



# Illinois State Board of Education

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

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

June 18, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

Governor JB Pritzker signed into law today [Senate Bill 1569](#), which includes many education provisions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please see the Governor's press release below for highlights from the bill. Importantly, the legislation creates a Blended Remote Learning Day option to give schools additional flexibility as they develop plans for fall.

ISBE will release guidance in the next week to support a safe transition back to in-person learning this fall. We will emphasize in-person learning for all students to the greatest extent possible, while realizing that may not be feasible in all situations. Blended Remote Learning Days allow schools to utilize a mix of in-person and remote learning, if needed, to protect the health and safety of students, teachers, and families. Schools that plan to utilize Blended Remote Learning Days should consider equity and prioritize in-person learning for our students with greater needs.

You may have listened into the ISBE Board meeting yesterday, which included a preview of the preliminary guidance for starting the 2020-21 school year in person. ISBE, the Illinois Department of Public Health, and our 56-member Transition Advisory Workgroup have worked together to develop common and clear requirements, while preserving the flexibility of each school district to implement a reopening plan that meets the needs of the community and the children that they serve. The guidance will include public health requirements for personal protective equipment, including face coverings; capacity limits on individuals in one space; social distancing; symptom screening; and schoolwide cleaning and disinfection.

Having been a district superintendent in Illinois, I understand the urgency of getting clarity and direction out to all of you as quickly as possible. At the same time, the stakes have never been higher for our guidance to adhere to the best and most current science and data. Meeting this standard has meant deep collaboration with public health experts. I appreciate the patience you have shown as we have sought to meet the high standard necessary to protect the health and safety of our students.

We hope to release the guidance in the next week and will follow the release with webinars to answer your questions in real-time. We respect the herculean effort required to plan for in-person instruction under the current circumstances, and we thank you for your ongoing partnership.

Sincerely,

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



**Office of the Governor  
JB Pritzker**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday, Jun. 18, 2020

**CONTACT**

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## **Gov. Pritzker Signs Remote Learning Legislation to Protect Students and Educators**

*Legislation Expands Emergency Use of Remote Learning, Makes  
Changes to School Code in Response to COVID-19*

**Springfield** – To ensure Illinois school districts have the necessary tools to effectively carry out remote learning and other necessary operations during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Governor JB Pritzker signed SB 1569 into law to provide support for educators, students, and families.

"As we face the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, Illinois is doing all it can to ensure our students receive the quality education they deserve," **said Governor JB Pritzker**. "Educators and administrators are doing what they do best, helping students continue to learn, providing meals, and looking out for the wellbeing of our children and families. This legislation will support that critical work and I applaud the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois General Assembly for coming together to support our schools and students across the state."

"The Illinois State Board of Education will release guidance in the coming days to support a safe transition back to in-person learning this fall," **said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala**. "We emphasize in-person learning for all students to the greatest extent possible, while realizing that may not be feasible in all situations. Senate Bill 1569 creates a Blended Remote Learning Day option that gives schools additional flexibility as they develop plans for fall. Schools that plan to utilize Blended Remote Learning Days should consider equity and prioritize in-person learning for our students with greater needs."

Due to the disruptions to in-person learning during the pandemic, the legislation allows school districts to use remote learning during a declared public health emergency. The legislation allows remote learning days and up to five remote learning planning days to be considered attendance days. The legislation also waives student assessment requirements

if the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has received a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education.

To assist teachers, the legislation provides a year-long licensure extension for those with teaching and education support professional licenses set to expire on June 30, 2020. To address the performance rating system for educators, the law outlines procedures and protections for evaluations, such as carrying over an “Excellent” rating from the previous evaluation period. To support educator recruitment, modifications to the School Code include:

- Makes licenses endorsed for visiting international educators valid for five years (currently three);
- Allows career and technical education teachers to renew their licenses with a test of workplace proficiency, not solely educators whose license was issued July 1, 2015 or after; and
- Updates language to conform with current licensure nomenclature.

The law also affirms that constitution exams can be administered remotely.

Building on efforts to provide support for child care providers, the law allows recipients of preschool education grants funded by ISBE to care for the children of essential workers who are under the age of 12 years old.

For parents, the law expands the requirement that they receive copies of all written materials used during a meeting to determine a child’s eligibility for special education and related services. Additionally, the legislation allows parents to choose how they wish to receive those materials and copies of their child’s school student records prior to the meeting.

The law ensures graduating high school seniors can graduate and earn their diploma. Additionally, ISBE may adopt rules to modify the requirements of the high school graduation requirements.

Regarding higher education, the law requires courses taken during the calendar year 2020 to be transferable for students receiving a passing grade and to fulfill the prerequisite requirements for advanced courses.

“With no time to prepare, the COVID-19 pandemic challenged educators to find new and innovative ways to meet the physical, social emotional, and academic needs of their students. We are grateful that the General Assembly, working in collaboration with Governor Pritzker, swiftly passed Senate Bill 1569 to codify the flexibility and creativity educators required to provide essential services to our states young people,” **said Dr. Jason Leahy, Executive Director of the Illinois Principals Association.**

“Throughout this pandemic, the Governor and State Board of Education have worked to provide guidance to districts and make adjustments to school operations with the primary focus always on serving students,” **said Illinois Federation of Teachers President Dan Montgomery.** “Through Executive Orders and now the signing of this legislation, the Governor is sending a clear message that in these difficult times our focus should be on

meeting the basic instructional, social, and emotional needs of students and not testing and bureaucracy. We applaud this effort.”

“We are very thankful that lawmakers saw fit to provide guidance in law that allows educators to concentrate on teaching and working to meet the needs of students in an emergency situation, to continue to work toward fixing the teacher shortage and to listen to the concerns of all involved when coming up with these solutions. It's a true testament to collaboration and to what we can do as a state when we pull together in the best interest of students," **said Illinois Education Association President Kathi Griffin.**

"During this unprecedented time in our state's history, SB 1569, the Education Omnibus all is comprehensive legislation to account for and acknowledge the real-time learning progress of our students and provide out entire educational system flexibility needed for successful students outcomes. No matter what the future holds for teaching and learning nationwide, Illinois is now better equipped to address out students' educational needs," **said Assistant Majority Leader Will Davis.**

“Teachers and administrators throughout our state stepped up to the plate and performed under extremely unusual circumstance,” **said Sen. Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant.** “I’m pleased to the Governor is signing our education bill, which allows our schools to serve our students to the best of their ability during these unique times.”

SB 1569 takes effect immediately.

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