



# Illinois State Board of Education

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**Darren Reisberg**  
*Chair of the Board*

**Dr. Carmen I. Ayala**  
*State Superintendent of Education*

March 13, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for your extraordinary leadership over the past several days, as Illinoisans have worked together to protect our communities during the growing coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic. Many of you have already made the difficult decision to close schools. Today, to further safeguard our communities from the spread of the virus, Governor JB Pritzker has declared mandatory school closures for all schools, both public and private, serving Illinois pre-kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.

**This mandatory closure takes effect Tuesday, March 17. Currently, we anticipate the closure to last through March 30. If your district's spring break is scheduled outside of this window, please consider moving your spring break to within this timeframe. You no longer need to report school closures to ISBE during this time.**

ISBE is reviewing all possible impacts of the school closure, including calendar requirements, assessments, accountability, etc. **ISBE will issue no penalties and will work to ensure no negative consequence to districts.** We understand that you may have many technical questions, and we assure you these will be addressed. Today, our number one priority is and must continue to be ensuring that the students of Illinois are safe, healthy, and taken care of.

You have full autonomy to provide continuous learning opportunities in the way that you are able, including through technology and free online resources. We encourage you to explore and implement what works best for your school community. Please see below for optional resources and examples.

ISBE has obtained the USDA waiver to provide meals during school closures, including to children under 5. Please make every effort to provide meals for all children who need them, no matter their resources and no matter what school they attend, in the way that works best for your community, such as grab-and-go or delivery. Districts will need to complete a one-page form that takes less than 10 minutes. Please send to ISBE at [CNP@isbe.net](mailto:CNP@isbe.net) as soon as possible.

We are also asking that at least one administrator stay on-site during the regular hours of the school day in case children whose parents cannot be home or children experiencing homelessness need a safe place to go. Please exercise social distancing in all situations.

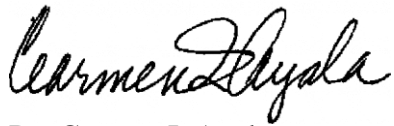
This is an unprecedented event in our lifetime. This public health emergency is evolving rapidly, and we will continue to inform you as quickly as we can.

If you have any questions, please email [COVID19closure@isbe.net](mailto:COVID19closure@isbe.net). ISBE staff will be monitoring this account over the weekend and in the weeks ahead. This account is reserved for administrators. Parents and other members of the public should email [COVID19@isbe.net](mailto:COVID19@isbe.net).

ISBE's previously scheduled e-learning webinar 2-4 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17 will now be a webinar for administrators to discuss this guidance and answer any questions you may have. Please register at [register.gotowebinar.com/register/7795133226120905987](https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7795133226120905987). If you already registered for the e-learning webinar, you do not need to register again.

We appreciate your support. We will get through this together.

Sincerely,



Dr. Carmen I. Ayala  
State Superintendent of Education

## **SCHOOL CLOSURE GUIDANCE**

### **ACTIVITIES**

All in-person school-sponsored activities that are scheduled during the statewide school closure are suspended until school resumes.

### **ASSESSMENTS, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM**

The U.S. Department of Education has communicated that it will make waivers available for assessments and accountability. ISBE will work in partnership with stakeholders to determine next steps for Illinois.

### **CONTINUITY OF EDUCATION**

You have full autonomy to provide continuous learning opportunities in the way that you are able, including through technology and free online resources. We encourage you to explore and implement what works best for your school community.

Some ideas include:

- Send books home with students and/or print out articles, poetry, and writing prompts.
- Assign a long-term research-based project aligned to multiple standards.
- Put together learning packets to review or enhance material already taught.
- Assign simple science projects that could be done at home.
- Review textbooks and print the supplemental lessons that one often does not have time to do in class.
- Use any online resources available to teachers and print assignments to do at home.

- Have students write reflection essays about a movie watched or a book read and scaffold the assignment for different age ranges.
- If your school district is providing grab-and-go meals or meal delivery, make take home packets available at the same location or through the same delivery mechanism.

