



October 22, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to require significant attention from our educators and administrators. In this context, I have received requests from stakeholders to revisit the flexibility provided last school year around teacher evaluations.

I have heard from superintendents and principals about the challenges of juggling staffing shortages, testing programs, contact tracing, and public health requirements, while trying to protect against physical and emotional burnout for themselves, their students, and their staff. Some school districts have continued to teach and learn through periods of remote learning, as they have taken adaptive pauses and managed COVID-19 outbreaks.

Recognizing the still uniquely challenging circumstances of the current school year, I brought the issue of teacher evaluations before the Illinois State Board of Education at its October 19 meeting. The Board unanimously supported providing the same type of flexibility for teacher evaluations that we provided last year.

We encourage school districts to continue the practice of summative evaluations as a means of recognizing and improving the performance of educators by identifying areas of strength and support. Teacher evaluations provide an opportunity for administrators to observe teachers, to ensure they're providing high-quality, rigorous instruction and meaningful feedback to their students. These observations inform how administrators support teachers who are struggling with the ongoing challenges of the pandemic.

ISBE will not initiate regulatory action against districts that do not move forward with summative evaluations this year. This flexibility will be available for this school year only.

Please keep in mind that if a performance evaluation is not conducted, then a teacher's rating defaults to Proficient – with the exception of teachers who received an Excellent on their most recent evaluation, whose ratings will default to Excellent, per [Public Act 101-643](#).

Thank you for your steadfast focus on supporting the growth of Illinois' students and educators.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen I. Ayala".

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala  
State Superintendent of Education