



# Illinois State Board of Education

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

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

April 2, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you to all of the school principals who participated in today's webinars. Your questions and concerns proved yet again that you're keeping your eyes on our shared goals of prioritizing our students, families, and communities. I appreciate the kindness and respect that characterize our conversations as we work through the pop quizzes presented by this COVID-19 pandemic.

I'm pleased to tell you the Spanish version of the Remote Learning Recommendations is posted on our COVID-19 webpage and linked [here](#). We anticipate sharing the Polish and Arabic translations tomorrow and hope these resources can help you reach your families equitably.

Ever mindful of the fact that many families rely on our schools for nutrition, ISBE is working in partnership with the Illinois Department of Human Services to provide extra funding to families whose children qualify for free or reduced priced meals. We will ask tomorrow that you take steps to verify that all students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals or have a low-income indicator have been entered into the Student Information System (SIS). Some students' circumstances may have changed, and we need to ensure that all students whose families could benefit from these much-needed funds have the opportunity to access them. Please look for additional instructions tomorrow.

Many of you have reached out to our agency with questions regarding educator candidates and asking how those pursuits will be affected by the suspension of in-person instruction. I want to assure you that ISBE is pursuing policy changes that will enable program candidates including student teachers, school service personnel, principals, superintendents, and people in subsequent endorsement programs to still receive licensure this spring and summer, despite building closures that may have prohibited classroom experience from being earned, and despite testing center closures statewide that may prevent educators from completing requisite testing.

We will provide official guidance regarding the edTPA, student teaching/internships, clinical hours required for endorsements, and testing timelines as soon as we are able. In the meantime, please assure candidates that ISBE is actively pursuing policy changes to ensure their ability to be licensed this spring/summer and to gain employment this fall is not negatively impacted.

As many districts become reliant on Zoom in remote learning environments, the company's CEO Eric Yuan has responded to recent hacking incidents by updating the service's privacy policies and creating special protections and [special features for use by schools](#). Among these new features is the ability to "lock" the door of your virtual classroom and to remove any unwanted

participants. Yuan has pledged to hold weekly chats focused on privacy and security issues and to spend the next few months engineering further improvements.

We are keenly aware of the challenges that may arise during the implementation of remote learning, especially for students with disabilities. The Illinois Assistive Technology Program (IATP), located in Springfield, helps school districts with special education technology needs and with purchasing assistive technology devices in bulk. To contact IATP, please visit [www.iltech.org](http://www.iltech.org) or call Lynette at (217) 522-7985.

I am also grateful to my staff in the special education department here at ISBE, who have been invited by the organization The Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education to provide training on holding mediation sessions virtually, using Zoom and DocuSign. These unprecedented circumstances come with unexpected challenges, but every time I look around, I see Illinois educators leading the state and leading the country with creative ideas and eagerness to extend help to others.

Governor Pritzker today launched a new effort to reinforce the message that we should all stay home and stay safe. The campaign is called “All in Illinois,” to remind us that we’re all in this together.

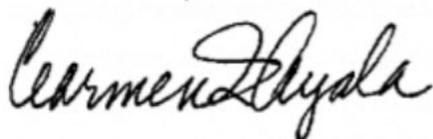
“I’ve taken virtually every action available to me to protect our residents and slow the spread, and now, our strongest weapon against COVID-19 is you,” the Governor said. “For everyone in Illinois, we as individuals must commit to stay home, stay safe and practice social distancing to stay healthy.”

You can show your solidarity by updating your Facebook profile photo with the All in Illinois frame image, or by sharing messages on social media using the #AllinIllinois hashtag. If you’d like to download an “All In” sign to display in a window, you can download one [here](#).

By now, you know how much I live for stories of superheroes (also known as teachers) taking care of students during this scary time. Today, we saw a Facebook post from a mom who has a son in 9<sup>th</sup> grade at Vernon Hills High School. He’s struggling with algebra, so his teacher, Jennifer Tye, instructed the mom to have her son to go stand in the driveway. Within 10 minutes, Ms. Tye appeared at the end of the driveway (safely more than six feet away) with a white board and markers, to give the freshman a distance algebra lesson.

Thank you. Keep up the great work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen I. Ayala". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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