



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

April 7, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

It was a gorgeous day outside across Illinois! I enjoyed having the sunlight on my face as I worked from inside. I know it may be tempting, but I echo the plea of our Governor and public health officials to please enjoy the nice weather by cracking a window or spending time in your backyard, but do not meet up with your friends, schedule play dates, or congregate in public spaces, including parks and playgrounds. Your neighbors' lives depend on it.

In this crisis, we want to relieve pressure wherever possible. We realize the COVID-19 pandemic may create a heightened level of anxiety, especially as it pertains to ongoing grant funding. To ease some of that anxiety, I have directed our Finance Department to temporarily suspend all further refund due notifications and freezes that are currently applied to all fiscal year 2020 grant projects.

Beginning next week, all scheduled payments through the month of April will be vouchered and sent to the Office of the Comptroller for payment. We will continue this practice indefinitely as vouchering occurs each week. We will reassess the application of normal protocols at a later date. However, you are encouraged to assess outstanding expenditure reports that are due and submit them as needed.

If you have a specific question about your payments or expenditure reports that may be due, please email the [appropriate staff in Funding and Disbursements](#) or contact us at COVID19@isbe.net.

As we continue to transition to remote learning, it's only normal that we may need some help. [Teach Plus](#) Illinois is offering All Means All: Making Remote Learning Work For Every Illinois Student. All Means All is a free, facilitated space for Illinois teachers to collaborate and adapt to the new remote learning environment. Teachers from the National Board, Illinois State Teachers of the Year, and Teach Plus Illinois will lead these planning and problem-solving sessions.

Divided by grade band and content area, these sessions can provide a basic schema for curriculum planning, plus address engagement strategies and social and emotional supports. These weekly, ongoing professional learning communities are free on a space-available basis to all Illinois teachers. To register, please fill out this short [registration form](#).

Here's the schedule:

Grades K-2 Thursdays at 8-9am	Grades 9-12 ELA Wednesdays at 3-4pm
Grades K-2 Thursdays at 3-4pm	Grades 9-12 Science Thursdays at 3-4pm
Grades 3-5 Fridays at 8-9am	Grades 9-12 Math - TBD
Grades 3-5 Fridays at 3-4pm	Grades 9-12 SS - TBD
Grades 6-8 Math Fridays at 3-4pm	Early Childhood Education - TBD
Grades 6-8 Science Wednesdays at 4-5pm	Arts - TBD
Grades 6-8 ELA/SS Thursdays at 2-3pm	CTE - TBD
Grades 9-12 ELA Wednesdays at 9-10am	

Advanced Placement (AP) Human Geography teachers may want to mark their calendars for 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 15. That's when the National Council for Geographic Education is hosting a webinar to help AP Human Geography teachers inform students about the new Free Response Questions students will see on this year's exam. Learn more and register at https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mN-n67osSu27dbgON1minAfbclid=IwAR18unfy15BkFBqUtx_xgCevO2zaRgOxGediLq4dEe01SNpR7Myfxjj8Naw.

As always, I want to share some inspiring stories from educators around the state. One that stood out to me today came from our Regional Office of Education #35, where they have focused on the at-risk families of LaSalle, Marshall, and Putnam Counties. The ROE's Student Service staff have been contacting students – including truant students and those from the Regional Safe School Program, Regional Work-Study, and Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program classrooms – and delivering snack bags, food gift cards, and homework. This strategy allows staff to identify the needs of the at-risk families and assist them in solving any immediate concerns.

Kassidi Guerrero, a truant officer and the Director of Student Services at ROE #35, has also been conducting online meeting groups to encourage healthy coping mechanisms, allow social interactions for our students, and provide opportunities for the ROE team to stay in touch with students who are more at-risk because of stay-at-home orders.

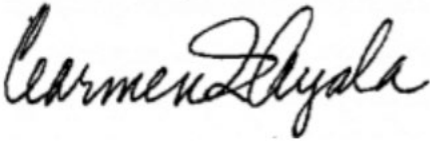
ROE #35 has also gotten help from its 501(c)3 foundation, Educate 35. The non-profit has received donations from Vactor, CORE Construction, and Deer Park Golf Club to supply \$1,000 worth of gift cards for food, and 35 Chromebooks to students and families in need, plus 300 meals from Seattle Sutton.

The work of ROE #35 gives us a great examples of how local student engagement/attendance/truancy policies and programs during this crisis can help schools identify and reach out to students in need of greater support.

I also want to give a very special shout-out today to Brooke Ray, a student at Tuscola High School. Brooke has been named Volunteer of the Week by Serve Illinois. Since COVID-19 rearranged her senior year, Brooke is volunteering her time at the Douglas County Emergency Operations Center, where she has taken the lead role on resource management and tracking. She is helping to sort, organize, and distribute personal protective equipment to local fire responders, fire departments, police departments, and nursing homes. She's also a Fire Explorer in Champaign and a probationary member of the Tuscola Fire Department. Thank you, Brooke, for all that you do!

And thank you in advance to all of the students, parents, and educators in Illinois for resisting the overwhelming urge to fully enjoy today's gloriously warm weather. Spring Fever hits hard, and we all wish we could be playing sports with our friends, hanging out at our favorite playground, or having playdates for our kids. But the more we do now to stop the spread of the coronavirus, the more time we buy for scientists, health care workers, and our own loved ones.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen I. Ayala". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "C".

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education
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