



REGIONAL OFFICE *of* EDUCATION

## *Bi-County Brief*

*Monroe/Randolph Counties*

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### **LOCAL SCHOOLS MAKE TOUGH FINANCIAL DECISIONS**

Monroe and Randolph County school districts join other districts across Illinois in making tough financial decisions based on delayed state payments and predictions of reduced funding for fiscal year 2011. Area teachers, aides and support staff have already received layoff notices. Talk of not replacing retiring teachers and reducing programs has been prevalent at February and March board meetings. In this frustrating time there are legitimate concerns that the educational gains made during recent years will be lost due to increased class size and reduced support. Our districts have worked hard to create adequate financial reserves and to provide area children with solid educational programs. To lose so much of what the districts have gained because of the state's financial crisis is a tough pill to swallow. If the state budget passes without sufficient financial support for education, bi-county districts will be using significant portions of their financial reserves during the next year.

### **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OFFICES OFFER HELP**

Workforce Development offices in Monroe and Randolph counties, providing services under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, offer their services to laid off school employees. The WIA, which focuses on meeting the need of local businesses for skilled labor and on providing education and training for individuals, helps all persons access free information, dislocated workers return to productivity, unemployed persons receive job skills training and young people prepare themselves for work and careers. The two Workforce Development offices are located in the respective county courthouses with hours in Chester from 8:00–4:00 and in Waterloo from 8:00–4:30.

### **COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS TO REPLACE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND**

Obama's blueprint for revising the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) has states adopting college- and career-ready standards and rewarding schools for producing dramatic gains in student achievement. America is challenged to embrace educational standards that would put it on a path to global leadership.

The blueprint provides incentives for states to adopt academic standards that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to create accountability systems that measure student growth toward meeting the goal that all children graduate high school and succeed in college. The plan also asks states and districts to develop meaningful ways of measuring teacher and principal effectiveness in order to provide better support for educators, enhance the profession through recognizing and rewarding excellence and ensure that every classroom has an effective teacher and every school a supportive leader.

As the discussion begins in earnest on the reauthorization, teachers, administrators and board members will want to learn about the provisions of the blueprint. To read the proposal in its entirety, access the U.S. Department of Education website and download the blueprint from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/index.html>.

### **SERVICE LEARNING GRANTS AVAILABLE FROM THE ROE**

The ROE has secured federal funding for service learning grants. Public or parochial elementary or high schools may apply for \$500 to provide service learning experiences for students. Service learning integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the educational experience, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities.

Funding can be used to secure transportation, for stipends for teachers, to pay substitutes, and to provide food for the students and teachers who participate. Grant information and applications will be sent to area principals soon. Activities must be completed by August 31, 2010. For more information, access [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org).

### **STUDENTS CAN ENTER RACHEL CARSON SENSE OF WONDER CONTEST**

Generations United, the EPA, the Dance Exchange and the Rachel Carson Council, Inc. have announced intergenerational poetry, essay, photo and dance contests. Entries, which must be submitted by June 16, 2010, should be from a team of two or more persons that includes a young person and an older person. The creative work of this team should express a "Sense of Wonder." Dance videos, which are not limited to the moving human body, can capture movement and change in nature. Get more information at <http://www.epa.gov/aging/resources/thesenseofwonder/index.htm>.

## RETHINKING HOMEWORK: BEST PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT DIVERSE NEEDS

What is effective homework? Is homework an essential component of rigorous schooling or a harmful practice that alienates and discourages a significant number of students? On March 15<sup>th</sup> Dr. Cathy Vatterott presented *Rethinking Homework: Best Practices that Support Diverse Needs* at Our Lady of the Snows Shrine. The workshop was well attended by schools in our region. Dr. Vatterott presented examples from K-12 schools around the country to facilitate a discussion of five aspects of the homework process: creating quality tasks, differentiating homework, decriminalizing grading and late policies, improving homework completion rates, and establishing homework support programs.

