

# INNOVATION

## in Illinois

# Letter from the State Superintendent of Education

Thank you for visiting the Illinois State Board of Education's booth at the 2025 **Illinois State Fair**! As summer winds down and we prepare for a new school year, I want to be among the first to welcome you back.

This year's theme — **Innovation in Illinois** — is a celebration of the forward-thinking spirit that defines our great state. Illinois has long been a leader in **invention, creativity, and progress**. At the Illinois State Board of Education, we are proud to support that tradition. Over the past year, we have worked with educators, families, and communities to launch new and exciting initiatives: a statewide numeracy plan to follow the success of our Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan, a collaborative effort to give families and educators more accurate and meaningful data about student performance, and a first-of-its-kind teacher recruitment marketing campaign — all aimed at ensuring every student in Illinois is ready for the future. Illinois students continue to amaze us with their **ideas, leadership, and bold thinking**. Whether they are designing new technologies, exploring creative careers, or solving real-world problems, we know they are building a better tomorrow.

Our incredible educators are at the heart of this innovation. They are not only teaching our students — they are **inspiring** them to think critically, **dream big**, and **pursue what's possible**. I encourage you to take a moment this year to **celebrate** the many people who support our students: teachers, principals, bus drivers, school board members, volunteers, and more. You'll find special appreciation days throughout this calendar — perfect opportunities to say thank you. And if someone in your school community is going above and beyond, please consider nominating them for ISBE's Those Who Excel & Teacher of the Year awards. We are honored to recognize the pioneers who are making a difference every day.

I hope you've had a restful summer, and I wish you and your family a joyful and successful 2025–26 school year.

**Thank you for being a  
valued partner in your  
child's education.**

All my best,  
Dr. Tony Sanders  
State Superintendent of Education



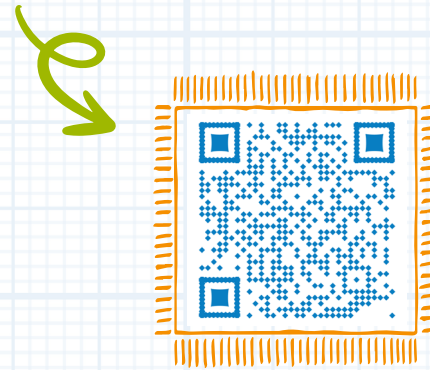
# Family and Community Engagement Calendar

**You are our greatest partner in your child's education!**

At the Illinois State Board of Education, we deeply value families as essential partners in education. We honor your diversity, experiences, and knowledge, and we warmly invite you to stay engaged with your local schools and districts throughout the year.

To support that partnership, we have created this calendar filled with **helpful tips**, **inspiring quotes**, and **resources** to share with your household and school community each month. In keeping with this year's theme of Innovation in Illinois, you'll also find monthly ideas to **spark creativity** and **encourage innovation** within your family.

To access links to all the resources featured in this calendar, visit the [ISBE 2025-26 School Year Family and Community Engagement Calendar](#) webpage on the ISBE website.



Be sure to follow us on social media for regular updates and opportunities to share your voice on new initiatives.

## Follow us on Social Media



Illinois state board  
of Education



Illinois state board  
of Education



@ISBENews



isbe.net



Illinois state board  
of Education



# August

## Monthlong Celebrations

- ~ Children's Eye Health and Safety
- ~ Immunization Awareness
- ~ Truancy Prevention

## August Resources

### Immunization Awareness and Children's Eye Health Month

Get ready for the new school year by ensuring your child is up to date on their health requirements, including immunizations and health, dental, and eye exams. Find the current immunization requirements on the [Illinois Department of Public Health Immunization webpage](#). Find the forms for health, dental, and eye exams under Forms for Students on the [ISBE Health Requirements/Student Health Data webpage](#).

### Truancy Prevention Month

Learn more about engaging with your child's school, the importance of attendance, and tips for a successful school year with the [National PTA's Family Resources](#) and [PTO Today's Back to School Resources](#).

### Illinois' Constitution

[The Office of the Illinois Secretary of State](#) provides a brief history of our Illinois Constitution.

Remember to update your contact information and sign up to your school's social media platform to stay informed on the school calendar, special events, and important information.

## Illinois Innovation

Martin Cooper, a Chicago native, invented the cell phone in 1973 while working for Motorola in Schaumburg. The device known as the DynaTAC (Dynamic Adaptive Total Area Coverage) weighed 2.5 pounds, stood 9 inches tall and provided only 35 minutes of talk time. Despite the short battery life and bulky size, it revolutionized how we communicate. Today, cell phones have become so accessible and common that even elementary school children often have them.

While cell phones can be a life saver in emergencies, they can also be a major distraction in the classroom. Check your school's policy on cell phones in the building. Review the policy with your child to ensure they understand the rules and consequences of using their cell phone during class time. You may also limit usage at home by enabling parent controls through your service provider to encourage homework completion and quality family time.








## Create Innovation at Home

Communication is a vital skill for any innovator. Many groundbreaking ideas — like the cell phone — were once considered far-fetched or even impossible. A century ago, the thought of using a handheld device to tele-communicate to someone miles away sounded like science fiction. However, thanks to clear communication and persistence, ideas like these became reality.

When your child comes up with a new idea, encourage them to think through how they would explain it to others. They should have a goal in mind. Can they clearly describe what problem they are trying to solve, the steps that are needed, and who or what may help them along the way?

By practicing clear communication, goal setting, and identifying resources, your child will not only strengthen their speaking and writing skills, but also learn how to turn ideas into action. These are the early steps of innovation!



