

Illinois State Board of Education



RESOLUTION

Supporting
In-Person Learning

September 7, 2021

WHEREAS, the hard work of our health care professionals and the conscientious diligence of all Illinoisans who altered their lives and daily habits to contain the spread of COVID-19 have allowed Illinois to transition into Phase 5 of the Restore Illinois Plan on June 11, 2021, allowing businesses to resume normal operations and public gatherings of all sizes to proceed; and

WHEREAS, students and school staff have meaningful protection from COVID-19, with three highly effective vaccines widely available to all Illinoisans age 12 and older and trials underway to determine if younger children can benefit from COVID-19 vaccines; and

WHEREAS, our schools have the capability to rapidly identify new cases to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks and reduce the risk of further transmission, thanks to the State of Illinois providing schools free access to Abbott's BinaxNOW rapid test and offering all schools in Illinois the use of covidSHIELD tests free of charge; and

WHEREAS, multiple studies show that – although online classes are a far better option than no classes at all – students, particularly students who struggle academically, still learn better while in person alongside their teachers; and

WHEREAS, reconnecting with teachers and peers in-person is essential for students' mental health and social-emotional development, especially after the prolonged isolation of the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Illinois schools are receiving \$7.8 billion in federal pandemic relief funds for the safe return to in-person learning and to address learning gaps caused by the pandemic through strategies, such as tutoring, summer school, and community partnerships for mental health; and

WHEREAS, all Illinois public school districts are offering in-person learning consistent with Illinois State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala's declaration in July 2021; and

WHEREAS, in August 2021, the Illinois Department of Public Health and Illinois State Board of Education issued guidance titled Revised Public Health Guidance for Schools: Part - 5 Supporting the Full Return to In-Person Learning for All Students that provides instruction on effectively layering required and recommended mitigation strategies to protect the safety of in-person learning; and

WHEREAS, 77 IL Admin Code 690.30 grants Illinois schools the authority to exclude Illinois students from school due to contacts related to communicable and infectious diseases, including COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of brief intervals of remote learning for individual students or schools pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/10-30 and 105 ILCS 5/34-18.66 is to keep the school community safe, provide continuity of learning, and ensure students transition back to in-person learning successfully and as quickly as possible; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois State Board of Education wishes to reaffirm the rights, powers, and duties of schools to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for all students and staff, including providing remote learning for students who are excluded from school;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Illinois State Board of Education supports Illinois State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala in making the following amended declaration: Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, all schools must resume fully in-person learning for all student attendance days, provided that, pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/10-30 and 105 ILCS 5/34-18.66, remote instruction must be made available for students who are excluded by a school pursuant to 77 Ill. Admin. Code 690.30, or students who are under isolation, quarantine, or adaptive pause consistent with guidance or requirements from a local health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health.

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