

Illinois Virtual Schools & Academy launches EmpowerU course across Illinois to build teen mental & physical fitness

Aligned to ISBE PE elective, taught by an ISBE-licensed instructor, and uniquely paired with daily "small-bite" wellness coaching



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Illinois Virtual Schools & Academy (IVSA) today announced the launch of EmpowerU's resilience & mental fitness course, "[Strong Mind. Healthy Body. Confident You.](#)," available for immediate enrollment for any Illinois high school student. The credit-bearing online high school course teaches practical mental and physical wellness skills through short, self-paced lessons paired with brief, daily 1:1 wellness coaching. The course aligns with Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Physical Education elective standards and is taught by an ISBE-licensed instructor. The coaching component provides daily support and accountability, so students take small steps each day to apply what they learn to goals at school and at home.

"The mental health crisis in our country is growing rapidly and families and partner districts have asked for a solution to address overall wellbeing," said Melissa Lundgaard, Executive Director, Illinois Virtual Schools & Academy. "This class checks every box: ISBE-aligned PE elective, an ISBE-licensed instructor, and embedded daily wellness coaching. Districts get a practical, credit-bearing option that can lift engagement, attendance, and well-being, without adding staff."

Unlike diagnosis-driven interventions, EmpowerU is a progress-focused solution that taps intrinsic motivation and builds durable habits, helping students who struggle with anxiety, avoidance, focus, screen-time self-limits, self-regulation, motivation, and friendships to re-engage and persist.

"We've seen this model work in North Dakota, Minnesota, and California through partnerships with leading online supplemental providers," said Katie Dorn, Co-Founder of EmpowerU. "In our credit-bearing course, over 90% of students make significant pre- to post-goal progress, and most students do not need higher, more costly interventions. We can't treat our way out of the youth mental health crisis with therapy alone - students need skill-based, supported programs built into the school day so they feel better and do better in school and life. This is the class that

makes that possible.”

What makes the course different:

- Standards-aligned & credit-bearing: Meets ISBE PE elective expectations; taught by an ISBE-licensed instructor.
- Daily skills + coaching: Short lessons plus embedded “small-bite” 1:1 wellness coaching help students apply strategies immediately.
- Flexible & school-friendly: 100% online, self-paced, designed to fit during the school day or after school.
- Measurable: Real-time dashboards and simple progress checks for counselors and families.

How to enroll:

Districts and counselors can [enroll students directly through IVSA](#). Families can request the course by contacting their school counselor or visiting the [IVSA course catalog](#).

About Illinois Virtual Schools & Academy (IVSA)

Illinois Virtual Schools & Academy expands access high-quality, standards-aligned courses for Illinois students through flexible online learning . Our comprehensive online school model is flexible and academically robust with a fully aligned curriculum, licensed IL teachers, and student support services. Illinois Virtual Schools & Academy is the ONLY approved public provider in the ISBE Virtual Course Catalog and is administered by the Lake County Regional Office of Education. Learn more at ivsaschool.org.

About EmpowerU

EmpowerU pairs short, skills-based lessons with daily 1:1 wellness coaching to help students build resilience, mental fitness, and healthy habits—and to help schools improve engagement, attendance, and outcomes. Learn more at empoweru.education.

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