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><b>“There is no innovation and creativity without failure. Period.”</b></p> <p>- Brené Brown <i>American academic</i></p>					1	2
3	4	5	6	7   State Fair in Springfield begins	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17   State Fair in Springfield ends	18	19	20	21	22   State Fair in Du Quoin begins	23
24 31	25	26  First Illinois Constitution adopted 	27	28	29	30

# September

## Monthlong Celebrations

~ Hispanic Heritage

## September Resources

### Hispanic and Latino Heritage Month

[The Smithsonian National Museum of the American Latino](#) provides digital resources as the physical building is constructed. [Latino Policy Forum](#) provides toolkits to help build equity for the Latino community.

### Labor Day

[Federal child labor provisions](#) ensure that work is safe for young people. For more information, call the Child Labor hotline at 800-645-5784.

### Suicide Prevention Week

Call 988 or text HOME to 741741 for the [Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#) to access counselors who provide support 24/7.

### Patriot Day

The [9/11 Memorial & Museum](#) is committed to providing ongoing resources for students, teachers, families, and the public.

### National Voter Registration Day

[National Voter Registration Day](#) has information to become **#voteready** and to promote voter registration.

## Illinois Innovation

Víctor Gómez, the 2025 Illinois Teacher of the Year, exemplifies how Illinois educators continue to inspire the next generation of innovators. Mr. Gómez, who has been recognized by the National Science Teacher Association, teaches bilingual science classes in Leyden High School District 212. He advocated for and successfully launched the school's first bilingual course and designed a curriculum tailored to provide more opportunities to the bilingual students in his community.

Mr. Gómez is a child of a Mexican immigrant who deeply values cultural heritage. To celebrate and empower students, he founded the Alianza Latin Student club and Mariachi Augilas, the first of their kind at Leyden, to honor his students' background through community and music.

Mr. Gómez also helped develop a partnership with Elmhurst University, enabling high school students to receive college credit. This helps create pathways for more bilingual students to enter and succeed in STEM



professions. In addition, he supports the teacher pipeline through mentorship of future bilingual teachers.

As Teacher of the Year, Mr. Gómez will travel across the state during his yearlong, state-funded sabbatical to share his passion, experiences, and commitment to education equity and innovation.

Request a speaking engagement by Mr. Gómez through ISBE's [Those Who Excel & Teacher of the Year webpage](#).

## Create Innovation at Home:

You don't have to be a teacher to inspire change - parents and students can be powerful advocates, too! Model innovation and teach your child the skills needed to become more confident. Here are some ways to get started:

- ~ **Research thoroughly** — Help your child explore both sides of an issue. Teach them how to understand key facts and evaluate data. Clear information builds a strong foundation for any idea.
- ~ **Craft a persuasive message** — Encourage your child to think about their audience. What words will connect with them? How can they clearly explain their idea to gain support?
- ~ **Be patient and persistent** — Remind your child that lasting change takes time. Support them in building positive relationships and goal commitment.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	<b>1</b>  Labor Day  State Fair in Du Quoin ends	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>  Grandparent's Day Suicide Prevention Week begins 	<b>8</b> International Literacy Day 	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> Patriot Day – Anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001, attacks 	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Suicide Prevention Week ends 
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Hispanic Heritage Month begins 	<b>16</b> Working Parent Day  IT Professionals Day  Voter Registration Day 	<b>17</b> Constitution Day 	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>  International Day of Peace	<b>22</b> First Day of Fall  Rosh Hashanah (Judaism) begins  Navratri (Hinduism) begins 	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> Rosh Hashanah ends 	<b>25</b>  68 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Little Rock Nine attending Central High School (a landmark moment in school desegregation)	<b>26</b>  Human Resources Professional Day	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<p><b>“Illinois’ fastest-growing student population is English learners. Víctor Gómez recognizes that bilingual students are poised for success in STEM – possessing the creativity, problem-solving skills, and non-linear thinking that are critical for innovation.”</b></p> <p><b>- Dr. Tony Sanders</b> State Superintendent of Education</p>			



# October

## Monthlong Celebrations

- ~ Bullying Prevention
- ~ Farm to School
- ~ Filipino American and Italian American Heritage
- ~ Fire Prevention
- ~ Learning Disabilities
- ~ LGBTQ+ History
- ~ Principal Appreciation

## October Resources

### LGBTQ+ History

[Public Act 101-0227](#) requires the inclusion of the contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the history of this country and state. ISBE's [Inclusive Curriculum Implementation Guidance](#) support schools in implementation of the law.

### Fire Prevention

The [National Fire Prevention Association](#) supplies toolkits and safety programs for community education.

### Learning Disabilities

The [National Center for Disabilities](#) aids those with learning disabilities with programs and scholarships.

### Bullying Prevention

Review [ISBE's Bullying Prevention webpage](#) for information and resources to support your child.

## Banned Books

The [American Library Association](#) and Banned Books Week Coalition set this year's theme as "Censorship is so 1984. Read for your rights." Visit your local library to check out books found on the banned list.

## Midwest Great Apple Crunch

[Illinois Farm to School](#) hosts the daylong Midwest Great Apple Crunch celebration as part of National Farm to School Month.

## Illinois Innovation

LGBT+ individuals have made lasting contributions to society. While Jane Addams never publicly identified as lesbian, she had two long-term, same-sex relationships in her life and openly expressed her love for her partner, Mary Rozet Smith. She was deeply connected to the lesbian community and an active advocate to advance women's rights through her work with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

In 2008, Addams was inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame. Her highest honor, however, was the Nobel Peace Prize for all her efforts to promote peace both nationally and internationally.

Addams' innovative thinking led to systems for change and made her a pioneer within the fields of social work, social reform, civic engagement, and feminism.

She co-founded Hull House in Chicago with Ellen G. Starr in 1889. Hull House provided vital services to millions of people through its 120-plus year history before closing in 2012.



