an application/resume in the past. Evaluators will be compensated.



Why I Joined isbe. Virtual career fair April 15.

NEW! HUMAN RESOURCES

ISBE Virtual Career Fair April 15

Mark your calendars for our virtual career fair from **10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. April 15**. We are seeking professionals grounded in the values of leadership, accountability, collaboration, equity, and service to join our team.

What to expect:

- Meet State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tony Sanders.
- Learn about our employee benefits, workplace culture, and growth opportunities.
- Discuss career opportunities in:
 - Technology Support & Infrastructure
 - Software Solutions
 - Early Childhood Development
 - School Business Services

- Federal and State Monitoring
- Data Strategies & Analytics

NEW! SPECIAL EDUCATION

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B State Application Public Review & Comment


The federal fiscal year (FFY) 2024 [IDEA Part B Annual State Application](#) is available for public review and comment. The application seeks funds that support provisions of special education services to children ages 3-21 in Illinois.

Upon the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) approval of the Illinois IDEA Part B application, the state will receive a federal grant award under Part B of the IDEA for the period of July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025.

As you review the application, please note the following:

- The application is in a format required by OSEP.
- Illinois is providing general assurances to OSEP that the state will be implementing the provisions of state and federal regulations for Part B of IDEA 2004.
- The dollar amounts listed in Section III, Use of Funds, are for State-Level Administration and Targeted Initiatives, not the cost of serving students with disabilities or the total cost of special education services in Illinois.
- The amounts for State-Level Administration and Targeted Initiatives are based for FFY 2023 allocation.


Written comments may be submitted to PartBapplications@isbe.net between **April 1-May 1**.

 English Learners Administrator Spring Training. Image of spring training flyer.

MULTILINGUAL/LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Regional EL Administrator Spring Training 2024

Coming soon to a region near you, [Regional EL Administrator 2024 Spring Training](#)! Learn or review the ins and outs of English learner programming, requirements, funding, and more. Attendance is strongly encouraged for EL program administrators of school districts that serve EL students. A school district can send one or two district staff members. This training is free to attend and is filling up quickly. You don't want to miss this opportunity!

 2024 School Nutrition Champion Award nominations due 5p.m. on April 15.

NUTRITION

2024 School Nutrition Champion Award

2024 School Nutrition Champion Award

Does your district have a dynamic food service director, a cashier who puts smiles on all the students' faces, a super creative cook, or an administrative assistant who knows all the ins and outs of the School Nutrition Programs regulations? ISBE wants to hear about them! We are seeking nominations for the 2024 ISBE School Nutrition Champion Award. Anyone can nominate a K-12 school nutrition professional for the award. School nutrition professionals employed at public or private schools in Illinois with the National School Lunch Program are eligible for the award.

Nominate someone for the [2024 School Nutrition Champion Award](#) by **5 p.m. April 15**. One School Nutrition Champion will be selected but all nominees will be highlighted in The Outlook, our monthly newsletter for School Nutrition Programs in Illinois. The winner will be announced on **May 3**, which is [School Lunch Hero Day](#). Meet last year's award winners on ISBE's [School Nutrition and Wellness Champions webpage](#) and all of the nominees in the [May 2023 issue of The Outlook](#).



Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan updates. Image of Illinois comprehensive literacy plan cover.

TEACHING & LEARNING

Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan Update


We're thrilled to announce some great updates on the [Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan webpage](#)! We have added a recorded [webinar](#) and [presentation](#) to the "What's New" section. Dive into these resources to enrich your understanding of literacy strategies and best practices.

Have questions? Check out the [FAQ document](#) for answers to common queries about literacy and how the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan impacts stakeholders.

Also, mark your calendars for our upcoming [Office Hours sessions](#):


- **11 a.m.-noon | April 2**
- **2-4 p.m. | April 10**

- 3-4 p.m. | April 10
- Noon-1 p.m. | April 18
- 3-4 p.m. | April 24
- 11 a.m.-noon | May 2
- 3-4 p.m. | May 7
- Noon-1 p.m. | May 16
- 3-4 p.m. | May 22

 Teacher Apprenticeship Pilot Program. Graphic of organizations part of partnership.

Teacher Apprenticeship Pilot IN BRIEF

ISBE, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, is excited to announce grant funding for a Teacher Apprenticeship

 Pilot. Public or private institutions of higher education approved by ISBE to offer educator preparation programs that lead to a Professional Educator License as a Learning Behavior Specialist I are eligible to apply. Eligible entities should have demonstrated expertise and effectiveness in administering teacher preparation programs directed toward workforce development. Applicants must partner with a public school district, consortium of schools, an early learning center, a special education cooperative, or a Regional Office of Education/Intermediate Service Center that demonstrates a shortage of Learning Behavior Specialist I teachers.


