



Illinois State Board of Education

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Guidance for Illinois Schools and Districts During COVID-19 State Emergency

Last updated: March 23, 2020

Executive Orders:

- [Executive Order 2020-10](#) (March 20, 2020) with exceptions, requires all individuals currently living within the State of Illinois to stay at home or at their place of residence. Among other changes, extends mandated statewide suspension of in-person instruction through April 7, 2020.
- [Executive Order 2020-07](#) (March 16, 2020) includes Open Meetings Act flexibility.
- [Executive Order 2020-06](#) (March 15, 2020) exempts schools operated by the Department of Juvenile Justice, State Board of Education or Department of Human Services from EO 2020-05.
- [Executive Order 2020-05](#) (March 13, 2020) requires all public and non-public schools to close beginning on Tuesday, March 17 through Monday, March 30. EO 2020-05 also provides flexibility in e-learning plans.

ASSESSMENTS/ACCOUNTABILITY

1. How will this closure impact administration of Spring 2020 State-mandated assessments and accountability? (Updated 3/23/20)

ISBE has submitted a waiver application to the U.S. Department of Education to:

- Waive all federally required assessments in the 2019-20 school year;
- Waive the requirement to provide summative designations and identify schools for targeted and comprehensive support in the 2019-20 school year; and
- Waive the requirement to report on accountability indicators on the 2019-20 school year Report Card.

The U.S. Department of Education has communicated that it will respond within one business day of ISBE's submission of the waiver application on March 23.

Once the waiver is approved, any school that is currently identified for comprehensive or targeted support in the 2019-20 school year will maintain that identification status in the 2020-21 school year and continue to receive supports and interventions consistent with the school's support and improvement plan in the 2020-21 school year.

[View the waiver application online.](#)

ISBE is also seeking relief from assessment-related requirements in state statute to secure complete assurance that state assessments do not need to be administered in the 2019-20 school year.

2. Will Invest in Kids scholarship recipients be required to take state assessments this Spring? (Updated 3/23/20)

State law requires Invest in Kids scholarship recipients to be assessed “in the same manner” as public-school students. In the event the federal waiver is approved, and State requirements are addressed (see Q1), Invest in Kids scholarship recipients will not need to complete State assessments during the Spring 2020 testing window.

3. Will the College Board still administer Advanced Placement (AP) Exams?

For the 2019-20 exam administration only, students can take a 45-minute online exam at home. Educator-led development committees are currently selecting the exam questions that will be administered. Students will be able to take these streamlined exams on any device they have access to— computer, tablet, or smartphone.

College Board will conduct standard-setting processes to set appropriately rigorous cut scores for AP scores of 3, 4, and 5.

AP curricula are locally developed, and College Board defers to local decisions on how best to help students complete coursework. To be fair to all students, some of whom have lost more instructional time than others, the exam will only include topics and skills most AP teachers and students have already covered in class by early March.

College Board recognizes that the digital divide could prevent some low-income and rural students from participating. Working with partners, College Board will invest so that these students have the tools and connectivity they need to review AP content online and take the exam.

The exam questions are designed in ways that prevent cheating; College Board is using a range of digital security tools and techniques, including plagiarism detection software, to protect the integrity of the exams.

4. Are there resources available for virtual learning for Advanced Placement courses?

All AP students and teachers will be able to draw on the free online resources that were provided to every AP classroom this fall. Additional resources will be made easily accessible to AP students and teachers through mobile phones and other devices.

Beginning on Wednesday, March 25, students and teachers can attend free, optional live AP review courses, delivered by AP teachers from across the country. Courses will also be recorded and available on-demand. These mobile-friendly classes are designed to be used

alongside work schools may continue to assign.

BOARD MEETINGS/OPEN MEETINGS ACT

5. Have any Open Meetings Act (OMA) requirements been relaxed?

Based upon Governor Pritzker's [Executive Order 2020-07](#) issued on March 16, during the duration of the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation, the provisions of the Open Meetings Act, 5 ILCS 120, requiring or relating to in-person attendance by members of a public body are suspended. Specifically, the requirement in 5 ILCS 120/2.01 that "members of a public body must be physically present" is suspended; and (2) the conditions in 5 ILCS 120/7 limiting when remote participation is permitted are suspended. Public bodies are encouraged to postpone consideration of public business where possible. When a meeting is necessary, public bodies are encouraged to provide video, audio, and/or telephonic access to meetings to ensure members of the public may monitor the meeting, and to update their websites and social media feeds to keep the public fully apprised of any modifications to their meeting schedules or the format of their meetings due to COVID-19, as well their activities relating to COVID-19.

