



# Illinois State Board of Education

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

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

April 17, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

Governor JB Pritzker announced today that Remote Learning Days will continue through the end of the school year. As difficult as this may be to hear, and as much as we miss the magic that happens in the physical space of the classroom, we know that this decision will save lives. We are prepared to do whatever is necessary to help flatten the curve and stop the spread of COVID-19.

State Board of Education Vice Chairperson and Community Consolidated Schools District 168 Superintendent Dr. Donna Leak and I joined the Governor's press conference today to support him in making this announcement, and you can view the videos of our remarks below:

- Governor JB Pritzker's remarks: [vimeo.com/409050353](https://vimeo.com/409050353)
- My remarks in English: [vimeo.com/409050400](https://vimeo.com/409050400)
- My remarks in Spanish: [vimeo.com/409040487](https://vimeo.com/409040487)
- Dr. Donna Leak's remarks: [vimeo.com/409050326](https://vimeo.com/409050326)

As you know, ISBE does not expect teachers and families to replicate their students' usual school experiences at home during Remote Learning Days. ISBE's Remote Learning Recommendations include guidelines for how much time children should focus on purely academic work, and they range from as little as 30 minutes per day for kindergartners, to somewhere between two and five hours per day for high school students.

Please continue to communicate regularly with your teachers and families about your school or district's expectations for grading and other concerns throughout the remainder of the school year. ISBE's recommendations are available on our website at [www.isbe.net/covid19](http://www.isbe.net/covid19) in English, Spanish, Polish, and Arabic.

Our school buildings may be closed, but the hearts and minds of our teachers and students are wide open. This pandemic has altered the fabric of how we teach, how we learn, and how we connect, but it has not shaken the core of what our schools do, which is take care of Illinois' children and prepare them for what's next. Our schools focus on social and emotional skills, like resilience, empathy, and adaptability, for this very reason: So when the unpredictable events in life knock us down, we have the strength and the mindset to get back up.

Many of Illinois' families are undergoing tremendous hardship, and we are committed to doing everything we can so that schools can continue to serve as conduits of food, technology, and resources not just to students, but to their families, to the elderly, and to entire communities.

During this period of remote learning, it's vitally important for educators to check in with every student every day. Taking attendance in some way is more important now than ever. This daily virtual contact allows teachers to gauge their students' needs — academic, social-emotional, and technological.

Many families do not have sufficient access to technology or internet at home. And we are going to tackle the digital divide head-on, as part of a strategic effort that will extend beyond the end of the pandemic. To start, we will use the agency's federal CARES Act dollars to increase access to technology in the least-resourced districts. We encourage school districts to use their CARES Act funding for this purpose as well.

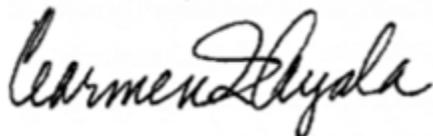
We also partnered with other agencies on a [WiFi hotspot map](#), as a short-term solution to increase access to the internet while students learn remotely. The WiFi map currently has nearly 300 hotspots students can use to complete coursework. Students and families should continue to practice social distancing by remaining in their cars while utilizing the hotspots. If a student or caretaker is sick or experiencing symptoms, they should remain at home.

Will students return to in-person instruction fully caught up? We are not expecting them to. ISBE will release transition guidance to help schools address learning loss and students' social-emotional needs when students return to classrooms, whenever that can happen safely.

All our efforts are geared toward meeting our students where they are and giving them the tools and supports they need for success. These efforts will not end even when the pandemic ends.

As I joined Governor Pritzker at his press conference today, I realized how proud I was to stand at the microphone and promise families that they are not alone: Their children are in the hands of educators who see their needs and go to moon and back to meet them. I could do that only because you continue to demonstrate those values every day, and for that, you have my deepest gratitude.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen I. Ayala". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

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