Your Illinois Coalition of Non-Public Schools (ICNS) Electronic Report is back for a new school year. Administrators from member schools that have joined ICNS will receive each month an issue of the Electronic Report. The purpose of this Report is to provide brief synopses of developments with the Illinois Coalition of Non-Public Schools, legislative updates, and information of interest to our nonpublic school administrators. As a benefit of membership, the Electronic Report is written and sent to you each month during the school year as a way of working to keep you informed.

ICNS IS THE ADVOCATE FOR NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Illinois Coalition of Nonpublic Schools (ICNS) continues to work hard in Springfield for you! During the 2010-2011 legislative year the Illinois General Assembly and the Governor’s inability to effectively address the state’s fiscal condition ($8 billion in the red) has been the major roadblock in ICNS efforts. The negative impact on education in Illinois continues to have a direct effect on almost all nonpublic schools.

Attempts to reverse these decisions continue to grow in momentum. In a concerted effort to restore lost funding ICNS (in partnership with the Catholic Conference of Illinois) will continue its high commitment to enhance our lobbying impact and influence with both ISBE and Illinois state legislators. Lobbyists working in Springfield include:

- Zach Wichmann of the Catholic Conference of Illinois
- Brittan Bolin contracted to specifically represent ICNS.

ICNS is committed to continuing our strong advocacy for Illinois nonpublic schools. But your membership dues are critical to our success. A minimal and reasonable investment to purchase your membership to ICNS is well worth the cost of $75 for 1 year or $125 for 2 years. Click here to find a form to use in renewing your membership.http://www.icns.net/icnsrenewal1112.pdf

REPORT CHARTS ENROLLMENT DROP IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Student enrollment in private, religious schools has taken a sharp dip since the economic downturn, as district and public charter school enrollments continue to climb, according to the U.S. Department of Education’s latest “Condition of Education” report. Private school enrollment fell from a high of 6.3 million students in the 2001-2002 school year to 5.5 million in 2009-2010, according to figures by the National Center for Education Statistics. “It’s been slight declines, and then all of a sudden this year [2009-2010] they lost 500,000 kids,” said Jack Buckley, the NCES commissioner.

Overall, private schools served about 10 percent of the nation’s kindergarten through 12th-grade students in 2009-2010, down from a high of 12 percent in 1996. During the same period, public school enrollment increased by 2.1 million students, to 49.3 million students, from 2001 to 2009. That dip was driven by enrollment decreases in Catholic parish and diocese schools—they lost 148,000 students that year and 510,000 altogether since 2002—as well as from schools designated by NCES statisticians as conservative Christian schools, which lost 146,000 students, and other religious-affiliated schools, which saw an 11,000-student decline that year. Read more.

ICNS LEGISLATIVE GOALS FOR 2011-2012

1. Work to restore funding to the Textbook Loan, Educational Improvement and School Safety Block Grant and the Parent/Guardian Transportation Reimbursement programs.
2. Maintain a smooth and cooperative relationship between the State Board of Education and nonpublic schools to ensure an effective state recognition program for nonpublic schools.
3. Pursue and support school choice options – such as tax credits and vouchers – as opportunities exist.
SCHOOL SAFETY BILL

The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (“OSFM”) recognizes the pivotal role assumed by private school administrators in safeguarding Illinois school children. To that end, the OSFM would like to remind you of your respective duties under the School Safety Drill Act, 105 ILCS 128 et al. (“Act”). The Act has the express purpose of establishing “minimum requirements and standards for schools to follow when conducting school safety drills and reviewing school emergency and crisis response plans and to encourage schools and first responders to work together for the safety of children.” As detailed in the Act, “all” Illinois schools are required to institute various safety drills and engage in an annual review of the school’s safety preparedness. More specifically, the Act imposes the following tasks upon private elementary and secondary schools each academic year:

- Conduct at least three school evacuation drills, one of which must include the participation of the appropriate local fire department or district.
- Conduct a law enforcement drill, with the participation of the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- Conduct, at a minimum, one severe weather and shelter-in-place drill.
- If applicable, during each academic year, schools are required to conduct at least one bus evacuation drill.
- Drills that are conducted within a school building are required to be conducted at each school building that houses school children.
- Perform, at a minimum, one annual review of each school building’s emergency and crisis response plans, protocols, and procedures and each building’s compliance with the school’s safety drill programs.

