

Illinois State Board of Education



Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent
of Education

The mission of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is to provide each and every child with safe and healthy learning conditions, great educators and equitable opportunities by practicing data-informed stewardship of resources and policy development, all done in partnership with educators, families and stakeholders. The vision of the ISBE is that all children are equipped to make meaningful contributions to society and live life to its fullest potential.

The ISBE believes that Illinois has an urgent and collective responsibility to achieve educational equity by ensuring that all policies, programs and practices affirm the strengths that children bring within their diverse backgrounds and life experiences, and by delivering the comprehensive supports, programs and educational opportunities they need to succeed.

The 1970 Illinois Constitution directed that the responsibilities for elementary and secondary education in the state be transferred from an elected superintendent to an appointed board of citizens. The resulting nine-member State Board of Education sets policies and guidelines for public schools — preschool through grade 12 — as well as for career and technical education. The board analyzes the goals, needs and requirements of education, and recommends legislation to the General Assembly for the benefit of nearly 2 million students in Illinois schools.

Throughout 2019 and 2020, the ISBE created a new strategic plan to improve student success in Illinois by refocusing on three goal areas:

- **Student Learning:** All students will make significant academic gains each year, increasing their knowledge, skills and opportunities so they graduate equipped to pursue a successful future, with the state paying special attention to addressing historic inequities.
- **Learning Conditions:** All schools will receive the resources necessary to create safe, healthy and welcoming learning environments and will be equipped to meet the unique academic, social and emotional needs of each and every child.
- **Elevating Educators:** Illinois' diverse student population will have educators who are prepared through multiple pathways and are supported in and recognized for their efforts to provide students with an education that meets their needs.

The plan provides a roadmap for Illinois public schools through 2023 and defines the steps the board will take to provide students in our state with safe and engaging schools, excellent teachers, and equitable learning opportunities. The plan reflects both the realities and uncertainties facing Illinois schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has affected almost every aspect of education in Illinois — temporarily in some and lasting in others.

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced Illinois schools to shift suddenly to fully remote learning for all students. Bolstered by more than \$600 million in federal relief funds, the ISBE made significant investments in expanding access to computers, tablets and the internet — advancing the goal of all students being able to engage meaningfully in synchronous learning from home.

The ISBE worked closely with the Illinois Department of Public Health to produce guidance in response to the pandemic in a concerted effort to lead Illinois schools safely through each phase of mitigation and recovery.

Illinois Teacher of the Year and Those Who Excel

The ISBE annually recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to elementary and secondary education with the Teacher of the Year and Those Who Excel awards programs. The top award is for the Illinois Teacher of the Year. The field of 10 Regional Teachers of the Year/finalists for the award in 2021 consisted of teachers from seven regions across the state and three teachers from Cook County, all of whom were selected by the ISBE from nominations submitted to the board.



Justin Johnson, left, a band instructor at Niles West High School in Niles Township High School-District 219, is a Cook County Co-Teacher of the Year and the 2021 Illinois Teacher of the Year.

Board Members: Darren Reisberg, *chair*; Dr. Donna Leak, *vice chair*; Dr. Christine Benson; Dr. David Lett; Susie Morrison; Jane Quinlan; and Jacqueline Robbins.

Administrative Personnel

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala.....*State Superintendent of Education*
 Trisha Olson.....*Legal Officer*
 Tassi Maton.....*Internal Audit Officer*
 Melissa Oller.....*Operating Officer*
 Robert Wolfe.....*Finance Officer*
 Dr. Ernesto Matias.....*Education Officer*
 Irma Snopek.....*Policy & Communications Officer*
 Dr. Brenda M. Dixon.....*Research & Evaluation Officer*

2019-20 Illinois Education Statistics*

Public school enrollment.....1,957,018
 Elementary (Pre-K-8).....1,349,530
 Secondary (9-12).....607,488
 Percentage of low-income students.....48.5%
 **Percentage of ninth-grade students on track to graduate.....88.8%
 ***Four-year graduation rate.....88%
 Number of staff certified (full-time equivalent).....137,253
 Percentage of teachers with a master’s degree or higher.....59.8%

*Illinois received a federal waiver and did not administer the state assessments that are normally required by the federal government in math, English language arts and science; therefore, 2020 assessment data is not available.

**ISBE strongly encouraged Illinois schools to amend normal grading policies in spring 2020, such as to “pass or incomplete,” to ensure grading policies during the COVID-19 pandemic would not harm students; therefore, 2020 ninth-graders on track metrics cannot be compared to prior years.

***Executive Order 2020-31 amended state graduation requirements for the Class of 2020 to ensure that the COVID-19 pandemic would not prevent students from graduating in spring 2020; therefore, 2020 graduation rates cannot be compared to prior years.