6. Should districts consider canceling meetings?

If a board does not have any pressing matters that require immediate vote, ISBE recommends that schools consider cancelling or rescheduling meetings. This will likely not be a realistic option for many school boards, however, who will need to convene to ensure that both fiscal needs and teacher evaluation/retention requirements are met.

CALENDAR AND STUDENT ATTENDANCE

7. How will days be counted during the mandated closure?

All days that a school district is closed pursuant to the Governor's [Executive Order 2020-05](#) **will be counted Act of God Days. Emergency Days will not be used. These Act of God Days do not need to be made up at the end of the school year.**

School districts are strongly encouraged to provide continuity of education to students during these Act of God Days through whatever means possible.

School districts should consult with their local collective bargaining units about expectations for teachers and other staff. Teachers are paid during Act of God Days, and Act of God Days count toward Teachers' Retirement System (TRS), Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) and Chicago Teachers Pension Fund (CTPF) service. ISBE issued [joint guidance](#) with the Governor, Illinois Education Association, Illinois Federation of Teachers, Illinois Principals Association, and Illinois Association of School Administrators on issues of employment during Act of God Days.

8. How will days be counted, if schools closed before the statewide school closure?

Days missed due to coronavirus/COVID-19 prior to March 17, 2020, must be counted as Emergency Days, provided the district still had Emergency Days for use.

If districts chose to use a Teacher Institute day in lieu of an Emergency Day, they do not need to amend their school calendar.

If districts chose to change their spring break in lieu of using Emergency Days prior to statewide closure of schools, they do not need to amend their school calendar.

Any E-learning Days used in lieu of Emergency Days prior to the mandated school closure will count as Instructional Days.

9. Can districts utilize E-learning Days in lieu of Act of God during the mandated closure?

E-learning during the mandated closure will not count as an Instructional Day on the school calendar.

ISBE strongly encourages all school districts to provide learning opportunities to all students during these Act of God Days through whatever means possible. ISBE has compiled a library of free online resources and platforms at www.isbe.net/keeplearning. Share how you are keeping students engaged in education on social media with #KeepLearning.

Please see the first question in the Calendar section for further guidance regarding continuity of education during the March 17-30 Act of God Days.

10. Should school districts take attendance during the mandated statewide school closure?

No. Taking attendance is not necessary, as days during the mandated statewide school closure March 17-30 are not Instructional Days.

11. Are districts required to change the dates of spring break if dates do not fall within the mandated closure timeframe?

No. School districts are not required to change the dates of an upcoming spring break to fall within the mandated closure; however, this is strongly encouraged in order to maximize students' learning opportunities during this school year.

12. Do districts need to submit changes to school calendars at this time? (Updated 3/23/20)

Calendar revisions do not need to be made at this time. Districts should be keeping accurate records, but do not need to enter calendar coding at this time. ROEs/ISCs and school districts will address calendars collaboratively in June. View ISBE and IARSS's guidance on school calendars [here](#).

CONTINUITY OF EDUCATION

13. Are ROEs/ISCs required to approve e-learning plans during the mandated statewide school closure?

E-learning during the mandated closure will not count as Instructional Days on the school calendar, so ROEs/ISCs do not need to approve plans for providing e-learning during the mandated statewide school closure.

School districts have full autonomy to provide continuous learning opportunities during the statewide school closure through whatever means possible, including through technology and free online resources. We encourage every school and district to explore and implement what works best for the school community.

School districts that have the capacity to provide e-learning are still strongly encouraged to prepare e-learning plans. E-learning plans must be verified by the Regional Office of Education and Intermediate Service Center for the school district, which must ensure that the specific needs of students are met, including special education students and English learners, as required by 105 ILCS 5/10-20.56(b).

