



Illinois State Board of Education

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Darren Reisberg
Chairman

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education

May 4, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

Today marks the beginning of this year's official Teacher Appreciation Week. I emphasize the word "official" because I have a hunch that families experiencing remote learning developed a newfound appreciation for teachers as far back as March 17 and that their appreciation has deepened every day since. I am proud of and in awe of each of you. We have asked so much of you over the past seven weeks, and every day my inbox is flooded with incredible accounts of teachers saving the day. From the bottom of my heart, thank you. I know you're busy, but if you have time, watch a short video message I recorded just for you via [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).

Governor JB Pritzker is also supporting Teacher Appreciation Week and encouraging all Illinoisans to thank our incredible teachers by sharing photos and videos at www.enjoyillinois.com/allinillinois/teachers.

The Governor thanked teachers in his press conference today, saying, "Educators have long been an unsung hero, giving the next generation the tools they need to build a better world. In this pandemic, millions of teachers have stepped into new roles as meal distributors, tech support staff, 3D printers, YouTube stars, innovators... doing their best to do their jobs and see students through an unprecedented situation. And by and large, they have shown us their extraordinary compassion and creativity. I am grateful to them. To all the educators watching, thank you for all the roles you are filling right now, and I am so grateful to you. If you are not a teacher but you know one, I hope you will take a moment to thank them today, call them, send them a note online. A few kind words goes an awfully long way. So I would appreciate if you would reach out to them today."

Anyone who wants to recognize an educator can share their stories on Twitter or Instagram with the hashtag #AllInIllinois. I know it's not the same as the baked treats and physical gifts teachers may receive at this time of year, but we look forward to seeing what is shared and amplifying these appreciations.

Following up on my message from Friday, announcing the availability of the [Pandemic EBT \(P-EBT\)](#) application, the Illinois Department of Human Services has received more than 3,100 applications since Friday. Please remind your school communities that families can participate in both P-EBT and any meal distribution program that is currently available at their school. They do not have to choose one or the other, as these programs operate independent of each other. Please share this information widely to ensure families in need are receiving all available support during this difficult time.

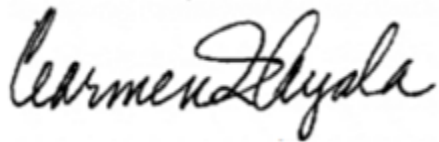
As many school districts begin approaching the close of the school year, please note that attendance data should be submitted to ISBE in the same manner as prior to Remote Learning Days, via the Student Information System. All SIS users received detailed guidance on reporting attendance to ISBE last Wednesday, April 29. Many of you are finding creative ways to engage with your students each day. For those who need a little assistance, please reference our new [student attendance guidance document](#) for more recommendations and resources on checking student engagement during remote learning.

Attendance goes hand-in-hand with school calendars, so today we also released [updated comprehensive guidance](#) that addresses multiple questions regarding school calendars. In the document, we outline the types of days that may count toward the requirement for 176 school days, as well as detailed information regarding Remote Planning Days and spring breaks. ISBE has built in as much flexibility as possible regarding how those days are counted. As a reminder, no calendar revisions need to be made in the Public School Calendar System at this time. Please keep accurate records and plan to work collaboratively with Regional Offices of Education and Intermediate Service Centers to submit final calendars in June.

COVID-19 has forced us to transform so many of the activities we normally love to fit new and different circumstances - including how we celebrate Teacher Appreciation Week. Teachers in Diamond Lake School District 76 received [signs in their yards](#). The Lincoln-Way West Student Council created a [video message](#) for their teachers. Stevenson High School created a [photo collage](#) for their math and science teachers as part of a Teacher Appreciation Week video series. Chicago Public Schools administrators delivered a video message to [#ThankATeacher](#). And the PTO at Channahon School District 17 [decorated their school grounds](#) for teachers to see as they drive by.

Illinois' amazing teachers have gone above and beyond for us; and now it's our turn to go above and beyond for them. Keep sharing your gratitude and praise. Happy Teacher Appreciation Week!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen I. Ayala". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education
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