Illinois State Board of Education

RESOLUTION

Supporting
In-Person Learning

May 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 the Bridge Phase of the Restore Illinois plan; and

WHEREAS, barring any unforeseen setbacks and changes in public health conditions, the State of Illinois will, on June 11, enter Phase 5 of the Restore Illinois plan, allowing businesses to resume normal operations and public gatherings of all sizes to proceed; and

WHEREAS, students and school staff now 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 middle and high schools use of covidSHIELD tests at a reduced or no cost; 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, nearly all Illinois public school districts are offering partial or fully in-person learning; and

WHEREAS, guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health is forthcoming regarding updated mitigations for schools in Phase 5 of the Restore Illinois plan;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Illinois State Board of Education supports the following declaration of Illinois State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala: 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 be made available for students who are not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine **and** are under a quarantine order by a local public health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health.

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