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CELL PHONES: AWAY ALL DAY HELPS KIDS THRIVE

We are excited to see Illinois make such fast and bipartisan headway on legislation to ban cell phones in schools! SB 2427 (Castro/Mussman) passed the Senate unanimously. If it makes it through the House, Illinois will join eight other states in requiring phones to be away during the school day.


Stand for Children has partnered with a national organization called “Away for the Day” that

supports cell phone policies in schools that require phones to be away from the first bell to the last bell, locking them away in pouches or envelopes that students cannot access and that keep teachers from being enforcers one class at a time.

A meta-analysis of 44 studies confirms the detrimental impact of phones during school. Growing evidence shows that unrestricted use of personal electronic


devices and access to social media by students:

- ▶ Interferes with the educational and social development mission of schools.
- ▶ Lowers student performance.
- ▶ Promotes cyberbullying.
- ▶ Contributes to academic dishonesty.




**83%** of NEA member teachers support phone-free policies during the entire school day with exceptions for medical needs and assistive tech.

--June 2024 NEA Poll



Students spend **90** minutes of a 6.5 hour school day on their smart phone.

--Christakis et al, February 2025 article

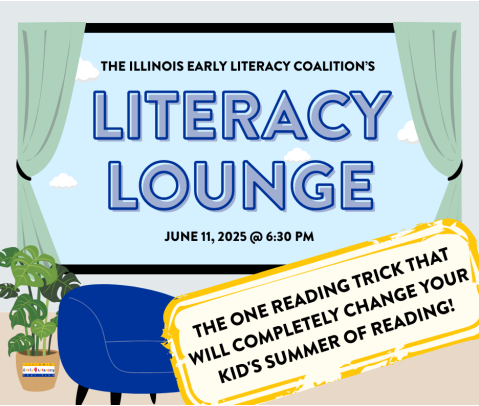


**70%** of high school teachers say cell phone use is a major problem in schools.

--Hatfield, Pew Researcher Center 2024

FOR YOUR CONSTITUENTS: QUARTERLY LITERACY LOUNGES

The Illinois Early Literacy Coalition has recently introduced a new way for parents to connect with community organizations and each other to support their children to become strong readers: Literacy Lounges! Our first gathering took place in



March where we explored data from Learning Heroes that showed a tremendous awareness gap among parents per a national poll:

- ▶ 92% of parents think their child is reading at or above grade level.
- ▶ But... just about one-third of students actually meet standards in reading.
- ▶ 80% of parents say their students get mostly Bs or better on their report cards, which is a big reason for the awareness gap.

We invite any parents or community members with an interest in supporting students to become strong readers to join us at our next Literacy Lounge, June 11 at 6:30 pm. RSVP here:



THE COUNTDOWN TO AN ILLINOIS NUMERACY PLAN HAS BEGUN!

In January 2024, ISBE adopted Illinois’ first-ever literacy plan after over a year of drafting, collecting feedback, and refining the final product. The agency has announced that it plans to embark on a similar trajectory toward a numeracy plan, beginning with a kick-off summit in June 2025. Superintendent Tony Sanders recently hosted a “fireside chat” on May 15 with Shalinee Sharma, author of Math Minds: The Simple Path to Loving Math.

Illinois was one of three states that gained back its

“...in math, we continue to recover more slowly, making the numeracy plan a timely endeavor...”

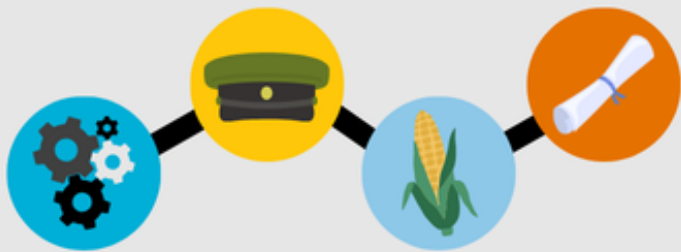
literacy learning losses from the pandemic. (Granted, there is a still a long way to go.) But in math, we continue to recover more slowly, making the numeracy plan a timely endeavor and one that we are excited to see! We also have high hopes that the plan will prioritize evidence-based practices, just like the literacy plan. These

include a strong emphasis on foundational skills and fact fluency, along with attention to conceptual understanding.

How many times have you heard adults say, “I’m just not a math person,” or whipped out their phone calculator to subtract 26 from 77? We hope that the numeracy plan will help Illinois students be supported in their schools to know that they can be a math person.

