



# Illinois State Board of Education

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**Darren Reisberg**  
*Chair of the Board*

**Dr. Carmen I. Ayala**  
*State Superintendent of Education*

April 15, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

I want to start with another friendly nudge to all National School Lunch Program participants (and that includes both public and non-public schools!) to make sure you have verified that every student currently eligible for free or reduced-price meals is marked as such, so that their families can qualify for the Pandemic EBT. Keep in mind that many families whose students were not previously eligible have now experienced job losses or other financial impacts because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We would hate for those families to miss out on additional financial support. Schools should keep their data current as they become aware of any additional students who qualify to receive free or reduced-price meals. The deadline for this verification is Friday, April 17. Instructions for this crucial verification can be found [here](#).

Another deadline on the horizon is May 1 – the last day to submit your nominations for [School Lunch Hero Day](#). I cannot imagine there will be any shortage of nominees for this award. If you need help deciding how you can still celebrate during this pandemic, the School Nutrition Association can assist you in recognizing the heroic job school nutrition professionals do every day, especially as they remain on the front lines to feed students.

Two potential School Lunch Heroes come to mind. The first is Unity Point Consolidated School District 140, an elementary district near Carbondale with about 650 students. Their kitchen staff is preparing 700-800 meals a day, their custodial staff and drivers are delivering the food to families, and of course, their teachers and paraprofessionals are connecting with students and families on a daily basis. Harrisburg CUSD 3 (whose summer food service program was a Governor's Hometown Award Finalist in 2019) is packaging 13,000 meals on Fridays and distributing those on Mondays. Each student gets a week's worth of breakfasts and lunches, all shelf-stable foods. It takes a lot of volunteers, but the effort matches the district motto: "Every child, every chance, every day."

I think we can all endorse that motto, especially now.

Lastly, please be sure to check out today's [updated FAQ](#). It includes information on Career and Technical Education/Perkins V and agricultural education.

Thank you for all you do!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen I. Ayala".

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