## Create Innovation at Home

Some of the most creative ideas come from trying to solve everyday problems. As a family, work together to come up with solutions that improve home life or make a difference in your community.

Start by choosing a problem to solve — like doing household chores or something grander, like reducing food insecurity in your community. Once you've identified a common need, research possible solutions.

Next, create a **SMART goal** together: **Specific** — clearly defined. **Measurable** — a way to track progress. **Achievable** — a realistic goal. **Relevant** — meaningful to your family or community. **Timely** — set a deadline. When you reach your goal, celebrate your success as a family!

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><b>“Necessity is the mother of invention.”</b></p> <p>- Albert Einstein Theoretical physicist</p> 			<p><b>1</b></p> <p> International Walk to School Day</p> <p>Yom Kippur (Judaism) begins </p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p> Custodian Day</p> <p>Yom Kippur ends </p> <p>Navratri ends </p>	<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>4</b></p>
<p><b>5</b></p> <p> Fire Prevention Week begins</p> <p>Banned Books Week begins </p> <p>World Teachers' Day </p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p> Child Health Day</p> <p>Sukkot (Judaism) begins </p>	<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p>Midwest Great Apple Crunch </p>	<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>Coming Out Day </p> <p>Fire Prevention Week ends </p> <p>Banned Books Week ends </p>
<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>13</b></p> <p>Indigenous People's Day </p> <p>Columbus Day </p> <p>School Lunch Week begins </p> <p>Sukkot ends </p>	<p><b>14</b></p>	<p><b>15</b></p>	<p><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>17</b></p> <p>School Week ends </p>	<p><b>18</b></p>
<p><b>19</b></p> <p> America's Safe Schools Week begins</p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p> Health Education Week begins</p> <p>School Bus Safety Week begins </p>	<p><b>21</b></p>	<p><b>22</b></p> <p> Illinois School Bus Driver Appreciation Day</p>	<p><b>23</b></p>	<p><b>24</b></p> <p> Health Education Week ends</p> <p>Illinois Principal Appreciation Day </p> <p>Bus Safety Week ends </p>	<p><b>25</b></p> <p>America's Safe Schools Week ends </p>
<p><b>26</b></p>	<p><b>27</b></p>	<p><b>28</b></p>	<p><b>29</b></p>	<p><b>30</b></p> <p> School Report Cards published at <a href="http://IllinoisReportCard.com">IllinoisReportCard.com</a></p>	<p><b>31</b></p> <p>Halloween </p>	

# November

## Monthlong Celebrations

- ~ Family Literacy
- ~ HOPE
- ~ Native American Heritage

## November Resources

### Native American Heritage Month

The [National Park Services](#) and the [National Museum of the American Indian](#) celebrate Native American/American Indian culture with educator resources that align with [Native American and Indigenous Peoples Resource Guide](#).

### National Family Literacy Month

The [National Center for Family Learning](#) promotes fun, family learning activities.

### National Homeless Outreach Prevention and Engagement (HOPE) Month

Runaway and homeless youth prevention and support are offered by [1800Runaway.org](#). If you are struggling with housing insecurity, reach out to your school district's [McKinney-Vento liaison](#).

### International Students Day

Read [The History of November 17th](#) to learn more about student activism.

### Veterans Day

The [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

honors Americans who have served in the armed forces.

**Your school's Report Card will be available on the [Illinois Report Card website](#).**

## Illinois Innovation

Thanksgiving is a time to gather with loved ones, share a meal, and express our gratitude. After all the food has been served and the dirty dishes begin stacking up, there's one modern convenience many of us are especially thankful for the dishwasher!

We can thank Josephine Garis Cochrane for inventing the first successful hand-powered dishwasher in the early 1880s while living in Shelbyville. Widowed and in debt, she pursued her idea for a gentler, more efficient dishwashing machine.

Other dishwashing machines of the time used scrubbers that damaged fine china. Her design used water pressure to clean dishes without damage. She partnered with mechanic George Butters to help build her design.

Though her first model was not affordable for home use, it was perfect for hotels and restaurants. She became so successful that she was able to open her own manufacturing business. Despite the many barriers she faced as a woman in the 19th century, Josephine ultimately persevered and changed the way

we clean up after meals.

Today, many households use a modern version of her model, something to appreciate even more after the holiday feast.

## Create Innovation at Home























Science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) are all around us — from the technology we use at home, to our household decor. Celebrating STEAM with your family is a great way to spark curiosity, build critical thinking skills, and highlight how these fields shape our everyday lives.

Here are a few ways to celebrate and explore STEAM together:

- ~ **Visit a Museum (in person or online)** — Explore local museums or take virtual tours. Discuss the artists, inventors, and scientists you discover with your child.
- ~ **Explore STEAM Career** — Research exciting jobs in STEAM fields, such as robotics, graphic design, or architecture. Help your child see the real-world possibilities connected to their interests.
- ~ **Take a Nature Walk** — Go outside to observe your surroundings. Take notes or sketches of what you see and talk about your findings as a family.





SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><b>“Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.”</b></p> <p>- Steve Jobs</p> <p>American businessman</p> 						<p><b>1</b></p> <p> All Saints' Day</p> <p>Day of the Dead  (Día de los Muertos)</p>
<p><b>2</b></p> <p>Daylight saving time ends </p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>School Psychology Week begins </p>	<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p>School Psychology Week begins </p>	<p><b>8</b></p> <p> STEAM Day</p>
<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>Veterans Day </p>	<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>13</b></p> <p>World Kindness Day </p>	<p><b>14</b></p>	<p><b>15</b></p> <p> Illinois School Board Member Day</p>
<p><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>17</b></p> <p>Intl. Students' Day  American Education Week begins  Hunger &amp; Homelessness Awareness Week begins  Geography Awareness Week begins </p>	<p><b>18</b></p>	<p><b>19</b></p> <p>Education Support Professionals Day </p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p>Transgender Day of Remembrance </p>	<p><b>21</b></p> <p>Substitute Educators Day  Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week begins  American Education Week ends </p>	<p><b>22</b></p> <p> Geography Awareness Week ends</p>
<p><b>23</b> 30</p>	<p><b>24</b></p>	<p><b>25</b></p>	<p><b>26</b></p>	<p><b>27</b></p> <p>Thanksgiving </p>	<p><b>28</b></p>	<p><b>29</b></p> <p> 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the enactment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</p>

# December

## December Resources

### Special Education Day

If you are the family member of a child with disabilities, familiarize yourself with your rights and the resources available to support your child's learning on [ISBE's Special Education Parent/Guardian resource webpage](#).

### Happy Birthday, Illinois!

Visit [Illinois.gov](#) to find government agencies and places to visit throughout our great state.

### Computer Science Education Week

This year's theme is "Looking Back, Leaping Forward" to honor past achievements while inspiring the next generation to leap forward into new possibilities, according to [CSWeek.org](#). Check out ISBE's [Computer Literacy Factsheet](#) to learn more about computer science education requirements in Illinois.

### International Human Rights Day and Migrants Day

The United Nations summarizes the meaning and history behind [Human Rights Day](#) and [Migrants Day](#).

### U.S. Bill of Rights

Visit the [National Archives](#) to view videos, articles, exhibits, and other resources pertaining to the U.S. Bill of Rights.

## Illinois Innovation

We often see December as the midpoint of the school year — a time to rest, recharge, and enjoy winter break with the family. It's also a season with cultural and religious celebrations, many of which bring loved ones together to share special meals. And sometimes, the best part is dessert! If you've ever had to bring the dessert, you know that transporting a cake can be tricky. That's exactly what Bertha Palmer thought in 1893 when she invented the brownie while preparing boxed lunches for the Women's Pavilion at the World's Columbian Exposition, held to mark the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in America.

Cake was the preferred option for dessert; however, it was too large and heavy to pack in a lunch box, so Mrs. Palmer needed something more portable. Thankfully, she had access to her husband's pastry chefs at the Palmer House in Chicago. Eventually, they created the tasty treat now known as the "brownie." Today, you may enjoy Mrs. Palmer's original recipe at the [Palmer House Hilton Hotel](#), or you can bake them at home using



the [Palmer House Brownie recipe](#).

## Create Innovation at Home


Collaboration is a key ingredient in both innovation and creativity. When people from different backgrounds come together — each bringing their own skills and experiences — they're more likely to solve problems effectively, learn from one another, and create lasting impact.

As parents, we can help our children understand the value of networking and collaborating by encouraging them to build strong social skills from an early age.

- ✍ Enroll younger children in activities, such as sports, arts, or community programs, outside of school to expand their social skills, practice teamwork, and build friendships.
- ✍ Converse with older children and teens about the benefits of joining clubs, music groups, or leadership programs, or urge them to volunteer. If they are entering the workplace, discuss how collaboration in professional settings can lead to greater success.

In today's global economy, collaboration is essential. Teaching your child how to connect, communicate, and work effectively with others is one of the most valuable life skills you can pass on.



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3 <div>             State of Illinois Birthday              International Day of Persons with Disabilities  </div>	4	5	6
7 <div>              Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day           </div>	8 <div>              Computer Science Education Week begins              Bodhi Day (Buddhism)           </div>	9	10 <div>             International Human Rights Day  </div>	11	12	13
14 <div>              Computer Science Education Week ends             <div>               Hanukkah (Judaism) begins  </div> </div>	15	16	17	18 <div>              International Migrants Day           </div>	19	20
21 <div>             Winter begins  </div>	22 <div>             Hanukkah ends  </div>	23	24	25 <div>             Christmas (Christianity)  </div>	26 <div>              First Day of Kwanzaa           </div>	27
28	29	30	31 <div>             New Year's Eve  </div>	<div> <p> <b>“Innovation is the unrelenting drive to break the status quo and develop anew where few have dared to go.”</b> </p> <p> <b>- Steven Jeffes</b>  <i>Business executive</i> </p>  </div>		



# January

## Monthlong Celebrations

- ~ Braille Literacy
- ~ Mentoring
- ~ Poverty Awareness
- ~ School Board Recognition

## January Resources

### Braille Literacy

Visit [Paths to Literacy](#) to find braille lessons, free braille books, ideas to celebrate Louis Braille's birthday, and more.

### Holocaust Remembrance

Visit the [Illinois Holocaust Museum](#) virtually or in person for exhibitions, events, and training. Review ISBE's new [Resource Guide for Teaching About the Holocaust and Genocide](#). Submit a request for the Simon Wiesenthal Center's [Mobile Museum of Tolerance](#) to visit your school or community.

### Human Trafficking

Use Homeland Security Tip Line to report suspicion of trafficking at 1-866-347-2423 or text "HELP" or "INFO" to BeFree (233733) for resources.

### Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service

Use the database from [AmeriCorps](#) to find volunteer opportunities near you.

## Poverty Awareness

[United for ALICE](#) maintains data, resources, and research on Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) households – those that earn above the poverty line but below the cost of living.

## School Board Recognition

The [Illinois Association of School Boards](#) now offers information for those considering becoming a candidate.

## Illinois Innovation

Innovation isn't just for scientists and inventors. You too can be an innovator and be a part of an ever-growing community of problem-solvers and change-makers. Here are a few Illinois-based groups and initiatives that support and increase innovation throughout our state.