You can watch a recording of the fireside chat at <https://bit.ly/3F3mxK3>

COLLEGE ~~AND~~ CAREER CORNER



For too long, we have lived in a culture that assumes students either go to college OR train for a career. But that is last century’s model. Today, it’s not a question of either/or—it’s BOTH. Every student needs instruction and opportunities that are

“Every student needs instruction and opportunities that are meaningful to them and their goals.”

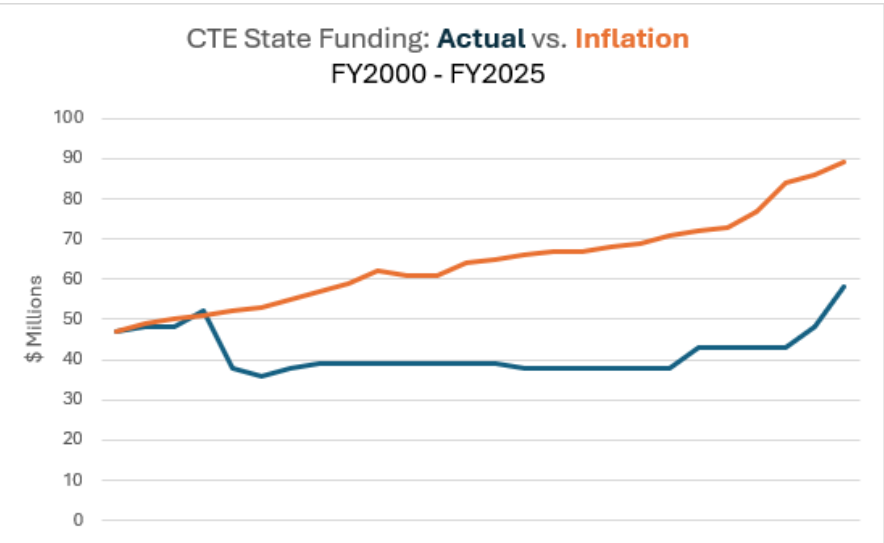
CTE FUNDING

Last year, the General Assembly appropriated \$58 million for secondary CTE. The \$58 million reflects a \$10 million increase last year and two smaller increases in 2020 and 2022. Before these increases, the state CTE appropriation had been stagnant for decades while CTE enrollment has been steadily increasing. The state’s much-needed investments have helped maintain high-quality, industry-aligned CTE programing, but it does not leave much for the expansion of either programs or CTE students. If CTE funding had kept up with inflation, the state appropriation would be well over \$90 million.

meaningful to them and their goals. Career and Technical Education (CTE) students are MORE likely to graduate and succeed in college than non-CTE students. At ISBE’s March board meeting, an amazing cohort of CTE student advisors shared their stories, and they fully embodied this modernized approach to CTE. All of them were passionate participants in CTE and had impressive professional ambitions, like becoming doctors, lawyers, and entrepreneurs. In fact,

Last year, 48% of Illinois’ total high school student population took at least one CTE course. The graduation rate for CTE concentrators (that is, students who take at least 2 CTE courses in a sequence) is 10 percentage points higher than non-CTE concentrators and that boost applied across all student demographic groups. So, an investment in CTE not only supports career-connected learning, but also helps more

48% of Illinois high school students took at least one CTE course in 2024.

