

Action Alert on ISBE Budget Continues – If you have not yet sent an email to the Illinois State Board of Education’s (ISBE) budget account, please do so soon to express the importance of funding the Textbook Loan and School Safety Block Grant. We hope these programs will see funding restored with the return to line-item budgeting, but our voices must be heard first.

ACTION ALERT! ISBE board members have indicated a desire to hear directly from school administrators and teachers about their upcoming budget recommendations. This is our invitation to be heard! I encourage every Catholic school principal and LAP, and as many staff members and parents as possible, to take ten minutes to draft and submit an email to ISBE through this account. The email address is: isbefy12@isbe.net.

This effort will be most effective if you draft an individualized message that includes examples of how you have used the Textbook Loan and School Safety (ADA) Block Grant to improve the education and safety of your students. I am providing some sample language below, but please try and make this message your own!

On ISBE’s budget priorities:

The first guiding budget question provided by ISBE asks whether General State Aid, mandated categoricals, such as special education and transportation, and early childhood, should remain budget priorities. I don’t believe anyone would argue against the importance of those state efforts; however, a serious case can be made that the Textbook Loan Program and the Educational Improvement and School Safety Block Grant are also critically important to student achievement and school safety, especially in tough budget times when expenditures on learning materials and building safety can be squeezed out by tight local school budgets.

On Textbook Loan:

Students cannot learn or succeed without effective and up-to-date learning materials, and for over thirty years, the Textbook Loan Program has helped ensure accurate and up-to-date textbooks and other instructional materials are present in ALL schools. It is the only state program that requires all its resources be spent on learning materials for students in classrooms. By funding this program you would be ensuring real dollars are spent on learning materials desperately needed by students all across in Illinois, in every school.

In Fiscal Year 2009, this program was funded at \$42.8 million. We understand it is unrealistic to expect that level of funding could be restored in one year, but we do recommend, and have filed legislation in the House with 33 co-sponsors and in the Senate with 17 co-sponsors, that the program’s funding be restored to the Fiscal Year 2007 level of \$29.1 million. Considering the widespread service of this program we hope and urge you to include funding of this program in your proposed Fiscal Year 2012 budget.

On the School Safety (ADA) Block Grant:

This profoundly important grant program provides public and state-recognized nonpublic schools flexible resources to meet otherwise unfunded government mandates. For nonpublic schools in particular, the statute requires the block grant work to provide reimbursements for local, state and federal health and safety mandates such as fingerprint-based criminal history checks, the purchase of Automated External Defibrillators, the implementation of School Crisis Plans, and many other expectations of fire, health and safety codes.

In Fiscal Year 2009, this program was funded at approximately \$74 million. Last year, funding was reduced by three-quarters, and it was zeroed out this year. This ADA Grant is incredibly unique among government programs: it gives recipients flexible resources to meet the health and safety needs of their students. Again, without this program, these needs could very well be squeezed out by budget cuts at the local level.

On ISBE's decision to cut funding to these programs:

ISBE's failure to provide any funding for these programs, even with the significant reduction in funds provided, is difficult to understand and not in keeping with the Board's strategic goals, which call for service to ALL schools and ALL students.

Feel free to use the sample language above to craft your message, but it is very important that you personalize your message; again, citing ways in which these programs have improved your student's academic achievement and your school's level of security is extremely important. They need to hear this from us! I ask that you submit your emails by **December 15**. As always, if you have questions, contact my office: 217-528-9220 or wichmann@catholicconferenceofillinois.org.

Legislative Priorities for 2011-12 General Assembly

CCI has not set next year's legislative agenda for Catholic schools. Our Department of Education meets this week to review the political landscape and discuss next steps. Our agenda will include efforts to restore funding to our education programs and a strong school choice initiative.

Administrative Issues

State Recognition – CCI spent last year working with ISBE to draft administrative rules for the governing of the nonpublic school recognition program. These rules are now in effect. We were successful in shaping these rules to meet our needs and expectations. In February, the Nonpublic School Advisory Committee began meeting with ISBE staff to begin revisions to the probe document (used in state recognition visits) to match the new rules.

In response to a formal letter of complaint recently sent to the State Superintendent, ISBE staff recently met with nonpublic school representatives to discuss the current situation. We presented our complaints (communication, no schedule of visits, new state recognition application, etc.) and discussed

solutions. Due to staff shortages and unforeseen glitches in implementing the new rules, ISBE will not conduct any state recognition visits until after the New Year. They will work with us on scheduling schools. They have also agreed to evaluate diocesan school improvement and private accreditation agencies for inclusion in the state recognition program – meaning if your school goes through one of those processes a state visit would not be required for state recognition. I hope we can have this in place by next school year.

