

Regional Office of Education Report

August 2022

Back to School

August is a very exciting time for us and our school districts. We have been busy with trainings and helping our school administrators with staffing issues. There also have been many questions about COVID regulations as we head back to school. I am happy to report that IDPH and ISBE have recommended that school districts and local health departments monitor the local schools this year and select what if any strategies they need to implement. It was very confusing and frustrating for everyone when the Governor recently extended the Executive Order requiring school employees to be fully vaccinated and, if not fully vaccinated, to test weekly. However, based on the Appellate Court decision on February 17, 2022, it is the opinion of many school attorneys that I have spoken with that the mandatory vaccination and testing requirements in the Executive Orders are unenforceable. However, schools may require employees to obtain a COVID-19 test to determine eligibility for COVID-19 administrative leave.

SEPLB

The State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board is responsible for making recommendations to the State Board of Education on whether colleges and universities should have their educator preparation programs approved. The board meets bi-monthly in Springfield to look at current programs and review any applications for new programs. I was recently asked by the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools to represent us on the board and I am excited to announce that after an interview and selection process, I was appointed to the board. I look forward to representing the IARSS and our three counties in doing this important work. I hope to focus on innovative ways we can train more educators and get them ready to serve our students.

Professional Development

Current Programs - Office of Professional Learning
Induction & Mentoring
Community Partnership Grant
Education Pathway Endorsement
Manufacturing & Agriculture Endorsement Programs
Elevating Special Educators

School Improvement & Strategic Planning
School Improvement Cooperative (instructional coaching, training, networking)
Social Emotional Learning/Trauma/Youth Mental Health First Aid/TRS I-A
Early Childhood Professional Learning
Family Education & Engagement

The Office of Professional Learning is busy preparing summer learning opportunities for educators, support staff, and administrators in Lee, Ogle & Whiteside counties. Each program has also engaged in strategic planning for FY23. The department anticipates adding at least 5 positions to the department to accommodate new programs and to address area needs.

Family Educators in the department maintain close contact with their at-risk preschool families in Rock Falls & Amboy. Family Educators have identified and communicated community resources during this uncertain time.

The department's social media presence continues to grow. Like our page on Facebook (Regional Office of Education #47) and download our ROE47 App for weekly teacher talks, instructional tips, news, giveaways, updates & more! Follow us on Twitter @RegionalOffice47

July Participants – 134

Thursday, July 7

Ag Pathways (day 1) @ SVCC

Monday, July 11

Priority Standards Level 1 Asynchronous Class (Google Classroom)
Media Literacy & Digital Tattoos @ SVCC

Tuesday, July 12

ELA Interventions @ SVCC

Wednesday, July 13

Workplace Wednesdays (day 1) @ Exelon Nuclear Plant; Byron

Thursday, July 14

Ag Pathways (day 2) @ 8:00 a.m.

Wednesday, July 20

Workplace Wednesdays (day 2) @ at Businesses in Sterling

Thursday, July 21

Priority Standards Level 1 Asynchronous Class @ 9:00 a.m.

Tuesday, July 26

Xello Introduction @ 9:00 a.m.

Math Interventions @ SVCC

Wednesday, July 27

Workplace Wednesdays (day 3) @ at Businesses in Dixon & Rock Falls

Thursday, July 28

Xello 2.0 @ 9:00 a.m.

Nexus

The Nexus program is off to a great start! We have welcomed a new Family Support Staff: Jessica Faivre, and to work along with Michelle Elmendorf and Program Coordinator Diana Merdian, the team will work with participating school districts, students, and families. This team of women has over 25 years of supporting families within their communities. This summer, the Nexus team has started working with families throughout Lee, Ogle, and Whiteside Counties.

Parents as Teachers First Years

July brings about a new fiscal year and we started the year strong with many families continuing their enrollment in the program. We have also been recruiting new families and have already enrolled 8 new children from 6 families. We continue to accept referrals as children age out of the program at age 3 and their slots open up for others. Contact Lois Meisenheimer at 815-625-1495 for more information or to make a referral.

In other Early Childhood news...

Competitive Grant for Early Childhood Facilities Announced

Governor JB Pritzker has announced \$60 million in capital grant opportunities for Illinois Early Childhood Education providers through the Rebuild Illinois Capital Program. The funding will support the construction, expansion, and renovation of facilities that support early student learning.

The initial grant installment delivers \$60 million to qualifying public school districts and not-for-profit early childhood facilities providing educational, health, social, or child development services to children aged zero to five years old and their families. Centers seeking to increase their capacity to provide care or educational opportunities for children in underserved communities are eligible for up to \$10 million under the Early Childhood Construction Grant. A three to ten percent match is required. Rebuild Illinois, Governor Pritzker's historic \$45 billion bipartisan capital plan, will provide a total of \$100 million in state funding for early childhood education provider grants.