If school districts would like to prepare e-learning plans for future use, Executive Order 2020-05 provides the following flexibility for the duration of the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation:

- The requirement pursuant to 10 ILCS 5/10-20.56(b) for Illinois school districts to receive approval by the school board before establishing and maintaining a program for the use of electronic-learning (e-learning) is suspended during the effect of the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation.
- Further, any e-learning program implemented pursuant to this Executive Order need not comply with the requirement to hold a public hearing pursuant to 10 ILCS 5/10-20.56(c) or the requirement to communicate protocol to teachers, staff, and students 30 days prior to implementation pursuant to 10 ILCS 5/10-20.56(d)(10).
- Regional Offices of Education and Intermediate Service Centers are not to deny e-learning plan approvals based solely on the 5 clock hours of instruction or school work required by 105 ILCS 5/10-19.05 so long as the Regional Offices of Education or Intermediate Service Centers determines that the plan provides substantial student learning opportunities, notwithstanding 105 ILCS 10-20.56(d)(1).
- E-learning programs adopted pursuant to this Executive Order may exceed the number of emergency days in the approved school calendar notwithstanding 105 ILCS 5/10-20.56(b).

14. Should student work be graded during the mandatory school closure?

Student work completed during the mandated statewide school closure must not negatively impact a student's grades or otherwise impact a student's academic standing. As we do not yet know the full extent of the closure and want to minimize any negative effects on students,

schools may allow student work to count during the closure only to increase a student's academic standing.

Our students may be experiencing varying mental and physical health challenges at this time and may have very different access to supports and technology at home. Our goal is that no student is negatively impacted by the closure and that no school district's policies or procedures should widen the equity gap.

15. May students' dual credit programs continue during the mandatory school closure?

Schools that provide dual credit coursework as a component of serving pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students must close for dual credit educational programs during the statewide school closure. Please work with your community college partners to ensure that students will not be penalized by these circumstances. ISBE and ICCB are working on additional coordinated guidance.

GRANTS

16. Will the application deadline for FY 2021 Early Childhood Block Grant applications be extended?

ISBE is extending the FY21 RFP submission deadline until 4 p.m. on April 15, 2020. We understand that potential applicants are currently handling other issues in relation the COVID-19 pandemic and may not be able to meet the previous due date of March 23. As a result, all applications are now due via electronic or U.S. mail on April 15, 2020 at 4 p.m. Due to the closing of State buildings as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, ISBE is not able to offer the option of hand delivered applications.

17. Will the deadline for Title III Intent to Apply forms be extended?

We are extending the deadline to submit Title III Intent to Apply forms to April 27, 2020. This extension will not affect when districts receive their funding in September if they have submitted their Intent to Apply and then subsequently submit their full application by the respective deadlines.

18. There are upcoming deadlines requiring meaningful consultation between public and nonpublic schools (e.g. Title III Intent to Apply). We are unable to make contact due to school closures. How should we proceed?

ISBE strongly recommends nonpublic school administrators provide their administrator contact information to public schools. This will facilitate coordination with regards to grants and services. Meaningful consultation may be completed via phone or webinar. Forms may be printed and signed by the nonpublic school and then returned via email to the public school for submission in applications.

HOMELESS STUDENTS

19. How can homeless students be supported during the mandated school closure?

The Lead Area Homeless liaisons and School District liaisons are required to work directly with families during this trying time to make sure that homeless children and youth have all of the materials needed to complete assignments, to provide access to meals, and to ensure the safety and stability of this vulnerable population. School District Liaisons work with Lead Area Liaisons to identify and locate specific services or connections with other agencies. The ISBE State Homeless Coordinator will continue to work closely with the liaisons to ensure that homeless children and youth, including unaccompanied youth, receive the same services as all other children. [View Lead Area Homeless Liaison contact information.](#)

NUTRITION/MEALS/FOOD SERVICE

20. Given the stay at home order included in Executive Order 2020-10, can school personnel still distribute meals to students?

Yes. School districts should continue to distribute meals to students.