Dr. Vatterott is the author of numerous articles about education, including "Homework Myths" and "There's Something Wrong with Homework," and three books, *Rethinking Homework: Best Practices that Support Diverse Needs*, *Academic Success through Empowering Students* and *Becoming a Middle Level Teacher: Student-Focused Teaching of Early Adolescents*. Area 5 RESPRO plans to sponsor Dr. Vatterott's return to our area in June to provide workshops on rethinking homework and rethinking grading. For more information phone the ROE at 939-5650.

## 8TH GRADE CAREER DAY AT SWIC

Have you ever seen nearly 570 eighth-grade students take over the SWIC campus in Red Bud on a Friday morning? If not, come and join the controlled chaos as the Okaw Regional Vocational System, in conjunction with Southwestern Illinois College, sponsors the 15th annual 8th Grade Career Day. Students from 15 different public and parochial schools will be attending. The first such event in 1995 had about 125 students attending.

Students have pre-registered for two career presentations, of the twelve being offered, where they will learn about interesting career choices. A third session will give students a chance to visit various informational booths and displays scattered throughout campus.

"The purpose of Career Day," explains Jim Heil, Okaw System Director, "is to get elementary students, especially 8th graders, thinking about their future. My office receives one dollar for each elementary student enrolled in the regional schools to be spent on career orientation and awareness activities. Career Day uses a large part of those funds."

## IBIOTECH HAS A FEW 2010-2011 OPENINGS

Science, math, vocational, agricultural, special education—ANY middle or high school teacher—is invited to join this year's Illinois Math Science Partnership IBioTech Program. Designed to give teachers an opportunity to build background knowledge in biotechnology and to extend that knowledge to their classrooms, the IBioTech Program will include TalentSparks in Chicago July 13-16, hands-on laboratory activities in Red Bud and area site visits July 20-23 and various online activities, lab experiences, speakers and required action research/lesson design projects throughout the 2010-2011 school year. Participants will receive a stipend for the 10 days of summer activities, 3 hours of tuition-free graduate science credit from Illinois State University, a laptop, video camera, books and materials. Top priority will be given to teachers who can commit to all summer and follow-up activities, and if more teachers apply than there are slots, priority will be given to middle or high school teachers who teach math, science or agricultural subjects, including special education. Because the application deadline is April 30<sup>th</sup>, e-mail Mary Ann Quivey, [mquivey@roe45.org](mailto:mquivey@roe45.org), ASAP.

## GET REACQUAINTED WITH THE PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF LEARNING

Do you ever wish you could wake up the brains and bodies of your learners so that they can take in more information? If you do, watch for this exciting training opportunity coming in June! The Brain Gym for Educators Course addresses the *physical* aspects of learning. Since many learning challenges are rooted in the primitive and postural reflexes, they can be accessed only through physical movement. In this course you will learn how to draw out the natural learner in each child. Nancy Peterson, an internationally known trainer for Brain Gym, will be in our area the week of June 14<sup>th</sup> for a 32-hour training at beautiful Toddhall Retreat and Conference Center in Columbia, IL. Watch for details coming soon!

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 7, 2010	Ind. & Mentor. Leadership Team	SWIC, Red Bud - Conf. Room	9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
April 12, 2010	IBioTech	SWIC, Red Bud - Room 217	8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
April 13, 2010	Gifted Education Seminar	SWIC, Red Bud - Room 152	8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
April 13, 2010	Spelling Bee	Prairie du Rocher School	6:00 p.m.
April 13, 2010	Project Citizen Hearings	SIU-Carbondale	9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
April 20, 2010	Best Reading Practices	SWIC, Red Bud - Room 152	8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
April 22, 2010	Art Festival	Sparta Lincoln Middle	5:00 p.m.
April 23, 2010	Superintendents' Council	TBA	9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
May 11, 2010	Gifted Education Seminar	SWIC, Red Bud - Room 152	8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
May 14, 2010	Principals' Meeting	SWIC, Red Bud - Room 152	8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
May 27, 2010	Gifted Education Seminar	Waterloo High School Library	4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.