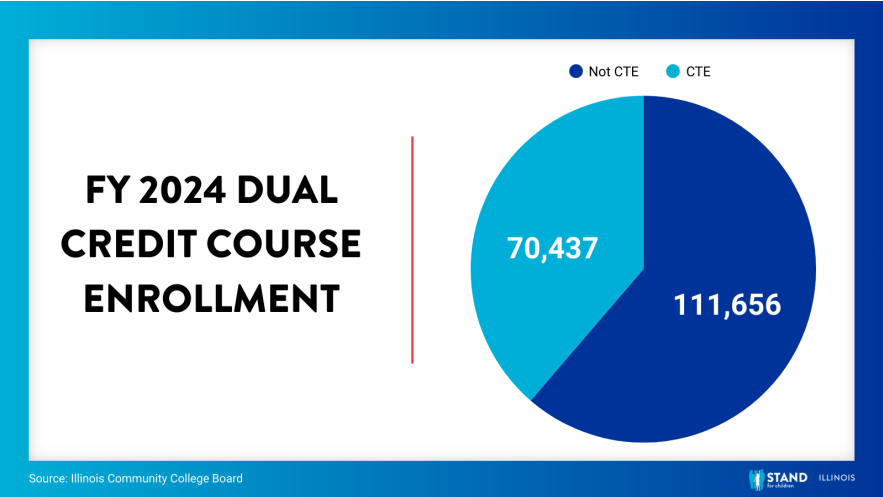


PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Dual Credit partnerships between high schools and colleges have proven to be a key strategy to introduce students to the rigor of college coursework and the mindset that college is a real possibility for them. Illinois has made significant strides over the last year in increasing access to accelerated coursework. Dual Credit enrollments have gone up

15% this year alone. One tool Illinois has used to support teachers to teach Dual Credit is called a “Professional Development Plan.” Generally, a high school teacher is qualified to teach Dual Credit when they hold a Master’s Degree in the subject area they teach or an out-of-subject-area Master’s (cont., p. 3)

- ✓ Dual Credit
- ✓ Career & Technical Education
- ✓ Advanced Coursework
- ✓ And More



one-third of Dual Credit courses are also CTE courses. This is no longer our

grandparents’ days of vocational education.

students graduate on time. Here’s the challenge: as more Illinois students explore CTE pathways, it also means that without significant increases in funding, everyone’s slice of the pie gets a little smaller. The pie has to grow alongside these improvements.

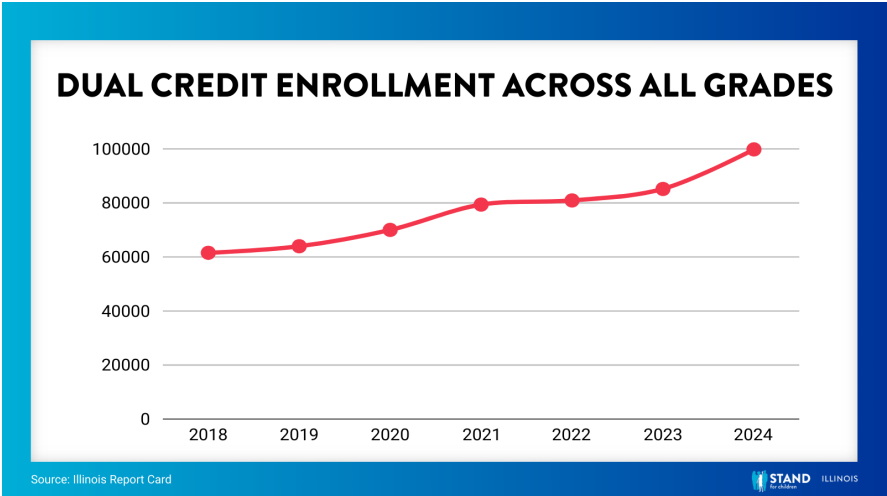
Last year, Illinois began the first year of phasing in a CTE funding formula that incentivizes CTE concentration and accounts for districts’ levels of funding adequacy. It also includes a hold harmless so no Education for Employment (EFE) district loses funds from the base year. (CTE funds flow to 56 EFEs, not directly to school districts, and in turn, EFEs manage regionalized CTE programs and Area Career Centers.) This represents a positive step toward accountability and equity in CTE. However, the rollout of the new formula is threatened by insufficient funds to ensure that no EFE would receive lower investments than previous years.

We need to grow the CTE “pie”

“...the rollout of the new formula is threatened by insufficient fuds...”

to improve access to meaningful CTE experiences. There are a few ways the legislature can consider structuring those increases:

- ▶ Increase funding for the CTE line in ISBE’s budget. This is obviously the most straight forward. The larger the allocation, the more quickly the transition to the improved funding formula.
- ▶ Create competitive grants in each of the seven CTE endorsement areas to provide dedicated support to strengthen priority career pathway areas and preserve future flexibility for these funds.
- ▶ Allocate resources to ISBE and/or ICCB for a capital needs assessment to determine where capital funding could most strengthen priority CTE pathways by region.





(from p. 2)

Degree with 18 hours of credit in the relevant subject. Professional Development Plans create a path for teachers with Master’s Degrees to teach Dual Credit

while finishing up their remaining nine hours of subject area credit.