ISBE staff have identified a few free online resources that can be sources of activities and inspiration:

- Share My Lesson: [www.sharemylesson.com](http://www.sharemylesson.com)
- National Geographic: [https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education/resource-library/?q=&page=1&per\\_page=25](https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education/resource-library/?q=&page=1&per_page=25)
- Field Museum: <https://www.fieldmuseum.org/educators/learning-resources/plants-animals>
- Lesson Planet: <https://www.lessonplanet.com/>
- The Learning Network: <https://www.nytimes.com/section/learning>
- Statistics in Schools: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sis/2020census/2020-resources.html>
- EdEx: <https://www.edx.org/>
- Global Digital Library: <https://www.digitallibrary.io/>
- Khan Academy: <https://www.khanacademy.org/>
- Learning Equality: <https://learningequality.org/kolibri/>

ISBE has compiled a [list of free resources](#) to support districts in providing opportunities to English Learners.

### **EVIDENCE-BASED FUNDING**

Evidence-Based Funding will continue as usual and will not be impacted by the school closure.

### **IEP MEETINGS, DUE PROCESS HEARINGS, AND MEDIATION**

To the extent practicable, districts should continue to meet any obligations relating to convening IEP meetings and complying with timelines for due process hearings and mediations. Schools may avail themselves of alternate means of meeting, including telephone or videoconference. All parties to due process hearings and mediations should take instruction from the hearing officer or mediator.

### **MEDICATION**

Districts must ensure families have access to needed medication stored in the school or nurses' office, which may include parent pickup of needed medication during statewide school closure.

### **NUTRITION**

ISBE has already obtained the USDA waiver to provide meals during school closures, including to children under 5. Please make every effort to provide meals for all children who need them, no matter their resources and no matter what school they attend, in the way that works best for your community, such as grab-and-go or delivery. Districts will need to complete a one-page waiver that takes less than 10 minutes: [www.isbe.net/Documents/ISBE-66-98.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/Documents/ISBE-66-98.pdf). Please send to ISBE at [CNP@isbe.net](mailto:CNP@isbe.net) as soon as possible.

School districts that do not participate in the federally funded school lunch or breakfast programs do not need to submit the waiver and are encouraged to also provide meals to children who may need them. ISBE is working with community organizations such as the major food banks who are working with their networks to assist in areas where potential meals may be needed.

### **Participation Requirements**

- Meals must meet the meal pattern requirements.
- Meals offered to children age 18 and below, or enrolled in school, are reimbursable.
- There is NO reimbursement for meals offered to adults, although school may offer such meals for purchase.
- Daily counts are required by meal service type. Please make sure that you are collecting this data on a daily basis.
- Schools should consult local Department of Public Health for questions related to food safety requirements.

### **Implementation Guidance**

- Ensure all the students' nutritional needs are addressed. This includes students with allergies and other food restrictions. Make sure to mark the food appropriately.
- Create multiple geographically located food distribution centers where necessary. Students are not allowed to eat inside the school.
- Ensure that all necessary personnel are stationed to maximize student and staff safety and that all distribution sites are supervised.
- Explore distribution strategies that will avoid large gatherings of people and make social distancing possible.
- Students can receive two meals a day (one breakfast, one lunch, or one snack in any combination). Both meals can be distributed at once either via pick-up, drive-up or delivery.
- Only parent/guardians/students themselves may pick up food. Children do not need to be accompanied by an adult to receive food.
- Allow ample and reasonable amount of time for meal pick-up for each meal service, recognizing that families may be experiencing challenges during this time.
- Use multiple modes of communication to inform students and families of available food service, including time, location, and method of distribution.
- Consider multiple methods of distribution, such as drive up; walk up; satellite locations, such as libraries, churches, park districts, and youth centers; home delivery via bus routes; and other options.

### **POLLING PLACES**

The election on March 17 is currently scheduled to proceed. This school closure mandate does not affect the availability of school buildings to serve as polling places. Please work with your county clerk if you have questions or concerns.

### **STUDENT SAFETY**

ISBE asks that at least one administrator stay on-site during the regular hours of the school day in case children whose parents cannot be home or children experiencing homelessness need a safe place to go. Please exercise social distancing in all situations. ISBE also strongly

recommends that districts conduct outreach to families concerning students who may be at an elevated risk due to statewide school closures.