- ~ [Illinois Digital Educators Alliance \(IDEA\)](#) – This free membership offers professional learning opportunities, advocacy events, and resources for educators. They also host IDEACON, an annual conference for educators and innovators across Illinois.
- ~ [Innovate Illinois](#) – This public-private coalition focuses on four key initiatives:
  - ~ [Beyond Silicon](#) – Advancing next-generation computing.
  - ~ [Beyond Biology](#) – Leading biotech and life sciences.
  - ~ [Beyond Carbon](#) – Promoting clean energy innovation.

~ [Beyond Boundaries](#) – Expanding regional and community access to innovation.











- ~ [Illinois Innovation Network](#) – The network connects hubs across Illinois via universities, labs, and institutes – each focused on areas like entrepreneurship or health and wellness.

## Create Innovation at Home

As you set goals for the new year, consider adding one powerful resolution to your list: **"Change my mindset."** Dedicate this year to building a growth mindset – not just for yourself, but for your entire family. A growth mindset views mistakes, setbacks, and challenges as valuable learning opportunities. Instead of seeing failure as the end, see it as part of the journey toward success.

Here's how you can help your family embrace a growth mindset:

- ~ [Reframe challenges](#) – Encourage your child to see challenges as exciting opportunities, not obstacles.
- ~ [Celebrate effort, not just results](#) – Praise persistence, hard work, and progress.
- ~ [Learn from mistakes](#) – Talk about what went wrong and how to do better next time, without shame or blame.
- ~ [Model positive language](#) – Try replacing fixed-mindset phrases with growth mindset alternatives.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><b>“ Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts. ”</b></p> <p>- Ellen Ochoa</p> <p>American engineer and former astronaut</p> 				<b>1</b>  New Year's Day 	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>  World Braille Day (Louis Braille's birthday) 	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>  Law Enforcement Appreciation Day 	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b>   Human Trafficking Awareness Day	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>  Religious Freedom Day 	<b>17</b>  Kid Inventors Day 
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>   Martin Luther King Jr. Day	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>  International Day of Education 
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>   International Holocaust Remembrance Day	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>

# February

## Monthlong Celebrations

- ~ Black History
- ~ Career and Technical Education
- ~ Children's Dental Health
- ~ Heart Health
- ~ Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention

## February Resources

### Black History

The [Association for the Study of African American Life and History](#) has a mission to promote, research, preserve, interpret, and disseminate information about Black life, history, and culture. This year marks the 100th annual celebration of Black history. Carter G. Woodson initiated Negro History Week in 1926. It was expanded into Black History Month 50 years later and officially recognized by President Gerald Ford.

### Children's Dental Health Month

The [American Dental Association](#) provides posters and coloring pages as well as a program planning guide to promote children's dental health.

### Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention

Visit the [Teen Dating Violence Month](#) website to learn facts, prevention strategies, and how to promote awareness about the issue with

the teens in your life. The [Parent Discussion Guide on Youth Healthy Relationships](#) explains how parents can talk to their teens about healthy relationships.

### Lunar New Year

The 2026 Lunar New Year ushers in the Year of the Horse. Learn the story of the animals of the lunar zodiac on [Twinkl Educational Publishing's YouTube channel](#).

## Illinois Innovation

As we celebrate Children's Dental Health Month, it's important to recognize one of the most influential figures in dental history – Dr. Greene Vardiman Black, often referred to as “father of modern restorative dentistry.”

Dr. Black began his dental practice around 1858 in Winchester. He served as an Army scout during the Civil War in 1862. After being injured in 1863, he opened a dental practice in Jacksonville. This is when and where he began pioneering advancements in dental science and technique.

Among his many contributions to the field of dentistry, Dr. Black invented the cord-driven dental engine and a foot motor. He also was one of the first medical professionals to use nitrous oxide gas as an anesthetic in dental procedures. Dr. Black wrote the first textbook of human dental anatomy and was a visionary in the treatment of cavities and the use of amalgam for fillings.

Dr. Black also promoted the importance of preventative care. Children's Dental Health Month is a great opportunity to teach children about the importance of prevention practices in maintaining healthy teeth and gums – lessons rooted in the pioneering work of Dr. G.V. Black.

## Create Innovation at Home

Encourage your child to explore Career and Technical Education (CTE). Career exploration can start earlier than you might think – even in preschool! Simple activities like role-playing or reading books about different professions can spark curiosity and help children imagine themselves in a variety of careers. As they grow, encourage them to explore CTE programs, which offer hands-on instruction for careers in ever-evolving, high-skill, and in-demand occupations.








Invite family members and friends from different trades to share their career experiences with your child.

To learn more, visit [ISBE's Career Technical Education webpage](#) to find resources, such as a CTE calendar, [Work-Based Learning Database](#), and career guides for high school and middle school students.

Connect with your high school to better understand the CTE opportunities and requirements in your community.





SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>1</b>  Freedom Day (Anniversary of signing of resolution that later was ratified as 13th Amendment abolishing slavery)	<b>2</b>  Groundhog Day School Counseling Week begins	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>  World Read Aloud Day	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> School Counseling Week ends	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> Lincoln's Birthday	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b> School Resource Officer Appreciation Day	<b>16</b>  Presidents Day	<b>17</b> Lunar New Year (Chinese New Year) Random Acts of Kindness Day Ramadan (Islam) begins Mardi Gras	<b>18</b> Ash Wednesday (Christianity)	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>  School Social Work Week begins	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>  Public Schools Week begins	<b>27</b>  School Social Work Week begins	<b>28</b>

**“Exploration is the engine that drives innovation.  
Innovation drives economic growth.”**

- Dr. Edith Widder  
American oceanographer



# March

## Monthlong Celebrations

- Disability Awareness
- Middle Level Education
- Music in Our Schools
- Reading
- Women's History
- Youth Art

## March Resources

### Disability Awareness

Explore the library provided by the [National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability](#) for resources "promoting health and well-being for all."

