



Illinois State Board of Education

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www.isbe.net

Darren Reisberg
Chair of the Board

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education

March 27, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

Fridays used to be the end of the week with nothing else on our school schedules except maybe a football game or a choir concert. But as we all know, we're rowing in uncharted waters, and today, even though it's Friday, we have some big updates to share with you.

I have declared that Remote Learning Days will begin for schools statewide on March 31 and continue until in-person instruction can resume. Please continue to send any questions you have to COVID19@isbe.net.

During Remote Learning Days, schools may implement either an E-Learning Plan or a Remote Learning Day Plan that provides students with instruction and access to educators through whatever means possible. Schools may use up to five Remote Learning Planning Days at any time after March 30 to work on Remote Learning Day Plans in partnership with their collective bargaining units.

Remote Learning Days, Remote Learning Planning Days, and Act of God Days count as actual student attendance days. **All of these days count toward the minimum length of the school year and absolutely do not need to be made up.** View ISBE's emergency rules for Remote Learning Days at www.isbe.net/Documents/23-5RG-E.pdf.

Over the past week, ISBE convened a Remote Learning Advisory Group of teachers, students, paraprofessionals, related service personnel, principals, and district and regional superintendents to make recommendations to support educators, students, and families during Remote Learning Days. The recommendations provide overarching best practices for instruction, grading, communication, social-emotional needs, content selection and delivery, family engagement, and other important concerns, as well as specific guidance for different grade bands, English Learners, and students with disabilities.

I am deeply grateful to the 63 members of our Remote Learning Advisory Group for giving their time and their expertise to help ISBE and schools across the state navigate a new way of teaching, learning, and caring for our students. View the Remote Learning Recommendations at www.isbe.net/Documents/RL-Recommendations-3-27-20.pdf.

The Remote Learning Recommendations strongly encourage that school districts' local grading policies during Remote Learning Days embrace the principle of "no educational harm to any child" and that school districts adopt grading models of pass or incomplete.

The Recommendations state that “Grading should focus on the continuation of learning and prioritize the connectedness and care for students and staff. All students should have the opportunity to redo, make up, or try again to complete, show progress, or attempt to complete work assigned prior to the remote learning period in that time frame. A focus on keeping children emotionally and physically safe, fed, and engaged in learning should be our first priority during this unprecedented time.”

ISBE has partnered with other agencies and advocates to provide additional clarity on other key topics.

ISBE released joint guidance with the Illinois Board of Higher Education and Illinois Community College Board to advise secondary and postsecondary institutions in Illinois on supporting and accommodating students who are enrolled in dual credit courses during the suspension of in-person instruction. View this guidance at www.isbe.net/Documents/Joint-Dual-Credit-Guidance-During-Suspension-of-In-Person-Instruction.pdf.

ISBE also met with the Illinois Federation of Teachers, Illinois Education Association, Illinois Association of School Administrators, and Illinois Principals Association to update our joint guidance regarding pay and work at www.isbe.net/Documents/Joint-Statement-Updated%203-27-20.pdf.

Additionally, Governor JB Pritzker’s Executive Order 2020-15, issued today, suspends state assessments for spring 2020, including the Constitution exam. This action officially ends assessment activity statewide for the Illinois Assessment of Readiness, Illinois Science Assessment, SAT, and Dynamic Learning Maps-Alternate Assessment for the 2019-20 school year.

We recognize that the free SAT provided by the state is the only opportunity many students get to take a college entrance exam. ISBE is working with the College Board on developing options to allow current 11th grade students to take the SAT in the fall.

ISBE has refreshed its comprehensive guidance document with all of this information, as well as updated guidance on driver’s education, nutrition, flexibility in expending grant funds, and Early Childhood Block Grant recipients providing child care to the children of essential workers. View the comprehensive guidance at www.isbe.net/Documents/FAQ-3-27-20.pdf

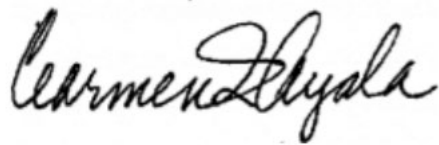
I know this is not the way that any of us envisioned this school year going. But I continue to be awed by the phenomenal creativity, resilience, empathy, and problem-solving prowess of Illinois’ educators, administrators, and students. The stories I see every day on social media, in the news, and in my email show me just how focused our educators are on supporting our children in this time of crisis.

[A story that appeared this week in a Springfield newspaper](#) highlighted the ways teachers from preK to AP calculus are engaging with their students through remote learning. One middle

school teacher even called every family on the phone to check in. Her name happens to be Jill Friday.

Like you, we are eager for life to return to normal, but keeping our communities safe must be our shared priority at this time. I am confident we will get through this together. And once this pandemic is past, we will certainly savor football games, choir concerts, and Fridays even more.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen I. Ayala". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'C'.

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education
Illinois State Board of Education