21. Are districts required to provide meals to students during closure?

While districts are not required to provide meals to students during the mandated closure, it is strongly encouraged for the health and wellbeing of all children. Please make every effort to provide meals for all children who need them, no matter their resources and no matter what school they attend, in the way that works best for your community, such as grab-and-go or delivery.

For schools participating in National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs, meals offered to all children age 18 and below, or enrolled in school, are reimbursable. As all students are eligible for meals, district meal service numbers may increase from what the district usually orders. **Therefore, please adjust food orders to make sure there is ample food to meet the increased need.** If faced with scenarios where there are fewer meals than the number of students requesting meal service, we ask that you please prioritize those students who are eligible for free/reduced lunch programs when distributing meals. In the event of localized shortages, schools should contact local food banks or neighboring districts for additional resources or the purchase of meals.

Participation Requirements

- Meals must meet the meal pattern requirements.
- Meals offered to all children age 18 and below, or enrolled in school, are reimbursable.

- There is no reimbursement for meals offered to adults, although school may offer such meals for purchase.
- Daily counts are required by meal service type. Please make sure that you are collecting this data on a daily basis.
- Schools should consult local Department of Public Health for questions related to food safety requirements.

Implementation Guidance

- Ensure all the students' nutritional needs are addressed. This includes students with allergies and other food restrictions. Make sure to mark the food appropriately.
- Create multiple geographically located food distribution centers where necessary. Students are not allowed to eat inside the school.
- Ensure that all necessary personnel are stationed to maximize student and staff safety and that all distribution sites are supervised.
- Explore distribution strategies that will avoid large gatherings of people and make social distancing possible.
- Students can receive two meals a day (one breakfast, one lunch, or one snack in any combination). Both meals can be distributed at once either via pick-up, drive-up or delivery.
- Parents/guardians or students themselves may pick up food. Children do not need to be accompanied by an adult to receive food.
- Allow ample and reasonable amount of time for meal pick-up for each meal service, recognizing that families may be experiencing challenges during this time.
- Use multiple modes of communication to inform students and families of available food service, including time, location, and method of distribution.
- Consider multiple methods of distribution, such as: drive up; walk up; satellite locations, such as libraries, churches, park districts, and youth centers; home delivery via bus routes; and other options.

22. Are districts required to complete a form to provide non-congregate feeding for students?

ISBE has already obtained the USDA waiver to provide meals during school closures, including to children under 5. Districts will need to complete a one-page waiver that takes less than 10 minutes: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/ISBE-66-98.pdf>. Please send to ISBE at CNP@isbe.net as soon as possible.

23. Can schools and school districts that do not participate in the federally funded school lunch or breakfast program provide meals to students?

Schools and school districts that do not participate in the federally funded National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs do not need to submit the waiver and are encouraged to also provide meals to children who may need them. ISBE is working with community organizations such as the major food banks who are working with their networks to assist in areas where potential meals may be needed.

24. Can schools and districts provide meals to students between the ages of 18 and 21 receiving special education services?

Yes, provided the student receiving special education services is enrolled in the school district.

25. Can a school that is not participating in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs direct its students to receive meals at a participating school?

Yes. Schools that do not participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs may direct students to receive meals at a participating school/district. Non-participating schools are highly encouraged to communicate with the participating school/district in advance to ensure an appropriate number of meals can be prepared and provided.

TRANSPORTATION

26. If districts use buses to deliver meals, is that mileage reimbursable? What is a reimbursable transportation expenditure?

The per-meal federal reimbursement rate for schools participating in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs includes transportation as an allowable expenditure. ISBE is also seeking flexibility to allow for transportation costs related to food delivery (or other services and materials for students' health and wellbeing) during the mandated statewide school closure to be claimable for reimbursement from the State through ISBE's regular Transportation Reimbursement.

27. Is ISBE reimbursing expenditures for school bus transportation during the closure if school buses are not running regular routes?

ISBE will base Transportation Reimbursement on expenditures. All allowable transportation expenditures incurred during the closure will be claimable for Transportation Reimbursement. School districts should work with their bus contractors to make payments to ensure that all personnel, including bus monitors and bus drivers, can continue to be paid during the closure. If school districts choose to negotiate and execute a contract amendment with their bus contractors to make payments during the closure to ensure transportation personnel will be paid in full, those expenditures will be reimbursed for state Transportation Reimbursement. Consultation with the district's legal representation is advised.

