



# 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*

June 11, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

As we begin preparations for the 2020-21 school year and consider the needs of our students in this unique situation, please do not miss the opportunity to apply for additional funding. On May 18, ISBE released the fiscal year 2020 Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Grant (ESSER) awarded under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The ESSER grants are designed to provide funding to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. We strongly encourage **every** district to explore using these dollars to strengthen your infrastructure for remote learning, whether that means purchasing hardware, software, connectivity, or providing professional development and planning on how to best use those assets.

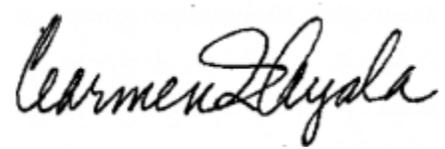
So far, we have received 332 applications and distributed \$864,850 to districts across the state. Districts are using the funds to purchase a variety of tools and resources, including technology devices; WiFi hotspots; digital applications to assist in communicating with families; workshops and training for staff on blended and remote learning; and health and safety equipment, such as sanitizers, digital thermometers, and cleaning supplies. Districts are also using the funds to hire mental health support staff to provide services for students, families, and educators.

We are processing applications swiftly, and districts are currently accessing their funds; although, many districts have not yet submitted applications. We can and should take advantage of this time and these grants to prepare for any future disruptions to in-person instruction that might necessitate a return to remote learning.

If you have not yet submitted an application, please do so as soon as possible. Applications should be submitted in the electronic Grants Management System in IWAS. View additional application instructions and information [here](#). We also hosted two webinars to help you apply for these grants, with information about allowable expenses, nonpublic consultation requirements, and LEA application requirements. We have provided a recording of the [webinars](#) and the [webinar presentation](#) for reference. If you have additional questions, please contact [IllinoisCares@isbe.net](mailto:IllinoisCares@isbe.net).

Again, we encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity as soon as possible to ensure you have the tools you need to help all students recover from learning loss and have a successful school year, no matter what the future holds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen 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