### Middle School

[7 steps to succeeding in middle school](#) from Great Schools shares tips for better performance.

### Music in School

The [Illinois Arts Learning Standards](#) for music will help you determine the objectives your child should focus on. Use the essential questions to spark music conversation with your child.

### Women's History Month

[Women's History Month](#) highlights events, exhibits, audio-visual resources, and fascinating stories of the achievements of women in a variety of fields.

## School Breakfast Week

Discover more about the [National School Breakfast Program](#) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

## Pi Day

Understanding pi can be complicated; [Pi Day](#) can help unravel the mathematical mystery and inspire fun activities.

## Illinois Innovation

Inspire art and get creative! Motivate your child to try new artistic mediums like clay, tissue paper, watercolors, or spray paint. Trying something new can spark imagination.

Did you know that aerosol spray paint was invented in Sycamore? In 1949, Bonnie Seymour's husband Ed needed to paint radiators quickly for his business. Bonnie suggested using an aerosol spray can. That simple idea led to the birth of spray paint, launching an entirely new art form.

Ed Seymour founded Seymour of Sycamore Inc., which is still thriving today! It is the largest family-owned and privately held aerosol paint manufacturer in the United States. The company continues to innovate, developing products like water-based traffic paint, inverted tip markers for striping paint, and a cast-iron finish used on rebuilt engine blocks.



















Whether your child is crafting a masterpiece or just having fun experimenting, art is a great way to learn, express, and be inspired by the creativity that surrounds us — even in our own communities!

## Create Innovation at Home

Creativity fuels innovation! Look around your home. Could a splash of color or a fresh design breathe new life into an outdated piece of furniture? You might be surprised at what's possible with just a little imagination.

Try repurposing something simple — like turning an old bookshelf on its side to create a charming storage bench. Invite your kids to be part of the process from the very beginning. Encourage them to dream up their own design, complete with sketches, colors, and decorative ideas. This not only fuels their creativity but helps them feel ownership of the project.

Once the plans are in place, make it a family affair! Take turns sanding, painting, spray-painting, upholstering, or adding unique touches. Not only will you create a one-of-a-kind piece of functional art, but you'll also build wonderful memories along the way. The finished product? A beautiful, personalized furniture piece — and a great conversation starter when guests visit!

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2  Casimir Pulaski Day Read Across America Day  SEL Week begins  School Breakfast Week begins 	3	4	5	6  SELWeek ends  School Breakfast Week ends 	7
8  International Women's Day Daylight saving time begins 	9	10	11	12	13	14  Pi Day  Science Day 
15	16	17  St. Patrick's Day  Agriculture Day 	18	19  Ramadan ends 	20  Eid al-Fitr (Islam) begins 	21  World Down Syndrome Day 
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29  Palm Sunday (Christianity) 	30  Pencil Day 	31  Hanuman Jayanti (Hinduism) begins  Transgender Day of Visibility 	<div> <div> <p>“You can’t use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.”</p> <p>- Maya Angelou</p> <p>Poet</p> </div>  </div>			

# April

## Monthlong Celebrations

- ~ Arab American Heritage
- ~ Autism Acceptance
- ~ Bilingual/Multilingual Learner Advocacy
- ~ Child Abuse Prevention
- ~ Financial Literacy
- ~ Illinois Innovation and Technology
- ~ Military Child
- ~ School Library
- ~ Sexual Assault Awareness

## April Resources

### Arab American Heritage

The [Arab American Institute](#) honors the history of Arab Americans with resources.

### Autism Acceptance

The [Autism Society](#) connects families to community, screening and diagnosis, news, research, and supports.

### Child Abuse Prevention

Report suspected child abuse or neglect, to the [Department of Child and Family Services](#) online or at 1-800-25-ABUSE (22873).

### Earth Day

[Earthday.org](#) teaches sustainable living.

### Financial Literacy

Visit the Office of the [Illinois State Treasurer](#)

to find free resources to support financial literacy at all ages.

### Military Child

Our [Military Kids](#) lists organizations that aid military children and their families with support from child care to grief counseling.

### School Library

Stay updated on school libraries and kids' book through the [School Library Journal](#).

## Illinois Innovation

Illinois celebrates April as Innovation and Technology Month. This initiative provides a reminder and opportunity of the importance and value of the technology industry to businesses and residents of Illinois.

The [Illinois the Department of Information Technology](#) (DoIT) is the lead agency recognizing this month with special events and resources. DoIT guides and supports the executive branch of state government agencies with their technology needs. It also manages the [Illinois K-12 Broadband Network](#) and [DoIT STEAM](#), a program that supports student learning in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM). DoIT STEAM hosts an annual Career Spark STEAM Expo in April to provide hands-on career experiences to encourage eighth grade students to pursue careers in STEAM fields.

## Create Innovation at Home

Cultivate curiosity at home. Curiosity leads to learning, discovery, and innovation.



















Parents can create a healthy habit of curiosity by asking essential questions daily like "Why?" and "How?" Why was something made? How does that work? These simple questions can open the door to deeper understanding and spark new ideas.

Curiosity leads to meaningful exploration and provides a great opportunity to teach responsible research skills. Remind your child that when they look for answers, it's important to:

- ~ Identify and use credible sources they can trust.
- ~ Be able to cite the author or origin of the information.
- ~ Compare multiple sources to cross-check facts and perspectives.