Unfortunately, the sunset date

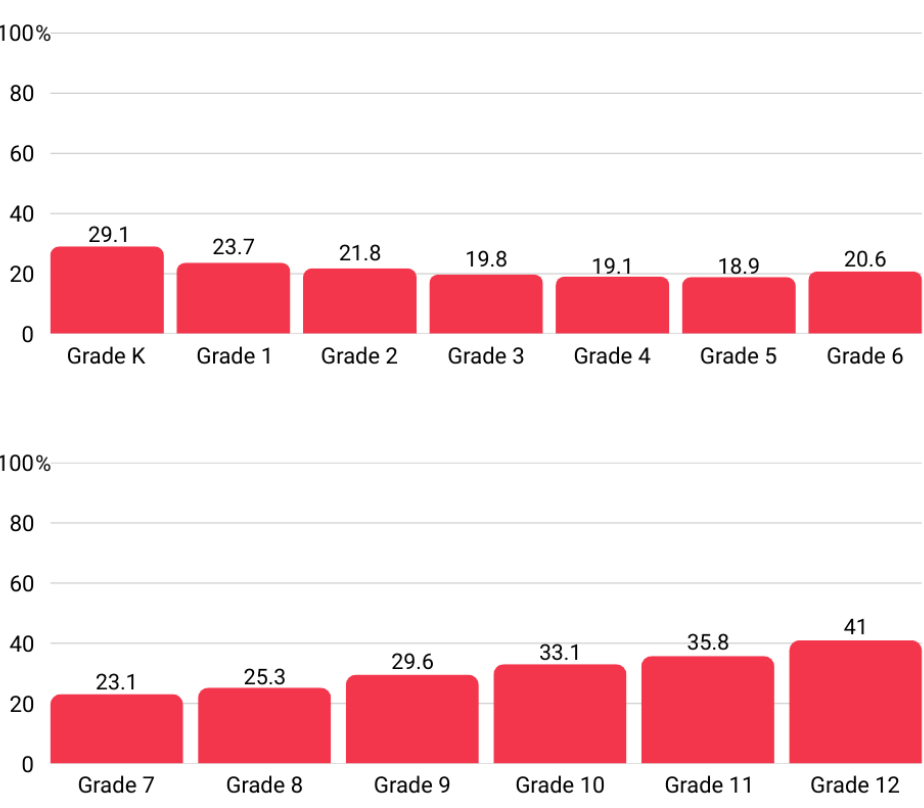
for Professional Development Plans expired January 1, taking off the table a useful tool to allow more students to access Dual Credit and more

teachers to build up their Dual Credit credentials. Reinstating Professional Development Plans is one real way state policy can strengthen Dual Credit.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM IS A CHRONIC PROBLEM

Chronic absenteeism continues to be a massive problem across the state post-pandemic, with 26% of students missing more than 10% of school days. The problem is worst in kindergarten (29%) and high school (35%) (Illinois Report Card).

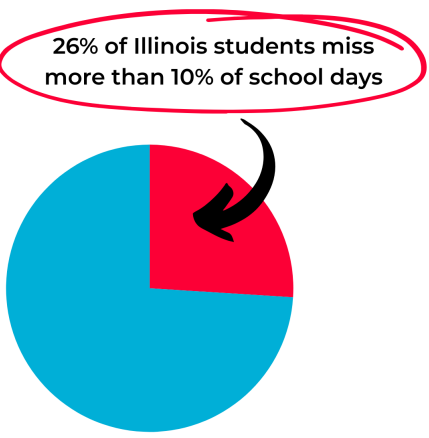
Attendance Works is a national organization that researches what works to curb absenteeism, tracks state policies, and makes recommendations that will boost attendance. At the state level, Illinois is actually doing a lot right based on these recommendations:



Attendance Works Says States Should...	And Illinois...	Grade
Define a full day of attendance	Specifically defines how to count student attendance	
Include chronic absenteeism in state ESSA accountability systems	Includes chronic absenteeism in our system (NOTE: listening tours around the state are happening now to improve this system – we want to make sure chronic absenteeism remains a meaningful metric!)	
Release chronic absenteeism rates publicly by grade level	Tracks absenteeism data by grade (which only 16 states do!) and demographics	
Ban the use of suspension or expulsion as a consequence for truancy	Does not allow for exclusionary discipline or fines for students as a consequence for absenteeism	
Include all absences – excused and unexcused – in chronic absenteeism counts	Counts all types of absences in the chronic absenteeism rate	

One recommendation that more states are working toward is early reporting of data. Since our definition of chronic absenteeism is 10% of school days, this can be calculated throughout the year based on the number of school days so far to get an earlier picture of what is going on in schools. But this sort of early data availability is only available in four states, according to Attendance Works research.

