

Dear Colleague,

As we face ongoing challenges in the education field locally and nationwide, I am inspired by the dedication our educators and school leaders are showing in meeting this difficult moment and uplifting their school communities. The Illinois State Board of Education and our partners across the state remain deeply committed to supporting our multilingual and English learner students. It is with this commitment at the forefront that I wish to cordially invite you to an important convening of multilingual education leaders from across the state.

The 2026 Multilingual Illinois/ESSA Statewide Conference is coordinated by the Illinois Resource Center and the Illinois Principals Association, in collaboration with ISBE. This year's conference will be held December 8th-10th at the state-of-the-art Tinley Park Convention Center.

The 2026 Multilingual Illinois/ESSA Statewide Conference comes at a critical time, as we are all seeking resources, collaboration and support in ensuring our students and communities continue to grow, learn and thrive amidst current challenges. We are stronger together, and the connections built and resources shared at this convening will be all the more important in the coming months and years. English learners now comprise nearly a fifth of all Illinois public school students, and many districts are welcoming these students for the first time ever, making the content and community of this conference all the more relevant and meaningful. This is one of the most important teacher and administrator gatherings in the state because of the specialized focus on these targeted populations and the educators and administrators that serve them.

This conference provides attendees information about best practices, useful innovations, new technologies, and practical approaches to everyday school management, as well as critical and timely issues. As the world around us rapidly changes, sparking conversations about the use of technology in the classroom (most notably artificial intelligence), conference speakers and partners have shared and will continue to share responsive, relevant and resourceful ways to adapt to these changes and leverage them to support learning. The conference also offers the opportunity for attendees to connect with publishers, technology companies, and other vendors who may aid in your continuous school improvement journey.

We are proud of the thoughtful collaboration and partnership the ISBE team and the IRC have maintained throughout the years of this conference. Our team has been working closely with the IRC to ensure that this conference “meets the moment” — that every activity and concurrent session is meaningful and relevant to educators, administrators, and the communities they serve.

My ISBE team and I look forward to connecting with you at this conference. Just as you plan to mingle with your peers from around the state, I encourage you to feel at ease with ISBE staff. We strive to be a resource for you.

Thank you for joining me for several days of learning, building relationships, and being inspired to do all we can to serve Illinois students at a time they need us most.

All my best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Sanders", written in a cursive style.

Dr. Tony Sanders
State Superintendent of Education