These practices not only build strong critical thinking skills but also lay the foundation for academic honesty and lifelong learning. So, the next time someone in the family asks, **"Why does it work like that?"** – embrace it! You never know where that curiosity might lead.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><b>“Innovation is the calling card of the future.”</b></p> <p>- Anna Eshoo Former United States Representative</p> 			<p><b>1</b></p> <p>Paraprofessional Appreciation Day </p> <p>Passover (Judaism) begins </p> <p>Hanuman Jayanti (Hinduism) ends </p>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p> School Librarian Day</p>
<p><b>5</b></p> <p> Roman Catholic Easter</p>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p> Passover ends</p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p>Day of Silence  (Raising awareness about the bullying and harassment of LGBTQ+ students)</p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p> 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act</p>
<p><b>12</b></p> <p> Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) Day</p> <p>Eastern Orthodox Easter </p>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
<p><b>19</b></p> <p> Library Week begins</p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p>Public School Volunteer Week begins </p>	<b>21</b>	<p><b>22</b></p> <p> Earth Day</p> <p>Administrative Professionals Day </p>	<b>23</b>	<p><b>24</b></p> <p>Arbor Day </p> <p>Public Schools Volunteer Week ends </p>	<p><b>25</b></p> <p> Library Week ends</p>
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<p><b>28</b></p> <p> Bus Drivers Appreciation Day</p>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>		



# May

## Monthlong Celebrations

- Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage
- Foster Care
- Healthy Vision
- Jewish American Heritage
- Mental Health Awareness

## May Resources

### AANHPI Heritage Month

Visit ISBE's [Standards & Instruction webpage](#) for resources on the Teaching Equitable Asian American Community History (TEAACH) Act.

### Foster Care

Use ISBE's [Liaison Locator](#) tool to find your district's youth in care/foster care liaison.

### Jewish American Heritage

[The Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History](#) organizes events and curates resources to honor Jewish American Heritage Month.

### Mental Health Awareness

[BEACON](#) is a free resource for children's behavioral and mental health supports.

### Teacher Appreciation

Find ideas to celebrate your child's teachers

and staff at [PTOanswers.com](https://PTOanswers.com).

## Memorial Day

The [Wounded Warrior Project](#) explains the facts, meaning, and history behind Memorial Day.

## Illinois Innovation

May 1 marks College Decision Day. There are several factors that may influence a student's final decision — proximity to home, field of study, campus life and culture, and financial aid and/or affordability. However, for some the deciding factor is the opportunity to learn from distinguished professors. Many Illinois professors are pioneers in their fields, leading to groundbreaking research and innovative technologies.

Donald Bitzer and Gene Slottow were two such professors at the University of Illinois Urbana- Champaign. They worked to develop the first plasma screen. This technology was the precursor to today's high-definition, flat-panel television monitors. Their contribution was so impactful that they received an Emmy Award.

As you explore your college options, read the faculty biographies. You may discover a professor whose work not only aligns with your interests but also inspires your future.


## Create Innovation at Home

Illinois has [Computer Science Learning Standards](#) that cover the nine core practices of computer science. Review the [practices](#) and connect them with technology use at home.

- Practice 1** — Fostering an inclusive computing culture.
- Practice 2** — Collaborating around computing.
- Practice 3** — Recognizing and defining computational problems.
- Practice 4** — Developing and using abstraction.
- Practice 5** — Creating computational artifacts.
- Practice 6** — Testing and refining computational artifacts.
- Practice 7** — Communicating about computing.
- Practice 8** — Analyzing the effects of advancements in computing on one's society, economy, and culture.
- Practice 9** — Reflecting on and revising one's computational thought processes and those of others.

State law requires school districts to provide all students developmentally appropriate opportunities to gain [Computer Literacy skills](#). These skills support students in the use of computers and related technology. Learn more from ISBE's fact sheets on [Computer Literacy](#) and [Computer Science](#).



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><b>“Innovation is seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought.”</b></p> <p>- Dr. Albert Szent-Györgyi Hungarian biochemist</p>					<p><b>1</b></p> <p>School Principals' Day </p> <p>School Lunch Hero Day </p> <p>P.E. and Sport Week begins </p> <p>Vesak (Buddhism) </p>	<p><b>2</b></p>
<p><b>3</b></p> <p>Music Week begins </p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>Teacher Appreciation Week begins </p> <p>Holi (Hinduism) </p>	<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>School Nurse Day </p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p>Physical Education and Sport week ends </p>	<p><b>8</b></p> <p>School Communicators Day </p> <p>Teacher Appreciation Week ends </p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p>Music Week ends </p>
<p><b>10</b></p> <p>Mother's Day </p>	<p><b>11</b></p>	<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>13</b></p>	<p><b>14</b></p>	<p><b>15</b></p>	<p><b>16</b></p>
<p><b>17</b></p>	<p><b>18</b></p> <p>Speech Pathologist Day </p>	<p><b>19</b></p>	<p><b>20</b></p>	<p><b>21</b></p> <p>Illinois Crossing Guard Day </p>	<p><b>22</b></p>	<p><b>23</b></p>
<p><b>24</b> <b>31</b></p>	<p><b>25</b></p> <p>Memorial Day </p>	<p><b>26</b></p>	<p><b>27</b></p>	<p><b>28</b></p>	<p><b>29</b></p>	<p><b>30</b></p>

# June

## Monthlong Celebrations

- ~ Caribbean American Heritage
- ~ LGBTQ+ Pride
- ~ Men's Health
- ~ Dairy

## June Resources

### Caribbean American Heritage

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign sponsors the [Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies](#), where you may sign up for its newsletter, join events, and explore the [Latin American and Caribbean Studies collection](#) from its virtual library.

### Dairy Month

Innovation can be found anywhere, including on a farm. [Dairy Farmers of America](#) created CoLAB to continue to innovate in their field.