28. Is the Illinois Secretary of State offering an extension period for obtaining school bus permits?

The Secretary of State released the following information on March 17: Due to the COVID-19 virus and based on recommendations by health and safety experts, all Secretary of State Driver Services Facilities are closed to the public. Essential Secretary of State staff are working. All driver's licenses, instruction permits, permits and identification cards that were

set to expire on or after March 17, 2020 are being extended for a period of 30 days. This includes School Bus Permits. We recognize that it may be difficult to complete the annual refresher training during this period, so a grace period of 30 days will be allowed for completion of this training.

SCOPE OF SCHOOL CLOSURES

29. Are personnel who are preparing and distributing learning materials and providing janitorial services considered “essential workers” and thus exempt from the stay at home mandate? (Updated 3/23/20)

Yes. Personnel who are preparing and distributing learning materials to students and personnel who are providing janitorial services are performing essential functions and are exempt from the stay at home mandate.

30. What are the timelines for return to school?

Pursuant to Executive Order 2020-10, at this time schools may reopen on April 8, 2020. Future decisions regarding statewide school closures will be made in consultation with public health officials.

COURSEWORK & ACTIVITIES

31. Can behind-the-wheel instruction for driver’s education continue during the closure?

Public and nonpublic schools that provide behind-the-wheel driver’s education should not provide that education during the mandatory school closure.

32. Can a district provide the remainder of students’ 30 clock hours of classroom instruction for driver’s education via distance learning?

Distance learning is not allowed for the 30 hours in-classroom instruction in driver’s education during the mandatory school closure.

33. Does the statewide school closure apply to private driver’s education schools?

ISBE does not interpret the [Executive Order 2020-05](#) as applying to private driver’s education schools.

34. Can students continue internships or other experiential learning opportunities during the closure?

No, students may not participate in these activities during the closure mandated by Executive Order 2020-05.

35. Should extracurricular activities still be taking place?

Extracurricular activities must not take place in person during the statewide school closure. Further, the Executive Order 2020-07 bans gatherings that consist of 50 people or more.

36. Can students utilize school grounds (i.e. playgrounds, basketball courts) during the statewide mandated school closure?

None of the Executive Orders issued to date addresses the use of school grounds during the statewide school closure.

37. Will coursework and graduation requirements be amended or waived?

ISBE highly recommends that districts strategize and prepare for how it can meet the needs of graduating seniors, including ensuring transcripts are accessible and students have the continued ability to request recommendations from teachers and the district. ISBE is also investigating opportunities to provide flexibility for graduation requirements for seniors, such as coursework requirements and the Constitution exam.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & CHILDCARE

38. How does the statewide school closure impact prekindergarten programs? (Updated 3/23/20)

The statewide mandated school closure extends also to any early childhood program for children ages birth through five located in public schools or in private schools.

Please see joint guidance issued by the Department of Human Services, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Education, and the State Board of Education regarding child care centers, child care homes, and early education programs [here](#).

39. Will ISBE penalize any community-based PFA/PI program financially for closing or having under-enrollment?

Early education programs funded through ISBE are advised that their funding will not be affected by a decision to close their program in response to the public health emergency. Similarly, the Office of Head Start has issued guidance that Head Start and Early Head Start programs will not be penalized for closing during the public health emergency. The Chicago Department of Child and Family Services will also not reduce funding due to closures or low attendance during this period. And IDHS is developing a simplified waiver process for the 80% attendance requirement in the Child Care Assistance Program for being paid for all eligible days for all enrolled children (look for further guidance on this process in the coming days). For programs funded by any or all of these funding streams, programs are

expected to continue to pay all staff per their regular work schedule during any closures due to the public health emergency.

40. How does the mandated closure impact Early Childhood Block Grant Prevention Initiative programs?

Currently, the Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Block Grant Prevention Initiative programs in collaboration with MIECHV and DHS Healthy Families Programs are suspending in-person visits until further notice. However, it is also important to ensure the continuity of education and services to children and families. Thus, to the extent possible, staff should offer visits over the phone or FaceTime/Skype if the family has that capability and follow their model's recommendations related to conducting and documenting visits that take place virtually or on the phone.

NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS

41. Are non-public schools mandated to close pursuant to [Executive Order 2020-10](#)?

Yes, both non-public and public prekindergarten through grade 12 schools must close on Tuesday, March 17 through Tuesday, April 7. This mandate applies to all Illinois public and nonpublic schools, including parochial and charter schools.

42. How will missed days impact nonpublic school recognition and registration for number of days requirement?

Registration and recognition status for nonpublic schools will not be impacted by the mandated school closure.

43. How does the other guidance in this document apply to nonpublic schools? (Updated 3/23/20)

Executive Order 2020-05 requires that nonpublic schools close through at least April 7, 2020. ISBE has drafted this guidance document primarily to address issues pertaining to public schools during the suspension of in-person instruction; however, nonpublic schools are encouraged to use this guidance as a model.

RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

44. Does the mandated school closure impact residential settings?

[Executive Order 2020-05](#) requires prekindergarten through grade 12 schools to close for educational purposes. Schools that include residential settings must halt education-related activities; however, the residential components of such facilities are not impacted at this time.

45. Does the mandated school closure apply to state operated schools?

No. Executive Order 2020-06 exempts schools operated by the Department of Juvenile Justice, State Board of Education or Department of Human Services from EO 2020-05. This includes:

- School District #428 (Department of Juvenile Justice)
- Philip Rock Center and School
- Illinois School for the Deaf
- Illinois School for the Visually Impaired
- Illinois Center for Rehabilitation & Education – Roosevelt

SPECIAL EDUCATION

46. What if a district has a question regarding special education?

ISBE released [Statewide School Closure Special Education Guidance](#) on March 18.

STAFFING

47. What if a district has questions regarding teacher staffing during the mandated statewide school closure?

Please reference the [joint guidance](#) on staffing released on March 17 by ISBE, IEA, IFT, IPA, and IASA.

48. Does the recommendation that school districts keep at least one administrator on site mean school districts are available to provide childcare?

No. The purpose of ISBE’s recommendation that an administrator remain in the building is to ensure the safety of any students who happen to come to school and to ensure that an individual with executive decision-making capacity is available on site.

EDUCATOR PREPARATION AND LICENSURE

49. What is being done for educator licensure candidates who might not be able to complete required program components (e.g., student teaching, internship hours, the EdTPA, content tests) due to school and test center closures?

Due to recent school and test center closures that limit or prohibit candidates from completing their preparation program requirements, ISBE is pursuing policy changes that will enable candidates who would otherwise complete their licensure requirements this spring or summer to receive licensure prior to the 2020-2021 school year. We will provide official guidance specific to the requirement changes as soon as we are able. ISBE is committed to resolving these licensure issues so that no candidate in the final stages of their preparation is adversely affected by the closures.

50. Will ISBE amend renewal dates for educator licensure?

Illinois is investigating opportunities to provide temporary extensions of renewal dates of licenses and will provide more information about this issue as it becomes available.

51. How does the statewide school closure impact educator professional development?

In light of recent school closures to prevent exposure to the COVID-19 virus and guidelines set forth by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) regarding group gatherings, the Illinois State Board of Education encourages all providers delivering professional development and/or administrator academies to consider alternative delivery formats while Illinois is under the governor-issued state of emergency. This guidance applies to all professional development and administrator academies, including those typically only offered in-person (e.g., AA #1801, AA #1865, AA #2001, and AA #3000/01/02).

HOMELESS STUDENTS

52. How can homeless students be supported during the mandated school closure?

The Lead Area Homeless liaisons and School District liaisons are required to work directly with families during this trying time to make sure that homeless children and youth have all of the materials needed to complete assignments, to provide access to meals, and to ensure the safety and stability of this vulnerable population. School District Liaisons work with Lead Area Liaisons to identify and locate specific services or connections with other agencies. The ISBE State Homeless Coordinator will continue to work closely with the liaisons to ensure that homeless children and youth, including unaccompanied youth, receive the same services as all other children. [View Lead Area Homeless Liaison contact information.](#)