



Illinois State Board of Education

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Darren Reisberg
Chair of the Board

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education

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Dear Colleagues:

Today we have good news.

First, the U.S. Department of Education has shared state allocations for the second round of COVID-19 relief funding for schools through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER II). Illinois will receive \$2,250,804,891 – more than four times the amount we received under ESSER I. You can now see your district's preliminary allocation [Linked in email]. I wanted to make sure you all received this information first and as soon as we received it.

As in the case of ESSER I, the allocation for those entities not listed in the spreadsheet above will come from the state set-aside in the approximate amount of \$63 per student. School districts are not required to provide equitable services for nonpublic schools with ESSER II. There is a set-aside for nonpublic schools in the forthcoming second round of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund.

I encourage you to channel these funds toward our most urgent needs: mitigating learning loss through supplemental learning opportunities, closing the digital divide, and addressing the mental health needs of our students. Illinois has charted historic gains toward closing the digital divide, but there are still students without the devices and connectivity they need. I urge you to use this substantial new funding to close the digital divide for good.

To mitigate learning loss, consider a longer school year, before-/after-school programs, and summer learning opportunities. Begin planning now to reimagine the school calendar and expand the school day to ensure students receive every opportunity to grow.

The pandemic continues to take a toll on our students' mental well-being. I encourage you to invest in greater access to supports and resources for students' social-emotional health.

In further good news, Governor JB Pritzker announced today that Illinois teachers will be next in line to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) recognize that educators are frontline workers who play a truly vital role in the healthy functioning of our communities.

We encourage all eligible educators to get the vaccine once it becomes available. Providing teachers with protection against COVID-19 will lay the groundwork for a full return to in-person instruction and to the teaching and learning environment we know and love.

The COVID-19 vaccine is still very limited in supply, so teachers will not begin receiving the vaccine immediately. Health care workers will remain at the very front of the line, classified as group 1A. Education workers, including teachers, support staff, and child care workers, are included in group 1B. We will keep you updated on the timeline for when immunization for group 1B can begin.

I know you will have many questions, and we will do our best to provide answers. For now, you can find more information in [IDPH's COVID-19 vaccine FAQ](#). As we have done several times since the pandemic began, ISBE will host webinars to facilitate open conversations so that we can understand all your questions and provide you with accurate information.

But for today, I wanted to make you all aware of this welcome news as quickly as possible. It truly represents a light at the end of a long, dark tunnel and a path forward for the children of Illinois.

Sincerely,

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala

State Superintendent of Education