



Illinois State Board of Education

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www.isbe.net

Darren Reisberg
Chair of the Board

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education

March 12, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to provide additional guidance about ensuring continuity of education to students during the current coronavirus/COVID-19 public health emergency. **I would first like to reiterate that all school closure decisions are made locally by the school district, working in partnership with the local department of public health. If a decision is made to close a school due to coronavirus/COVID-19, a designee should immediately email ISBE at COVID19closure@isbe.net and take one minute to complete this online form: [REDACTED]. Your responses will populate the public dashboard to track school closures at www.isbe.net/coronavirus. Please do not post the link to the online form publicly or share beyond your designee.**

ISBE strongly encourages every school district to develop a contingency plan to ensure students continue to receive some access to instructional resources in the event of a school closure due to COVID-19.

A full e-learning program may not be possible for every district. We encourage administrators to work with teachers and staff to plan ahead and be prepared with activities that work within the circumstances of your school community. We encourage you to consider activities like those you might use over winter or spring break to keep students engaged in the curriculum and prevent learning loss. Please find time to sit down with teachers to craft a viable contingency plan by grade level.

Some ideas for home learning include:

- Send books home with students and/or print out articles, poetry, and writing prompts.
- Assign a long-term research-based project aligned to multiple standards.
- Put together learning packets to review or enhance material already taught.
- Assign simple science projects that could be done at home.
- Review textbooks and print the supplemental lessons that one often does not have time to do in class.
- Use any online resources available to teachers and print assignments to do at home.
- Have students write reflection essays about a movie watched or a book read and scaffold the assignment for different age ranges.
- If your school district is providing grab-and-go meals or meal delivery, make take home packets available at the same location or through the same delivery mechanism.

ISBE staff have identified a few free online resources that can be sources of activities and inspiration:

- Share My Lesson: www.sharemylesson.com

- National Geographic: https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education/resource-library/?q=&page=1&per_page=25
- Field Museum: <https://www.fieldmuseum.org/educators/learning-resources/plants-animals>
- Lesson Planet: <https://www.lessonplanet.com/>
- The Learning Network: <https://www.nytimes.com/section/learning>
- Statistics in Schools: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sis/2020census/2020-resources.html>
- EdEx: <https://www.edx.org/>
- Global Digital Library: <https://www.digitallibrary.io/>
- Khan Academy: <https://www.khanacademy.org/>
- Learning Equality: <https://learningequality.org/kolibri/>

Students and their families may have health concerns during this time, and so ISBE recommends that any student work completed during a coronavirus-related Emergency or Act of God Day not count toward student grades or otherwise impact a student's academic standing.

For those districts that choose to and are able to provide a full e-learning program, we are working to obtain the following flexibility regarding the current requirements for e-learning plans and will keep you updated on the progress:

- Remove the limit on the number of e-learning days a district may use during the state disaster proclamation.
- Allow district superintendents to adopt the plan without board approval.
- Remove the requirement that school boards hold a public hearing on the plan.
- Remove the Sept. 1 plan approval deadline.
- Remove the 30-day parental notification requirement.
- Allow ROEs/ISCs not to deny plan approval based solely on the 300-minute instructional requirement, if the ROE/ISC determines that the plan provides substantial student learning opportunities.

We strongly encourage those districts that are able to engage in e-learning that do not have approved plans to submit your e-learning plans to your ROEs/ISCs for approval **as soon as possible**, in preparation for the potential need to close school buildings.

E-learning plans must still include the requirements outlined in subsection (d) of [Section 10-20.56](#) of the School Code, with the exception of (d)(10). E-learning plans must account for providing appropriate learning opportunities to English Learners and students with disabilities and must account for students without access to technology at home. ISBE has compiled a [list of free resources](#) to support districts in providing e-learning to English Learners.

Please join ISBE's e-learning webinar for administrators 2-4 p.m. on March 17 to learn more about developing an approvable e-learning plan. [View additional details and register for the webinar here.](#)

Additionally, the following districts have graciously agreed to share their e-learning plans and resources. Please note these were not developed with ISBE but are being offered as a resource:

- [Glen Ellyn Elementary School District 41](#)
- [Reavis High School District 220](#)
- [Ridgewood High School District 234](#)

School districts should work in collaboration with the local collective bargaining unit when developing the contingency plan for either home learning or e-learning to make the plan work for each student, to contemplate teachers' work hours, and to discuss how school support personnel can support students' learning. The [ISBE Guidance to Schools on Coronavirus](#) has been updated to reflect all of the information and changes described above.

Lastly, if you have not done so already, we ask that every district please take a few moments to complete this [survey](#) in order to help us determine district e-learning capabilities and health supply needs.

Please do not hesitate to reach out at COVID19@isbe.net with any questions.

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