



Illinois State Board of Education

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Mandatory Statewide School Closure Guidance for Illinois Schools and School Districts

Last updated: March 16, 2020

ASSESSMENTS/ACCOUNTABILITY

1. How will this closure impact administration of Spring 2020 State-mandated assessments and accountability? (Updated 3/16/2020)

The U.S. Department of Education has communicated that it will make waivers available for assessments and accountability. ISBE will work in partnership with stakeholders to determine next steps for Illinois. This closure will not impact school year 2019-20 summative designations.

View additional information regarding the [impact of COVID-19 on assessments and accountability](#) from the U.S. Department of Education.

2. How will the mandated closure impact the administration of Advanced Placement (AP) Exams? (Updated 3/16/2020)

ISBE is awaiting direction from the College Board, which administers AP Exams.

BOARD MEETINGS/OPEN MEETINGS ACT

3. Have any Open Meetings Act (OMA) requirements been relaxed? (Updated 3/16/2020)

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.

4. 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 INSTRUCTION/CONTINUITY OF EDUCATION

5. How will days be counted during the mandated closure? (Updated 3/16/2020)

All days that a school is closed pursuant to the Governor's [Executive Order 2020-05](#) **will be counted Act of God Days. Emergency Days will not be used. At this time, 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 instruction to students during these Act of God Days through whatever means possible.

Student work completed during the mandated statewide school closure March 17-30 must not count toward student grades or otherwise impact a student's academic standing, as these are Act of God Days and not Instructional Days.

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) service. ISBE will issue joint guidance on imminently with the Illinois Education Association, Illinois Federation of Teachers, Illinois Principals Association, and Illinois Association of School Administrators.

6. How will days be counted, if schools closed before the mandated 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.

7. Can districts utilize E-learning Days in lieu of Act of God during the mandated closure? (Updated 3/16/2020)

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.

8. Are ROEs/ISCs required to approve E-Learning Plans during the mandated closure? (Updated 3/16/2020)

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 closure.

School districts have full autonomy to provide continuous learning opportunities 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.

If school districts would like to prepare e-learning plans for use later during the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation, [Executive Order 2020-05](#) provides the following flexibility:

- 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).
- However, any e-learning program adopted pursuant to this Executive Order must be verified by the regional office of education or 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).
- 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).

9. 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.

NUTRITION/MEALS/FOOD SERVICE

10. 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.

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.

11. 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.

12. If districts use buses to deliver meals, is that mileage reimbursable?

Transportation costs are an allowable cost under the USDA waiver. The rate of reimbursement may depend on each district's specific programming. In addition, ISBE is reviewing other options for ensuring transportation reimbursement for schools, including possible changes to Part 120 of the Administrative Code to allow regular transportation reimbursement for food expenses due to school closure.

13. 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 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.

14. Can schools and districts provide meals to students between the ages of 18 and 21 receiving special education services? (Updated 3/16/2020)

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

SCOPE OF SCHOOL CLOSURES

15. What are the timelines for return to school?

Pursuant to [Executive Order 2020-05](#), at this time schools may reopen on Tuesday, March 31. Future decisions regarding statewide school closures will be made in consultation with public health officials.

16. Are non-public schools mandated to close pursuant to [Executive Order 2020-05](#)?

Yes, both non-public and public prekindergarten through grade 12 schools must close on Tuesday, March 17 through Monday, March 30. At this time schools may reopen on Tuesday, March 31. This mandate applies to all Illinois public and nonpublic schools, including parochial and charter schools.

17. How does the mandated closure impact prekindergarten programs? (Updated 3/16/2020)

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.

At this time, the Governor has not mandated that child care centers licensed by the Department of Children and Family Services (or legally license-exempt centers outside of schools) close. However, centers are allowed to close if they so choose. In deciding whether to close, child care center leaders should consider whether they serve many parents who still need to work outside of their homes (e.g., health care workers, first responders, grocery store clerks, etc.) and whose ability to work would be limited if the center closed. If programs do decide to remain open, they are strongly urged to follow the guidance for child care centers provided by the [Centers for Disease Control](#). Additional information is available at www.isbe.net/Documents/Guidance-Child-Care-Centers-COVID-19-closures.pdf.

18. Will ISBE penalize any community-based PFA/PI program financially for closing or having under-enrollment? (Updated 3/16/2020)

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. Additional information is available at www.isbe.net/Documents/Guidance-Child-Care-Centers-COVID-19-closures.pdf.

19. How does the mandated closure impact Early Childhood Block Grant Prevention Initiative programs? (Updated 3/16/2020)

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.

20. 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.

21. Can a district provide the remainder of students' 30 clock hours of classroom instruction for driver's education via distance learning? (Updated 3/16/2020)

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

22. Can students continue internships or other experiential learning opportunities during the closure? (Updated 3/16/2020)

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

23. Should extracurricular activities still be taking place? (Updated 3/16/2020)

Extracurricular activities must not take place during the statewide school closure. In fact, the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) announced on March 12 that it has canceled its remaining winter State Series postseason tournaments, which include Boys Basketball, Scholastic Bowl, Drama & Group Interpretation, Music Organization, Debate and Journalism, over concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further, the [Executive Order 2020-07](#) bans gatherings that consist of 50 people or more.

24. Does the closure impact the ability of a school to serve as a polling place? (Updated 3/16/2020)

The election on March 17 is currently scheduled to proceed. This school closure mandate does not affect the availability of school buildings to serve as polling places. School districts that normally host polling places are asked to please honor election day on March 17 by having facilities open for voters. According to state law: "Upon request of the county board or board of election commissioners, the proper agency of government (including school districts and units of local government) shall make a public building under

its control available for use as a polling place on an election day and for a reasonably necessary time before and after election day, without charge.”

Please work with your county clerk if you have questions or concerns.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

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

ISBE is currently reviewing questions regarding special education and will releasing guidance specific to special education as soon as it becomes available.

STAFFING

26. What if a district has questions regarding teacher staffing during the mandated statewide school closure? (Updated 3/16/2020)

ISBE, IEA, IFT, IPA, and IASA will issue joint guidance regarding staffing imminently.

27. Does the recommendation that school districts keep at least one administrator on site mean school districts are available to provide childcare? (Updated 3/16/2020)

No. The goal of the mandatory statewide school closure is to limit social contact and encourage students and families to stay home. 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.