1. Christmas Break. Our last day of school is Tuesday, December 20.

This is a 2:00 pm dismissal. All staff (including office staff) should feel

free to leave at 2:30 pm. We will return to school on Monday, January 2.

This is a Teacher Institute Day (yes, paraprofessionals are required to

attend). We will start at 8:00 am and finish at 1:00 pm. We are required

to put in five hours. However, lunch will be on your own from 12:00-1:00

pm. Students will return to school on Tuesday, January 3.

2. Certification Fees Set to Increase at the Start of the New Year.

Please be advised that pursuant to PA 97-0607, signed on Aug. 26, 2011, that

educator certification fees will increase on Jan. 1, 2012. The new fees are

as follows: $75 application fee for each educator certificate; $50 for

each subsequent endorsement application; $10 per year registration fee for

the course of the validity cycle. The registration fee must be paid in its

entirety. For example, the registration fee for a certificate with a

five-year validity cycle would be $50. Any application that ISBE receives on

or after Jan. 1, 2012, will be held to the new fee structure. If you are

unsure as to whether or not an application and fee will reach the Illinois

State Board of Education by Dec. 29, 2011, please utilize the Educator

Certification System (ECS). Applicants may apply online for most

certificates through midnight of Dec. 31, 2011. Note that all fees continue

to be non-refundable and non-transferable. Please contact Educator

Certification at (217) 557-6763 with any questions. In addition, there has

been a change in legislation regarding renewal of ALL EDUCATOR CERTIFICATES.

If your certificate was due for renewal on June 30, 2011, you have until

December 31, 2011 to renew your certificate or your Teaching Certificate

will be considered LAPSED and a penalty requirement of 9 semester hours of

college credit will be required for reinstatement! To renew your teaching

certificate, please go to www.isbe.net and log into your ECS account. You

may also visit the Hancock/McDonough County Regional Office of Education at

130 S. Lafayette St., Suite 200, Macomb, Illinois or call the ROE office at

309-837-4821.

3. Health Insurance Premiums. It has been past practice to pre-pay our

district's health insurance premium one month in advance. Therefore, the

employee's portion of the insurance premium is deducted one month in

advance. We are going to change this past practice. Starting in January

2012, we are going to begin paying our health insurance premium the month it

is due (instead of a month in advance). Since December's premiums will have

been paid in November, there will be no insurance premium deducted on both

December paychecks. Starting in January of 2012, your premium deductions

will resume. Obviously, there will be no lapse in coverage. If you have

questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

4. Wages. The term "wages" means all remuneration for services performed

by an employee for an employer, unless specifically excluded. Wages are

subject to Federal income tax, social security, and Medicare tax, except

where the law provides exceptions. Therefore, all wages must be run through

payroll. This includes, but is not limited to ticket taking, retirement

incentives, attendance bonuses, etc. For example, employees who take

tickets will no longer receive a separate check from the district. This

compensation will come through payroll.

5. Mileage Rate Remains the Same - 55.5 Cents. The Internal Revenue

Service today issued the 2012 optional standard mileage rates used to

calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business,

charitable, medical or moving purposes. Beginning on Jan. 1, 2012, the

standard mileage rates for the use of a car (also vans, pickups or panel

trucks) will be: 55.5 cents per mile for business miles driven; 23 cents

per mile driven for medical or moving purposes; 14 cents per mile driven in

service of charitable organizations. The rate for business miles driven is

unchanged from the mid-year adjustment that became effective on July 1,

2011. The medical and moving rate has been reduced by 0.5 cents per mile.

6. IMRF Employees. How does your salary determine your pension? Under

the Regular Tier I plan, your final rate of earnings is your highest total

earnings during ANY 48 consecutive months within your last 10 years of IMRF

service divided by 48. Usually, this is the average of the last 48 months

of service. For example, if your 48 month total was $121,650; You would

divide that by 48; Your FRE (Final Rate of Earning) would be $2,534. For

employees in Regular Tier 2 (Hired after January 1, 2011), your FRE is your

highest total earnings during ANY 96 consecutive months within your last 10

years of IMRF service divided by 96.