Another consideration Attendance Works raises – which is not without its downsides – is that most states, including Illinois, based funding formulas on student enrollment rather than attendance. This was a deliberate decision made when Evidence-Based Funding was enacted because schools must fund their classrooms



for the number of students enrolled, rather than the number who happen to show up. Only six states currently fund based on attendance averages. The downside to attendance-based student counts is that lower-income districts are hit the hardest by that change and it creates a big incentive to game attendance rates.

There is a campaign underway today challenging

states to cut their chronic absenteeism rates in half over five years. Fifteen states have opted into the challenge. Illinois is not yet one of those states.

Local policy is key to improving rates of absenteeism, and those range from improving transportation services to creating welcoming school environments to communicating with parents to re-emphasize the importance of making it to class every day.

SB 407 (Lightford/Crawford) creates a task force to study the impact of the pandemic on chronic absenteeism and make recommendations for a state strategy to address these ongoing challenges.

### Chronic Absenteeism Hits Home

About 480,000 students in Illinois are chronically absent. Anita (not her real name) is one of them. See our interview with her below, translated from its original Spanish:

**Stand:** Tell us a little about yourself.

**Anita:** I came to the United States a year ago from Mexico. I lived in a shelter in Chicago for a while, then with my boyfriend’s family, and now with my foster parents, sister, and niece. I like to play Free Fire on my phone and I’m learning English at school.

**Stand:** What do you like most about school?

**Anita:** Well, the truth is that I don’t really like school very much. I have some friends I have made. But the work is very hard for me.

**Stand:** How often do you stay home from school?

**Anita:** There are some days I decide not to go, or I try to stay home if they let me. My stomach hurts and my head hurts a lot, and sometimes when they make me go to school, I have to come home in the middle of the day because I feel sick. I also don’t like to go when I am late, and other people in the house make me late a lot. They give me a detention when I arrive late, so I prefer not to go to school those days.

**Stand:** Do they punish you in some way when you miss class?

**Anita:** No. I will have problems if I arrive late, but if I don’t go, there’s no problem.

**Stand:** Do you feel like you are out of the habit of going to school and it’s hard to get back into the habit of going?

**Anita:** Yes.

**Stand:** What would it take for you to make it to school more often?

**Anita:** Well, it’s just that I don’t think it matters much for me whether I attend or not. Maybe if I felt like I was learning more. But I also have had a lot going on since I have been in the United States and I feel sick a lot.