### LGBTQ+ Pride

ISBE's Student Care Department designed a page pertaining to [support of transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming students](#). Also check out [ISBE's Family Resources on Inclusivity](#).

### Men's Health

[Men's Health Month](#) is a monthlong observance to promote awareness, prevention, and education on male health issues worldwide.

## Juneteenth

Illinois declared June 19 an official state holiday in 2021. Juneteenth commemorates the end of slavery in the United States, when freedom reached enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, two and half years after the Emancipation Proclamation. Check out [Juneteenthillinois.com](#) to learn more about the history behind the holiday and find an event near you.

## Illinois Innovation

Congratulations, graduates! The sky's the limit – keep reaching for it!

That's exactly what William LeBaron Jenney did when he revolutionized architectural engineering by building upward, using an iron frame to support a taller structure. In 1884, he pushed the limits by designing the world's first skyscraper – the Home Insurance Building in Chicago. Completed in 1885, the 10-story structure stood 138 feet tall and forever changed the skyline of the city – and the world.

Just like Chicago's towering landmarks, may your ambitions rise above limits and reshape the future. Keep reaching!



## Create Innovation at Home

Looking for a fun and educational way to challenge your child's mind? Try a simple engineering activity that encourages creativity, problem-solving, and resilience – all through play!

Gather everyday household items, such as dry pasta, straws, paper, and a small amount of tape. The key is to choose materials that are a bit tricky to work with – this adds to the challenge! Make sure each participant has the same set of supplies to keep things fair. Set a timer and see who can build the tallest free-standing structure before time runs out. Then, gather everyone together and talk about the experience:

- ~ What part of the challenge was the hardest?
- ~ How did they try to solve that problem?
- ~ What might they try differently next time?

These kinds of activities do more than build towers – they build confidence, patience, and perseverance. By facing small frustrations and learning to work through them, children grow stronger and more resourceful. Challenges are a natural part of growing up. It's in overcoming them that we raise resilient, innovative thinkers who aren't afraid to take on the world.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8  International World Oceans Day	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
 Flag Day				Autistic Pride Day 	Juneteenth 	
21  Father's Day First Day of Summer	22	23  53rd anniversary of Title IX (U.S. civil rights law that prohibits sex discrimination in any education program or activity receiving federal funding)	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	<div> <div> <div>“Doubt is the father of invention.”</div> <div>- Galileo Galilei</div> <div>Astronomer</div> </div>  </div>			

# July

## Monthlong Celebrations

- ~ Social Wellness
- ~ Disability Pride

## July Resources

### Disability Pride

[The Illinois Department of Human Services](#) provides services, benefits, and education pertaining to disability and rehabilitation. You may dial the help line for further information at 1-800-843-6154 or TTY 266-324-5553.

### Social Wellness

[Hello 4 Health](#) defines social well-being and explains its five key areas — integration, contribution, actualization, coherence, and acceptance.

### Child Care

[Illinois Cares for Kids](#) includes a database with over 10,000 child care and early learning programs throughout Illinois.

### Independence Day (July 4)

In 2026, Americans nationwide celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The [Illinois America 250 Commission](#) was established to “develop, encourage, and execute an inclusive commemoration and observance of the founding of the United States of America, and Illinois’ imperative role in the nation’s history.”

Make sure your community is represented in the celebrations at [il250.org](http://il250.org).

## Illinois Innovation

Summer break is the perfect time for a road trip — and what better way to pass the miles than with some car karaoke? We can thank Paul Galvin’s innovative thinking for making music on the go possible. In 1930, the Galvin Manufacturing Corp., based in Chicago, introduced the first mass-produced car radio under the brand name “Motorola” — a blend of “motor” and “Victrola.”

Before this breakthrough, car radios were far too expensive for the average consumer. Galvin’s affordable design changed that, making in-car entertainment accessible and setting the stage for car radios to become a standard feature in vehicles across the world.

## Create Innovation at Home

### Focus on the Process: Encouraging Reflective Thinking in Young Creators

When your child is engaged in a creative project — encourage them to shift their focus from the final product to the process itself. This builds critical thinking, problem-solving, and a deeper understanding of how they learn.



Ask your child to take simple notes as they work. These could include:

- ~ What steps they took.
- ~ What strategies they used.
- ~ What worked well — and what didn’t.
- ~ Why they think certain approaches were successful.



Afterward, have a conversation about their process. Ask questions like:

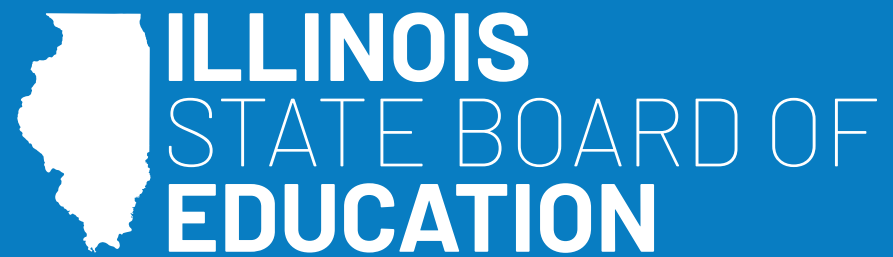
- ~ “Why do you think that method worked better than the other?”
- ~ “What could you try next time?”
- ~ “Can you think of another way to solve the same problem?”

By reflecting on their decisions and strategies, children learn to evaluate their thinking, adapt to challenges, and develop resilience.

These reflection habits help your child grow into a thoughtful, independent learner.



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><b>“It always seems impossible until it is done.”</b></p> <p>- Nelson Mandela</p> <p>Activist</p>			1	2	3	4  Independence Day, 250 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26  35 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	27	28	29	30	31	



[isbe.net](http://isbe.net)