



Illinois State Board of Education

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Darren Reisberg
Chair of the Board

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education

March 26, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

Today's message focuses on caring for our students and caring for each other during this time of crisis. So many educators use the phrase, "Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

East St. Louis District 189 put this principle into practice by establishing a [Helpline](#) that students can text at any time to reach the district's Student Support Staff. This helpline connects students to the kind of support they may normally receive from their school social worker, nurse, or homeless outreach worker. The district posted the number on social media, inviting students to connect if they're kicked out of their home or just worried about a friend.

These kinds of connections are more important than ever, as students are no longer in our daily line of sight. I encourage teachers to check in with students periodically in whatever way you can. We need to look out for our most vulnerable children, especially in times of crisis.

To help us take care of each other, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act requires certain employers to provide their employees with paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. These provisions will apply from April 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. The U.S. Department of Labor has created a [new poster](#) outlining these policies, which I encourage you to share with your staff.

Thank you for everything you are doing to keep our students – and yourselves – engaged, healthy, and safe.

Sincerely,

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

Dr. Carmen I Ayala
State Superintendent of Education
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