



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 24, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

Governor JB Pritzker's recent decision to keep remote learning in place for the remainder of the school year will help keep Illinois residents safe and healthy, but naturally brings up many questions for students and their families. Governor Pritzker today filed Executive Order 2020-31, which addresses some outstanding issues regarding graduation requirements for high school seniors and licensure requirements for educators. The executive order, in conjunction with emergency rules that ISBE will file early next week, will ensure that all high school seniors can graduate this year as expected, and all qualified educators and prospective educators can support our students in the fall as planned. ISBE will release detailed additional information regarding graduation and licensure flexibility early next week once the emergency rules are in place.

Students and teachers also may be wondering when and how they can go to school buildings to gather their belongings. Each district may develop a process for students and educators to collect their belongings and should consult with district legal counsel, county health departments, and the Illinois Department of Public Health to ensure the process keeps everyone safe and protected. Ideally, guidelines should minimize entry into buildings. Plans should be crafted and implemented using maximum empathy for students and families who may have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in ways that create or exacerbate inequities. Try to create flexible timeframes to accommodate families struggling with transportation issues or limited resources at home and families collecting materials for multiple students. Let common sense and kindness help guide your planning.

If entry is allowed, ISBE makes the following recommendations:

- Schools and districts should consider creating schedules for a limited number of individuals to enter buildings for the gathering of a student's personal belongings. Schools and districts should consider creating timeslots per hour per building based on multiple criteria i.e., number of students, building layout, and internal resources available to oversee the process.
- Students and staff should wear face coverings while in the building.
- Unless a student requires one-on-one assistance, guests who arrive to assist students should be required to remain in their vehicle until the student brings their items outside to be loaded into their vehicle. If one-on-one assistance is necessary, only one guest may accompany students into the building. Parents or guardians may also gather personal belongings on behalf of students.
- After the "pick-up" day, keys or district-owned padlocks should remain on lockers untouched for at least four days.
- Wipes and sanitizer should be made available in school buildings for staff and students.
- If carts are provided by the school, staff should sanitize the carts between uses.
- Schools should consider custodial support that may be needed to address litter produced during this process and to sanitize the school following access by parents, guardians and students.

This information regarding item pick-up from school buildings, as well as information regarding extracurricular activities and state grants, has been added to our [updated comprehensive guidance document](#).

We are excited to share that ISBE has received its CARES Act funding application from the U.S. Department of Education. We are working on submitting the application as soon as possible and will provide you with an update upon submission. School districts should start thinking about the ways these funds can help meet students' needs and how they can use these funds to increase students' access to the internet and technology.

The CARES Act also includes waivers, for which Illinois is approved, to allow local education agencies more flexibility in Titles I, II, III, and IV as well as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Details are available on our website at www.isbe.net/Documents/CARES-Act-District-Waivers.pdf.

Lastly, I want to remind you that the impact every educator can have on a child goes beyond teaching and learning; as educators, we care for the whole child — their social, emotional, and physical health. Part of that sacred responsibility is serving as a Mandated Reporter. If you suspect abuse or neglect, state law requires that teachers, school personnel, child care workers, educational advocates assigned to a child pursuant to the School Code, and truancy officers, among others, report suspected neglect or abuse. The Children's Advocacy Centers of Illinois have provided the following fact sheet to help school-related Mandated Reporters be watchful for signs of concern: www.isbe.net/Documents/CACI-Essential4kids-Schools.pdf. Please help protect Illinois children's safety and wellbeing by staying in daily contact with every student. If you have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, you must directly report it immediately to the hotline: 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873).

Thank you for everything you do. I know the past few weeks have been challenging – even harrowing, for some – but I am constantly thankful to have you by my side as we lead and care for our students and communities.

Now, I've heard a rumor that today is Friday, so please transition from remote learning to remote relaxation and enjoy your weekend.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen I. Ayala". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education
Illinois State Board of Education