

State Board of Education Meeting Summary: Friday, March 27

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The State Board of Education met via conference call on Friday, March 27 to address certain time-sensitive topics relating to COVID-19, such as grading guidance, distribution of new funding in response to the coronavirus, and approval of a new state of emergency leave policy. Many of these topics were brought to the Board's attention in a [recommendations document](#) created and shared with policymakers by the NC Association of School Administrators (NCASA) and one of NCASA's core affiliates, the NC School Superintendents' Association (NCSSA). The following summary reflects actions taken by members of the State Board during Friday's meeting:

New Business: COVID-19 - State of Emergency Sick Leave (BENF-001)

Members of the State Board [approved](#) a new policy—[Section 9.4.2 Contagious Disease Policy to Address 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic](#), which provides emergency leave to “employees in local education agencies, the Innovative School District, and regional schools for the period covering April 1 – April 30, 2020, and may be extended by the State Board of Education.” The policy notes that the SBE “encourages all public schools to provide remote work opportunities for their employees...as well as allow the continuation of salary and benefits.” When it is not possible for an employee to work remotely and continue to be paid, up to 168 hours of paid State of Emergency Leave may be used for the following reasons:

1. **Childcare/Eldercare/High Risk Employees**—Mandatory or non-mandatory employees (including temporary and permanent employees) who cannot work because they have childcare or eldercare needs due to COVID-19-related facility closings may receive paid State of Emergency Leave up to the maximum hours allowed. Mandatory employees who cannot work because they are high risk and who have not been assigned alternate telework duties may receive paid State of Emergency Leave up to the maximum hours allowed.
2. **Unable To Telework/Reduced Hours**—Non-mandatory employees (including temporary and permanent employees, as well as employees who report to work for reduced hours) who are unable to telework who have not been authorized by their supervisor to continue to report to work will receive paid State of Emergency Leave up to the maximum hours allowed if they cannot telework because their position duties cannot be performed remotely and reasonable alternate remote work is not feasible or productive, as determined by the employer. Mandatory employees who have a reduced on-site schedule, at the discretion of the employer, may take paid State of Emergency Leave for the balance of hours where they have not been assigned on-site or remote duties.
3. **Part-time Employees**—For part-time employees with irregular schedules, paid State of Emergency Leave should be based upon the employee's average hours per week over the course of the previous month. In no case will paid State of Emergency Leave exceed 40 hours per week. Part-time employees shall receive a pro-rated share of the 168 State of Emergency Leave hours.
4. **COVID-19 Sickness/Self Quarantine**—Any mandatory or non-mandatory employees (including temporary and permanent employees) who are sick due to symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or who are caring for a dependent with such symptoms, or a health care provider has advised the employee to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19 will receive State of Emergency Leave up to the maximum hours allowed. All other medically related absences will utilize regular forms of leave such as sick, vacation, and bonus leave, or shared leave if previously approved.

The policy further notes that non-mandatory employees who have taken other pre-approved leave, chose not to work, or are unavailable for reasons not provided in the policy, must use other available leave types, such as vacation time or bonus leave. Mandatory employees also do not receive any additional pay under this new policy, nor are substitute employees entitled to leave under the policy.

Finally, the policy notes that up to 96 hours of additional State of Emergency Leave is available for all employees who requested leave during the school closure period of March 16-March 31, 2020, for the same reasons set forth above.

SLA 1 - COVID-19: Grading Guidance Recommendation

State Board members [approved](#) new guidance and policy additions regarding remote learning and grading for grades K-5, grades 6-11, and graduating seniors. The [approved recommendations document](#) first defines remote learning as *“learning that takes place outside of the traditional school setting using various media and formats, such as but not limited to: video conference, telephone conference, print material, online material, or learning management systems.”* The document then lays out the following five “critical factors for effective remote learning”:

1. Is accessible by all students for which the learning is intended and is responsive to diverse learning groups;
2. Maintains consistent communication between instructional staff and students;
3. Addresses the curricular and instructional needs associated with appropriate standards;
4. Includes evidence of student learning; and
5. Considers the whole child as well as the home learning environment.

If all of the above critical factors for remote learning are met, LEAs/charters may continue to evaluate students, although the document notes that LEAs/charters should focus on *“supporting student progress and communicating feedback to students and families rather than on assigning grades”* for Grades K-5. For Grades 6-11, the document notes that LEAs/charters may continue to assign grades, but if all critical factors for remote learning are not met, student grades should not be negatively impacted.

Finally, the document notes that seniors should receive pass/fail designations for any spring classes, based on their performance until schools closed on March 13. If a student was failing as of that date, then the student can use remote learning opportunities to attempt to bring his or her grade up to passing. For seniors, the focus of the policy is to ensure students meet the minimum graduation requirements of 22 credits.

SLA 2 - COVID-19: NC Textbook Evaluation and Adoption

State Board members [approved](#) the recommendation to indefinitely postpone the 2020 textbook evaluation and adoption process that was currently in progress.

BSOP 1 - Approval of Contracts over \$500 Thousand per CNTR-002

State Board members [voted to table](#) the approval of a [new contract amendment](#), which would have extended the State’s emergency contract with Istation through June.

BSOP 2 - COVID-19: \$50 Million Allotment Distribution (ALOT-003)

State Board members [approved](#) a distribution formula for the \$50 million in new supplemental funding provided to public schools for additional COVID-19 expenditures. The Board was presented with three different distribution formulas, all of which proposed to distribute funds based on some combination of the percentage of low wealth/poverty students, as well as student ADM. Board members ultimately approved a formula in which 50% of funds are distributed based on the number of poverty children per the Title I Low Income poverty data,

and remaining funds are distributed based on allotted ADM. Special provisions and other considerations for this funding distribution can be accessed [here](#).

BSOP 3 – COVID-19: Exceptional Children (EC) Division April 1 Child Count (ALOT-003)

State Board members [approved](#) the recommendation that for the April 1, 2020 child count, a statistical formula will be used to project the normal increase from December 1 to April 1 child count, using the last five years of data.

Members can access the entire agenda and all presentations for this meeting by clicking [here](#).