Nonpublic Registration, Enrollment and Staff Report – This report became available in the IWAS system beginning *October 1, 2010*. Completed reports must be received by ISBE no later than *December 31, 2010*. Nonpublic schools that have registered with ISBE at least once in the past must submit their data online via IWAS. Nonpublic schools that have never registered must submit their data using paper form 87-01: www.isbe.net/research/htmls/np_entity.htm. This report (and Immunization Data) must be submitted before the annual Application for Recognition and School Calendar can be submitted!

Nonpublic School Application for State Recognition and School Calendar – This IWAS system was opened on *October 18, 2010*, and will be due *December 31, 2010*. You will notice significant changes in the application this year. Without prior notice, ISBE has included an affirmation checklist in the application that was typically part of the probe document. This occurrence was included in our complaint letter to the State Superintendent, and if there is a need, we will issue guidance on how to complete the application's checklist.

Still, ISBE has indicated that no extensions will be granted. Schools that fail to meet all requirements and deadlines concerning the registration and recognition of their nonpublic school risk losing their recognition status. To assist your school in meeting the deadlines:

Physical, Dental and Vision Examination Requirements

Physical Exams: Please remember children must receive physical examinations prior to entering Illinois schools for the first time, prior to the date of entering kindergarten or first grade, prior to entering sixth grade, and prior to entering ninth grade. A list of the immunization requirements:

http://www.isbe.net/research/pdfs/immunization_requirements.pdf

As noted, beginning *October 16, 2010*, the Student Health Data – Immunization system will be available in IWAS for school year 2010-11 data submission. Completed reports must have been submitted by *November 15, 2010*.

Dental Exams: All Illinois children in kindergarten and Grades 2 and 6 are required to have an oral health examination. Each child is required to present proof of examination by a dentist prior to *May 15* of the school year. The Proof of School Dental Examination form and the Dental Examination Waiver form are uniform for statewide use and are available on the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois State Board of Education websites. *

Every school shall report to the Illinois State Board of Education by **June 30** the number of children with dental examinations completed and additional details regarding those examinations and the number of children receiving waivers for various reasons.

Vision Exams: All children enrolling in kindergarten and any student enrolling for the first time in an Illinois school are required to have an eye examination. The eye examination requirement does not apply to children enrolling in preschool. Before **October 15** of the school year, each child to whom the eye examination requirement applies is required to present proof of an eye examination. The Eye Examination Report form, as designated and available on the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois State Board of Education websites, are uniform for statewide use. *

Every school is required to report to the Illinois State Board of Education by **June 30** the number of children with eye examinations completed and the number of children receiving waivers for various reasons. The IWAS system for reporting opened on **October 16, 2010**.

** The consequence for students failing to submit the dental exam (for grades 2 & 6) and eye exams is that schools may withhold report cards.*

State Recognition: Snapshot of Important Dates

<u>October 1</u> *	Nonpublic Registration, Enrollment and Staff Report available on IWAS
<u>October 16</u> *	Student Health Data - Immunization system available on IWAS
<u>October 18</u>	Nonpublic School Application for State Recognition and School Calendar available on IWAS
<u>November 15</u>	Completed Health/Immunization Data Reports Due
<u>December 31</u>	Nonpublic Registrations, Enrollment and Staff Report & Nonpublic School Application for State Recognition and School Calendar Due

** Nonpublic Registration, Enrollment and Staff Report and Student Health Data - Immunization must be submitted before Recognition Application will be accepted.*

LAP Network - As always, I strongly urge you to ensure your school has an appointed LAP or LAPS for this upcoming school year, so the Catholic School Legislative Action Network is kept up-to-date. The work this year will be critically important, and its success will largely depend upon the willingness and ability of our network to become engaged in the political process - see **ACTION ALERT** included above!

The LAP network does not meet as a whole, or even interact except through central coordination, but it does communicate and act through my office and in the best interests of Catholic schools in Illinois. A school's LAP should be in charge of coordinating and distributing legislative action alerts and leading

the effort to build relationships with local legislators. The LAP can be anyone: school administrator, teacher, parent, or volunteer, as long as they have the time and the will to work on legislative activities.

Facebook Page for Catholic School Advocacy – To augment the LAP network and monthly newsletter, and eager to invite more into new technologies, I have setup a Facebook page for Catholic School Advocacy in Illinois. Facebook users simply need to look up the page at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Springfield-IL/CCI-Catholic-School-Advocacy-in-Illinois/124415842483?created

or do a search on Facebook of Catholic School Advocacy. Being a fan of the page will allow you to receive updates, action alerts and access to other things, such as pictures of events and rallies as well as links to pertinent articles and videos.

Thank you for all that you do on behalf of Catholic schools!

Zach Wichmann, *Director of Government Relations*

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