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Let's get right to it.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The legislature has not been in session since May. Please see last month's newsletter for updates on legislation that was signed into law over the summer.

The fall Veto Session begins in mid-November. We do not anticipate this short session will deal with any education-related legislation, but we will monitor things closely.

Otherwise, the Catholic Conference of Illinois' board, comprised of the Bishops of Illinois and several lay experts, recently approved our legislative agenda for the 99th General Assembly (which begins in January 2015 and will last two years). The agenda is as follows:

- Advocate for the creation of a Tax Credit Scholarship Program to empower parents to make the best educational choices for their children.
- Maintain a smooth and cooperative relationship between with State Board of Education and Catholic schools to ensure an effective state recognition program for nonpublic schools.
- Pursue and support other school choice options – such as voucher programs and/or for the expansion of the Education Expense Tax Credit – as opportunities exist.
- Monitor, shape and/or defeat new legislative or administrative proposals impacting nonpublic schools.
- Work to restore funding to the Textbook Block Grant, Educational Improvement and School Safety Block Grant and the Parent/Guardian Transportation Reimbursement programs.

Adopting these goals will not inhibit our ability to become involved in other issues as necessary, but they will serve as guidance in planning and executing legislative strategies.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

State Recognition & the Illinois State Board of Recognition (ISBE) – Please remember the November 15, 2014, deadline for submitting the (1) Nonpublic Registration, Enrollment and Staff Report, (2) Immunization Data and (3) Nonpublic School Application for Sate Recognition and School Calendar. These forms must be completed and submitted on time in order to extend your school's state recognition status from December 31, 2014 to December 31, 2015. The deadline cannot be missed.

Nonpublic Registration, Enrollment and Staff Report – This report typically becomes available on the IWAS system around October 1st. Completed reports must be received by ISBE no later than November 15, 2014. Nonpublic schools that have registered with ISBE at least once in the past must submit their data online via IWAS. Schools that have never

registered must submit their data using the paper form:
http://www.isbe.net/research/htmls/np_entity.htm.

Immunization Data Report -- This report also typically becomes available on the IWAS system around October 1st. Completed reports must be received by ISBE no later than November 15, 2014.

Nonpublic School Application for State Recognition and School Calendar – This IWAS system usually opens about a week later, but it is still due November 15, 2014. As was the case last year, ISBE will include an affirmation checklist in the application that was typically part of the probe document. My office sent guidance to you on how to complete the checklist last year. If you need the guidance again, please let me know.

PLEASE REMEMBER that the order in which these forms are done is important! The immunization data and the Nonpublic Registration, Enrollment and Staff Report must be completed and submitted BEFORE the Nonpublic School Application for State Recognition and School Calendar can be submitted on IWAS.

Also, we are currently working with ISBE on revisions to the administrative rules governing the state recognition process. The revisions concern no more TB tests for new school employees, schools holding an annual meeting to review crisis planning and a method for schools to certify their not-for-profit status.

Finally, ISBE has been able to hire new staff and are seeking further coordination with Regional Offices of Education to move forward on school visits. We anticipate there will be school visits for state recognition in the second half of the school year. If your school have not been visited since 2009, you may be on the schedule.

Administrator/Teacher Licensure & Professional Development – In mid-July, ISBE proposed new rules for educator licensure and professional development requirements. Although the rules do not impede the licensure and licensure renewal of our teachers, and in fact will help them track their licensure status and professional development through ELIS, they do define the status of nonpublic school teacher licenses as “valid and exempt” and remove the status of our diocesan offices as “approved” providers of professional development.

It is important to note that despite the rule changes our teachers will still be able self-select their licensure status on the ELIS system. When the new system rolled out last month, their choices were “valid and active” or “valid and inactive.” After our protest, they are changing the choices to “valid and active” or “valid and exempt.” Teachers working in nonpublic schools are by statutory definition exempt from the state’s professional development requirements. But it is up to the individual teacher to select their status on ELIS. Just be clear, even if a teacher chooses “valid and active” the state will not check their professional development. Any requirements in this area are and remain internal.

The practical effects of the new rules are not overly significant (the licenses are still valid; we can still do professional development; teachers self-select their status), but the perception of our dioceses not being “approved” providers is not great. We submitted public comments to ISBE on the rules and continue to explore options for going forward.

Illinois Catholic Advocacy Network (I-CAN) – CCI has adopted this new technology to improve our advocacy efforts in Springfield. Our Principal and Legislative Action Person (LAP) email lists are now housed in the I-CAN database and our action alerts are better designed and MUCH easier to act on. In fact, after receiving an action alert through the I-CAN network, you will now be able to send a pre-drafted email to your state representative and state senator in as little as three clicks and under a minute. It can't be beat!

If your school is in the Rockford, Peoria, Joliet or Belleville dioceses, you should have recently received a letter from me reminding you to appoint or re-appoint your school's LAP. (The Chicago and Springfield dioceses collect this information internally.) This is very important as grassroots advocacy is our only tool in trying to shape what happened in Springfield. Please give this letter your attention and submit your LAP to us as soon as possible.

Thank you all for all that you do. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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