Upon conclusion of your school’s annual review, a Compliance Report must be completed and sent to the OSFM detailing same. The Compliance Report form may be found, on-line, at http://www.sfm.illinois.gov/public/AnnualReviewComplianceReportfromPrivateSchools.aspx. Paper copies may be obtained by calling the OSFM Division of Fire Prevention, (217) 785-0969. Compliance Reports completed by private elementary and secondary schools are to be submitted to the OSFM, on or before October 1st of each school year, at Office of the State Fire Marshal, Division of Fire Prevention, 1035 Stevenson Dr., Springfield, IL 62703-4259. Copies of the Compliance Report should also be provided to each appropriate fire department, fire protection district and/or law enforcement agency that participated in the review. For those schools that have already submitted a form for this academic year, a new form is not required for this academic year.

CAPE OUTLOOK

The September 2011 issue of CAPE Outlook, a monthly newsletter from the Council for American Private Education, is available for download as a free PDF document by entering the following URL in your browser: http://www.capenet.org/pdf/Outlook367.pdf

In Outlook this month:

- Historic Year for School Choice
- Geography and History NAEP
- Early Childhood Race to the Top
- Absolutely No On Vouchers
- Religious Schools and Charter Schools

EDUCATION IN THE NEWS

- A Foreseen Result - Weeks after Indiana began the nation’s broadest school voucher program, thousands of students have transferred from public to private schools, causing a spike in enrollment at some Catholic institutions that were only recently on the brink of closing for lack of pupils.

- School Choice Moves Ahead - In just the first six months of 2011, 10 states and the District of Columbia have passed legislation supporting school voucher or scholarship tax credit programs. http://www.districtadministration.com/viewarticle.aspx?articleid=2865

- And another perspective on vouchers - They’ll vouch for it - A new report from the Center on Education Policy (CEP) reviews a decade of voucher research, finding no clear positive impact on student academic achievement; it also finds mixed outcomes overall for students who attend private schools using vouchers. The report summarizes current publicly funded voucher programs, and reflects on voucher policies since 2000. In the past, proponents argued that vouchers would give low-income students a chance to attend a better school and achieve at higher levels. Proponents have also highlighted research showing higher graduation rates among voucher students and greater
satisfaction among parents, emphasizing the inherent value of parental choice. Opponents, assert that voucher students do not come out ahead academically and that the practice drains public schools of much-needed resources while affecting only a small number of children. The report also notes that much of the recent voucher research has been carried out or sponsored by pro-voucher organizations, and urges greater scrutiny to ensure future studies are not biased. See the report: http://www.cep-dc.org/

COMCAST INTERNET ESSENTIALS PROGRAM
Offers Low-Cost Internet and Computers

As the nation's largest Internet service provider, Comcast has organized a program for families in school districts who have students in the Free Lunch program. If they qualify, families can receive an internet connection for $9.95 per month. This low price can continue for the entirety of the student's years in school. In addition, those families are also eligible to receive a voucher with which they can purchase a computer for under $150 plus tax. School administrators can help families by signing up on Comcast's partner website. Materials can be ordered to distribute at back to school events, technology fairs, family events or other school activities. http://www.internetessentials.com/faq/index.html

GOVERNOR FINISHES WORK ON BILLS

Governor Pat Quinn has finished his work of consideration of all of the legislation sent to him by the legislature this spring. In all, 640 bills (407 House bills and 233 Senate bills) were approved by the legislature and sent to the Governor. The Governor signed 610 of the 640 bills into law; he issued vetoes on the other 30. Those bills that were vetoed will be taken up by the legislature when it returns to session for the fall Veto Session October 25-27 and November 8-10. A total of 6,278 bills were introduced in the Spring session.