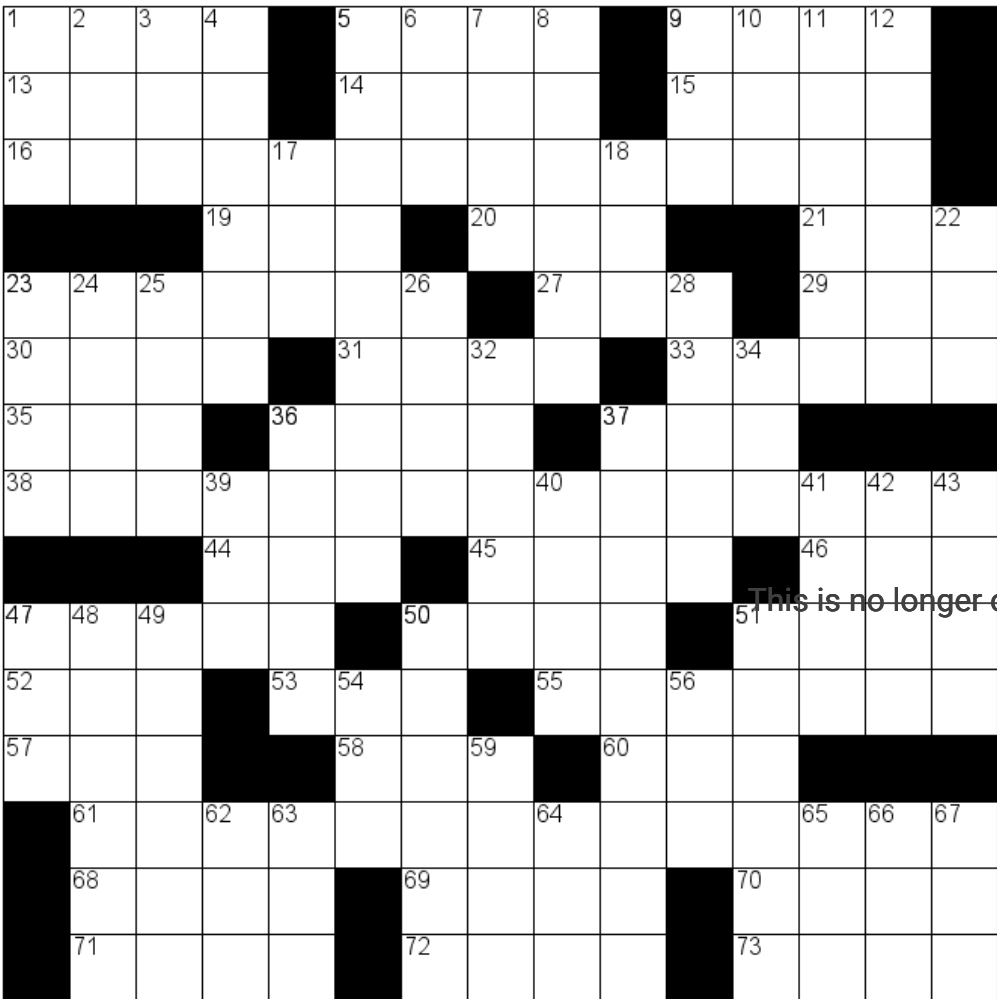
CROSSWORD: A MODEST PREPOSITION

ACROSS

- 1. Fed ag agency
- 5. Martial arts hall
- 9. Type of pet or seed
- 13. Thailand, formerly
- 14. Symbolic thing
- 15. Clue
- 16. Where you might reach
- 19. Web addr.
- 20. Form pledging confidentiality, briefly
- 21. Massage utterance
- 23. One who carries the bill
- 27. Type of oven
- 29. Fed security agency
- 30. Stretched
- 31. One from Denmark
- 33. Unpleasant demeanors (slang)
- 35. Raoul et al
- 36. Difference between currencies
- 37. Swanson or McConchie
- 38. Where you might read
- 44. 3 ft
- 45. Might be candy or sugar
- 46. Eggs
- 47. United Arab Emirates locale
- 50. Thin, tapered piece of material
- 51. An especially attractive person
- 52. Card game with skips and reverses
- 53. Consume
- 55. Habit
- 57. Listening device?
- 58. Head covering
- 60. Boxing term, briefly
- 61. Where you might work
- 68. Yard
- 69. Simplicity
- 70. 1/8 of an ounce
- 71. Someone \_\_\_\_ (another person)
- 72. Bigtime actor
- 73. Faction

DOWN

- 1. Trump's domain, briefly



- 2. Denotes a typo
- 3. Spanish "to give"
- 4. Quantity
- 5. Moved
- 6. Month #10
- 7. Cullerton or Curran
- 8. Temperamental
- 9. Tai \_\_\_\_
- 10. Belonging to a male
- 11. Not on the shore
- 12. Relaxed
- 17. freshmen, sophomores, jrs, \_\_\_\_
- 18. Highest bond rating
- 22. Possesses
- 23. Puncture
- 24. Bringer of coffee or an analysis
- 25. Kick out
- 26. Precipitate
- 28. Old
- 32. Nick
- 34. "One" prefix
- 36. Nest
- 37. Cub scout pack's female leader
- 39. Text slang asking for ur whereabouts
- 40. Smidge
- 41. Response to the little red hen
- 42. Equitable
- 43. Rational
- 47. Owed
- 48. Lacking the requisite skill
- 49. Related to the north
- 50. Declares
- 51. Oppositional
- 54. Light bulb moment utterance
- 56. Abbreviated version of stringed instrument
- 59. Not this
- 62. Fed agency that shares the temp
- 63. Mt. Vernon to E. StL direction
- 64. Fed agency for travel safety
- 65. Mineral deposit
- 66. Noodle vessel for chs sauce
- 67. Pre-hospital CPR giver



ABOUT STAND FOR CHILDREN

Stand for Children is a unique catalyst for educational equity and racial justice to create a brighter future for us all.

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