



# Illinois State Board of Education

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

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

September 21, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

Over the past few weeks, dozens of districts from across the state have asked me how to handle teacher evaluations. These evaluations are yet another one of those crucial interior rhythms of the school year disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last spring, the legislature passed [Public Act 101-643](#), which provided (among other things) flexibility for districts to be able to create an alternate performance rating system. As this new school year begins, district leaders are juggling all sorts of critical shortages, and pursuing different strategies regarding teacher evaluations. However, as it currently stands, the final summative rating has not been eliminated from rule or statutory language.

Therefore, I brought this issue to the full board of education yesterday. After lengthy discussion, the board recognized the value of summative evaluations and encouraged districts to continue this practice as a means of helping recognize the performance of educators, identify areas where they need support, and keep tabs on student growth.

However, due to the unusual nature of this 2020-21 school year, the board decided this agency will not initiate regulatory action against districts that don't end up moving forward with summative evaluations this year. This flexibility will be available for school districts for this school year only.

We want administrators in every building to observe teachers, to ensure they're providing high-quality, rigorous instruction and meaningful feedback to their students. Such observations cue administrators to provide extra support to teachers who are struggling and reveal the heroic efforts of teachers who are creating strategies that work. There are districts that have found ways, endorsed by their unions, to continue the practice of summative evaluations even as classes meet remotely.

But the board recognizes the unique challenges each district faces this year. Rather than take a punitive approach, we believe our focus should remain on supporting students' and teachers' growth.

Sincerely,

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