



Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
www.isbe.net

Darren Reisberg
Chair of the Board

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education

May 18, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

I am happy to announce that ISBE released today the fiscal year 2020 Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Grant (ESSER) awarded under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. We encourage districts to submit their applications in the electronic Grants Management System in IWAS as soon as possible.

The ESSER grants are designed to provide funding to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. We strongly encourage every district to explore using these dollars to strengthen your infrastructure for remote learning, whether that means purchasing hardware, software, connectivity, or providing professional development and planning on how to best use those assets. We can and should take advantage of this time and these grants to prepare for any future disruptions to in-person instruction that might necessitate a return to remote learning.

We are hosting webinars to help you apply for these grants, with information about allowable expenses, nonpublic consultation requirements, and LEA application requirements. A recording of each webinar and the webinar presentation will be posted on the ISBE website at www.isbe.net/covid19 as soon as available. You can still sign up for the session at 3 p.m. tomorrow, May 19 by [registering here](#).

We should also use this time before we return to school buildings to stock up on deep-cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment and any other equipment needed to prepare your buildings for students to return. Please remember that funds available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency [Public Assistance](#) program for these expenses.

I'm going to shift now from dollars to data. You may have been wondering how our popular illinoisreportcard.com website will deal with all the information gaps created by COVID-19. Certain metrics — like assessments and the climate survey — will not appear on this year's report card. Other metrics — including gifted counts, school improvement funds, and KIDS survey results — have been added, as previously planned. Schools summative designations will remain the same from 2019 to 2020. You can see the entire list of changes in the May issue of the Report Card Rundown [here](#).

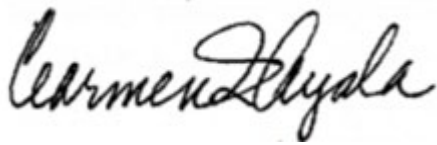
Before I close, I need to nudge you again to please complete the [Illinois Educator Survey](#) by May 31. The answers we get there will equip all of us with incredibly helpful statewide perspectives on your needs as we work together with the Illinois Department of Public Health on

the next parts of our transition recommendations. If you've already filled out the survey, make sure your teachers and fellow administrators have too!

Lastly, I continue to be impressed and heartened by the safe celebrations you all are hosting for your graduates. Mattoon High School is giving each of its 234 seniors a personal graduation ceremony. These 5-minute rituals began on Saturday and go through Wednesday. Each graduate gets to bring five guests, walk the stage, and receive their diploma from a family member. Then the whole class gets a car parade at 6 p.m. Friday! We love this creative way to celebrate the Class of 2020.

Thank you, as always, for your remarkable efforts in this historic time.

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
Illinois State Board of Education