View [Job Training and Economic Development - Teachers Apprenticeship Program Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) or reach out to preparation@isbe.net for more information. You may also visit [ISBE's apprenticeship webpage](#). Applications are due by **5 p.m. June 30**.

Educator Opportunities Renew America's Schools Prize

The Office of State and Community Energy Programs is accepting applications for

the [2024 Renew America's Schools Prize](#), which will award an anticipated \$180 million to districts across the country engaging in strategic partnerships to build capacity and implement energy upgrades in their schools. Eligible submissions will lower utilities costs, improve indoor air quality, and foster healthier learning environments across a portfolio of 10 or more school facilities. Competitors submitting proposals should be organizations or teams with the capacity to aggregate and manage projects across a portfolio.

The 2024 Renew America's Schools Prize will invest in school facilities that demonstrate the need for both energy improvements and financing, with a focus on Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that qualify as disadvantaged and/or rural. Eligible improvements – like new HVAC and ventilation systems, building envelope and lighting projects, alternative fuel and renewable energy technologies – will result in improved health outcomes, energy savings, and/or energy cost savings. [Applications](#) are due by **4 p.m. June 13**.

 Group of diverse students with school supplies.

School to Prison Pipeline - Practical Research and Recommendations from Successful Situations

Racial discrimination in schools in the United States has resulted in a disproportionate number of Black students receiving exclusionary and punitive consequences, in which they are more likely to end up part of the school-to-prison pipeline and less likely to graduate. In many situations, school leaders have found ways to both reduce the number of suspensions for their Black students and also the disparity in consequences between students of different racial backgrounds. [School to Prison Pipeline - Practical Research and Recommendations from Successful Situations](#), hosted by [Ed Leaders Network](#) at **3 p.m. March 28**, will share themes that emerged from interviews with these successful school leaders. This information can be used as recommendations and reflections for consideration in your own school context.

Teach Learn G.L.O.W. Literacy Conference

The Teach Learn G.L.O.W. Literacy Conference, sponsored by the Jeanine Nicarico

Memorial Fund, will bring together experts, innovators, and leaders in literacy with the goal of facilitating knowledge sharing, idea exchange, and collaborative efforts with educators. The conference serves as a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and reflection and aims to embody the mission and objectives of the Jeanine Nicario Memorial Fund -- to promote a deeper understanding of literacy and enhance literacy opportunities for all.

The conference will be held **May 29-30** at Naperville Central High School in Naperville. Visit the [Teach Learn G.L.O.W. Literacy Conference webpage](#) for more information and to register.

Get an Online Master's Degree in Veterinary Science

The University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine offers a Master of Veterinary Science (MVS) degree for Illinois educators. The Master of Veterinary Science degree offers flexible coursework so learners can tailor the program to meet their career needs. Beyond the core curriculum in animal health, learners choose from a wide array of elective offerings. This program is available both online and in person. For more information or to register for an informational session, visit the [MVS webpage](#).

The [Leaders in Teaching Excellence Scholarship](#) covers up to 50% of tuition costs for educators pursuing a Master of Veterinary Science degree. To be eligible for consideration, students must be fully admitted to the MVS degree program, have an active professional educator's license within the state of Illinois, and be a current employee of a K-12 school district. To learn more about the Leaders in Teaching Excellence Scholarship or start an application for the fall 2024 semester, please contact Jennifer Fugate at jfugate2@illinois.edu. Scholarship applications are due **July 15**.


Educator Recognition

U.S. Department of Education Engage Every Student Recognition Program

The U.S. Department of Education is thrilled to launch the [Engage Every Student recognition program](#)! The program aims to recognize nonprofit organizations, LEAs, and municipalities or local government entities working together to expand access to high-quality after-school and summer learning programs.

The nomination window closes **April 10**. For more information, please visit the [Engage Every Student recognition program webpage](#).

 <http://www.isbe.net/>. ISBE logo.

 Join our team. Outline of people.



The Illinois State Board of Education is the State Education Agency for Illinois. Our mission is to provide each and every child with safe and healthy learning conditions, great educators, and equitable opportunities by practicing data-informed stewardship of resources and policy development, all done in partnership with educators, families, and stakeholders.

Featured ISBE Career Opportunities

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- [Data Strategies & Analytics Supervisor #1541](#)
- [Developer/Statistician \(Principal Consultant #1824\)](#)
- [Grant Reviewer \(Principal Consultant #1353\)](#)