Applications for the Early Childhood Construction Grant will be accepted through October 10, 2022. For more information, including selection criteria, visit [Grants - Grants \(illinois.gov\)](#).

The members of the Sauk Valley STARS Early Childhood Education Coalition had a workshop this spring encouraging school districts and other non-profit early childhood education providers to start thinking about their construction or renovation needs in preparation for this grant release. The Coalition and the ECE ROE staff may be able to provide some support to applicants who are interested in applying for this grant.

ECEC Enrollment Community Outreach Grant

Marketing and community outreach efforts are ramping up with the launch of "I Got Love / ¡Siento Amor!", the statewide enrollment campaign for childcare and early education services, featuring Illinois artists, musicians, and production partners.

Since March 2020, the state has provided \$978 million in early childhood stability and recovery. While this investment allowed providers to keep their doors open (97% of licensed provider recipients remained open at the end of 2021), enrollment has decreased as an ongoing result of the pandemic.

To help increase early childhood and care enrollment statewide, the campaign is investing \$12.7 million in amplifying information about Illinois' one-stop-shop for all things early childhood, the Illinois Cares for Kids website, which has a search engine for local programs, information on child care subsidy programs, and many other resources on the importance of early learning. Illinois Cares for Kids is a place parents, grandparents, caretakers, teachers, and childcare providers can access all things related to early childhood in Illinois.

The 'I Got Love / ¡Siento Amor! campaign is available in English and Spanish and features an Illinois-based local artistic collaboration spreading the message that Illinois is full of people who care. The campaign will target families in need of childcare and early learning supports to showcase the importance of early learning programs and how the state can support families looking to enroll in one.

The enrollment campaign is part of Governor Pritzker's Learning Renewal Efforts and is a collaboration between the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, Illinois Department of Human Services, and the

Illinois Board of Higher Education. The ROE will serve as the local point of contact for this project.

The Illinois Department of Human Services, through the Division of Early Childhood, provided funding for community-based outreach grants. These grants support local community outreach to increase enrollment and are available to all 102 counties across Illinois. The state identified a need to reach communities and families with timely, accurate information necessary to make informed decisions about the well-being of their children.

"Families need to know the resources and options available to them when it comes to early learning and childcare," said Secretary Grace Hou, Illinois Department of Human Services. "This outreach campaign will give parents and caregivers struggling with the many stressors of raising a family resources to find safe providers they trust and can partner with to help children get ahead."

"It's important that families feel comfortable with the people taking care of their children," said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala. "Illinois Cares for Kids shows families the quality of care they can receive and gives parents and caretakers the tools to make informed decisions about childcare and early learning."

The campaign also includes a statewide Text Messaging Platform, Ready for K, that offers fun facts and tips on children's learning and development, available in multiple languages.

More information on programs is available at www.illinoiscaresforkids.org/.

Education Outreach Program

We are in the process of enrolling new students for this school year. It is exciting to meet the students that we will be working with this year!

The Education Outreach Program provides academic services and opportunities for employment skills training, job shadowing, and paid work experience jobs to help prepare them for employment upon completion of the program. Additional services include transportation, financial assistance with GED testing fees, and stipends for completing exams. To qualify for services, students must no longer be enrolled in school; reside in Lee, Ogle, or Whiteside County; and be between the ages of 17-24.

This summer, we are busy working with BEST, Inc. to provide work experience opportunities for our students. Job shadowing and paid work experience are coordinated with a variety of private and non-profit employers and allow students to learn important employability skills and gain experience in a variety of career settings.

To enroll, or for additional information, please contact Beth Hubbard, Program Coordinator at 815.622.4950 or bhubbard@roe47.org.

Regional Center for Change

The C4C family is excited to start a new year in school year 2023! I can't believe we are in our fourth year after consolidating Center for Change and Nachusa into one building here at Thome School. As I am writing this update, my hands are covered in paint, I can hear the circular saw in the distance, and a few teachers and counselor emphatically chatting about the changes they have made to their respective classrooms. The end of July and beginning of August are always a busy time in schools. Finishing up final touches and building projects; applying new learning and strategies acquired over the summer; righting wrongs from the previous year. We have created a culture of continuous improvement here at C4C and the work that has been put in over summer is an indicator of that philosophy! Angie Tennyson and I are wrapping up new student intake meetings this week and next week. We continue to be a beacon of light in the darkness for students, families, and the school districts we serve. We are "the center for change NOT the center for staying the same"!