



Illinois State Board of Education

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Darren Reisberg
Chair of the Board

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education

May 15, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

I am very happy to be able to announce that ISBE is releasing Part One of our recommendations for transitioning to in-person instruction, which focuses on [Considerations for Closing the 2019-20 School Year & Summer 2020](#).

The Governor's Restore Illinois plan places the return to physical school buildings in Phase 4 of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The entire state is currently experiencing Phase 2, but different regions around the state may reach Phase 4 at different times. You may have heard me say already that schools and districts should have a plan A, plan B, and plan C. When students return to physical school buildings, in-person instruction will not look normal.

I encourage district leaders to start thinking about using CARES Act funds for further strengthening their infrastructure for remote learning and for professional development and planning. As the Illinois Association of School Administrators communicated yesterday, I also encourage every district to begin the procurement process for purchasing PPE and deep cleaning supplies as soon as possible in order to have them ready for when students return to school buildings. IASA Executive Director Brent Clark said, "At this point, our inquiry through the supply chains is ahead of other states, but it's not going to be long before others start to catch up. My best advice is to get in line now given the global demand on these products." As a reminder, [FEMA Public Assistance](#) funds are available for these expenses.

In the next few weeks, ISBE – in partnership with the Illinois Department of Public Health – will provide further recommendations to help you navigate this transition.

[Part One](#) that we are releasing today provides academic, social-emotional, and logistical considerations for ending the current school year and entering the summer. To develop the transition considerations, ISBE convened an advisory group with the key lenses that should be present in developing local plans, including social workers, administrators, multilingual educators, special education instructors, and general education teachers. The advisory group firmly believes that an effective transition back to school starts with closing out the current school year.

Part One covers grading and addressing Incompletes in more detail; summer school; and utilizing the summer months for professional development, preparations to assess student learning, social-emotional supports, and device distribution.

I know many of you are eager for more – for guidance on how to plan for the start of next school year and for when students return to the classroom. We are eager, too. But we cannot lose sight of the fact that these considerations are matters of life and death. We are working closely with public health experts to ensure that any recommendations we provide to you contain the information you will need to welcome your students and staff back safely with minimal risk to their health and wellbeing. We must take every precaution with the lives of students and families in our hands.

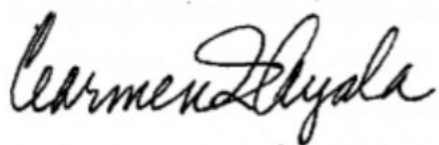
As I announced last week, Illinois is excited to partner with the Council of Chief State School Officers and XQ Institute in support of *Graduate Together: America Honors the High School Class of 2020*, a one-hour, commercial-free primetime graduation special to be broadcast Saturday. During the broadcast, viewers will be directed to XQ’s new [Rethink Together online forum](#), which will feature [specific content for Illinois](#), including a congratulatory message to our graduates from me and special messages from the seniors on ISBE’s awesome Student Advisory Council to their fellow members of the Class of 2020.

The national telecast will air on Saturday, May 16 at 7 p.m. on more than 30 broadcast and cable networks and streaming services, as well as various social media platforms. Led by XQ Institute, The LeBron James Family Foundation, and The Entertainment Industry Foundation, the special is being produced in partnership with a broad coalition of education, philanthropic, and corporate partners. In addition, corporate and philanthropic giving associated with #GraduateTogether will benefit DonorsChoose and America’s Food Fund to help meet student needs in some of our nation’s most underserved and under-resourced communities.

I will close with a friendly reminder to please complete and ask your teachers and fellow administrators to complete the [Illinois Educator Survey](#) by May 31, which will equip all of us with incredibly helpful statewide perspectives on your needs as we work together with IDPH on the next parts of our transition recommendations.

Thank you, and have a wonderful, safe, and restful weekend.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen I. Ayala". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education
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