Bills Signed By the Governor
• HB 78 (Jakobsson, D-Urbana) creates the offense of criminal trespass in a safe school zone. The violation is committed when a student who has been suspended or expelled, or an employee who has been dismissed for disrupting operations at school, knowingly enters or remains in a safe school zone without lawful business. The bill is now Public Act 97-0547, effective January 1, 2012.
• HB 1095 (Dugan, D-Bradley) prohibits the use of non-certified rebuilt flame safeguard controls on forced air heating equipment for any non-residential structure (including schools). The bill is now Public Act 97-0554, effective January 1, 2012.
• HB 1571 (Cross, R-Oswego) changes the Care of Students with Diabetes Act to clarify that for school employees and delegated care aides, training shall occur during regular in-service training. The bill is now Public Act 97-0559, effective August 25, 2011.
• HB 3115 (Gordon, D-Peoria), subject to appropriations, authorizes the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to provide annual funding to public school districts and State-recognized, non-public schools serving students in grades kindergarten through 12 for the purchase of secular textbooks. Textbooks can include computer software and electronic textbooks. The bill is now Public Act 97-0570, effective August 25, 2011.
• SB 1799 (Steans, D-Chicago), generally, repeals all of the current teacher certification requirements and creates a new Article 21B of the School Code to establish a teacher licensure program. The bill creates three types of licenses: a Professional Educator's License, a Professional Educator's License with Stipulations, and a Substitute Educator License. From there, teachers and administrators must earn endorsements for teaching and administrative positions. The bill is now Public Act 97-0607, effective August 26, 2011.

SCHOOL RECOGNITION

ICNS Board Members met with the ISBE to discuss the school recognition proves. Agreement was reached to change the timeframe for nonpublic school recognition application submission to October 1 to November 15
(from October 1 to December 31) in order to coincide with the immunization data submission deadline (Oct. 15) and to spur along the visit process. We also agreed that a recognition status granted would last for the school year and until December 31 of the next school year. This cuts down the status gap that existed when recognition only lasted for the school year in which it was received, and allows schools to go through the process of renewing recognition while maintaining recognition status. As these changes need to go through the rule-making process, they will not be in effect until the 2012-13 school year; however, ISBE assures us they will begin visits this year on October 1.

STUDENT HEALTH DATA - IMMUNIZATION REPORT
Now is the critical time to be on top of receiving student immunization records. The report will be due to the Illinois State Board of Education by November 15. If this form is not filed in a timely manner you will NOT be able to successfully complete your Non-public School Application for Recognition and Calendar due December 31. ISBE will be unwavering in this requirement.

GRANT AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

State Farm Foundation: State Farm is committed to meeting the needs of our communities by focusing our giving in three areas: Safe Neighbors (safety), Strong Neighborhoods (community development), and Education Excellence (education). Maximum award: varies. Eligibility: nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations under Section 501(c)3 of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, Deadline: October 31, 2011. http://www.statefarm.com/about/part_spos/grants/cogrants.asp

Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation: Melody Program Mr. Holland’s Opus Melody Program provides musical instruments and instrument repairs to existing K-12 school music programs that have no other source of financing to purchase additional musical instruments and materials. Eligibility: music programs that take place during the regular school day. Schools must have an established instrumental music program that is at least three years old. Maximum award: $8,000. Deadline for Pre-Qualification: September 29, 2011. http://www.mhopus.org/teachers.asp


Lowe’s Toolbox for Education Lowe’s Toolbox for Education grants fund school improvement projects initiated by parents in recognition of the importance of parental involvement in education. Maximum award: $5,000. Eligibility: K-12 schools (including charter, parochial, private, etc.) Deadline: October 14, 2011. http://toolboxforesducation.com/

CONTACT US
All of our member schools should be receiving a membership letter related to joining ICNS for the 2011-12 school year. If you committed to two years of membership, we thank you for your support. For those schools that now need to renew, please complete the application on-line at http://www.icns.net/icnsrenewal1112.pdf for either one year at $75 or for two years of membership for $125.

If you have any questions, comments or need information related to our efforts in supporting nonpublic schools, feel free to communicate with us by sending an e-mail to ICNS.