



# Illinois State Board of Education

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www.isbe.net

**Gery J. Chico**  
Chairman

**Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.**  
State Superintendent of Education

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November 13, 2013

Dear Ms. Woestehoff:

Thank you for your inquiry about the initiative underway known as the Illinois Shared Learning Environment (“ISLE”). We understand that you and the organizations represented in your letter have a number of concerns, and we appreciate the opportunity to clear up some of the uncertainties and misinformation about this initiative.

The ISLE is an online platform currently under development that will provide educators and students with access to tools and content that help to meet each student where they are. While teachers already work very hard to personalize learning for their students, this can be very time-consuming for those who do not have access to the best resources to help them. The ISLE aims to lower the barriers for school districts to access these resources so that teachers can spend less time planning and more time teaching.

The ISLE’s development is funded by a grant from the Governor’s Office and its long term operations will be funded by state and local sources. Planning and development of the ISLE has been with the oversight of an Advisory Committee that includes school districts (including Chicago Public Schools), teachers unions (including the Chicago Teachers Union), and many other educational stakeholders from across Illinois.

The ISLE will be piloted this winter in two school districts, Bloomington and McLean County, and over the next two years will be implemented in districts participating in Race to the Top. Other districts outside the Race to the Top program will have the option to participate in the ISLE but will not be required.

InBloom is a non-profit organization working with multiple states that will expand the reach of the ISLE by providing services to connect school districts to a broader range of tools and resources. School districts participating in the ISLE will have the option to access inBloom’s services through the ISLE if they choose but are not required to do so.

Privacy and security of student data have been a top priority throughout the planning and development of the ISLE and therefore the state has taken several key steps to ensure data will be used to benefit students without exposing them to increased privacy risks. First, the ISLE will preserve local control of student data. School districts retain control over which of their student data is shared and with whom, not the state. Second, the data used in the ISLE will be restricted only to data relevant for instructional applications. Sensitive non-academic information such as disciplinary and medical data will not be shared with or through the ISLE. Third, substantial effort has gone into securing the ISLE data infrastructure within Illinois based upon industry best practices to ensure all student data is encrypted and protected.

Many school districts in Illinois already contract with third parties to provide data systems, instructional technologies and online assessments. Through these contracts, student data are exchanged in a manner that protects student privacy and is in compliance with applicable state and federal privacy laws. Districts report that these technology services provide educational benefits to educators and students that the district would not otherwise be able to provide. The ISLE will streamline this data sharing process to allow improved technology and even tighter controls to better protect student data, limiting third party access to only the necessary data for the intended educational purposes, and ensuring compliance with all applicable state laws and local policies.

Additional information about the ISLE is available online at [ilsharedlearning.org](http://ilsharedlearning.org), including information about our efforts to incorporate feedback from parents, teachers, and many other stakeholder groups into our planning efforts. We encourage concerned parents to learn more about the initiative and welcome an ongoing dialogue among parents, teachers, school districts, and the state.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter R. Godard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "G".

Peter Godard  
Chief Performance Officer  
Illinois State Board of Education