



School District Recommendations for Continuing 2019-2020 School Year

The following reflects feedback collected from superintendents statewide, in both urban and rural school districts, regarding the most-immediate needs for assistance as of March 19, 2020. This listing of recommended next steps is not intended to be all-inclusive and is subject to change, especially if the closure of public schools is extended beyond the original two-week period in response to escalating coronavirus concerns in our state and nation.

Needed State Actions for Supporting Public Schools:

Step 1: If additional closure is required, provide LEAs ample time for planning and communication with parents, students and staff.

Step 2: Issue uniform guidance on staff work days, leave time, and other personnel items.

- **Compensate all personnel for the days included in the school closure.** Since having large numbers of employees working creates a health risk for the individuals and potential liability risk for the district, no employee who is either unable to work due to elimination of their normal job role (e.g. bus drivers) or is afraid to be on school grounds due to the health concerns should be penalized with reduction of leave or pay.
- **Provide additional pay for any ten-month employee who works during the school closure, as well as those who exceed their 215-day employment contract requirement,** to compensate for needed assistance in supporting student remote learning, providing meal and child care services, and sanitizing buses and facilities.
- **Release a comprehensive, uniform set of guidelines for pay and leave time for all categories of employees,** particularly for staff who are unable to perform their normal functions (e.g. bus drivers), to ensure equity among all LEA personnel.
- **Authorize LEAs to designate essential employees who would continue providing child nutrition, IT, child care and other necessary school services to support students and the community** during an extended period of school closure.

- **Clarify in legislation, policy or executive order under what circumstances missed work days fall under the contagious disease exception (Code 24) allowing ongoing pay.**
- **Hold principals and teachers harmless** by allowing districts to choose either the 2018-19 or 2019-20 school accountability outcomes, whichever are more favorable, for reporting, evaluation designations, principal pay and staff bonuses and salary placement for next year.
- **Do not issue one-time teacher performance bonuses** (AP, WorkKeys, 3rd grade reading) during the 2019-20 school year.
- **Waive any abbreviated and full observation requirements for any teacher in their contract renewal cycle.**
- **Provide waivers for state-required beginning teacher observations.**
- **Waive in-service training requirements temporarily for principals and teachers.**
- **Grant licensure flexibility for teachers who are up for renewal this year and next year due to lack of ability to secure continuing credits.**

Step 3: Suspend testing requirements and ease related accountability measures.

- **Provide waivers for the minimum 185 days or 1,025 instructional hours for the 2019-20 school year.**
- **Request a federal waiver from all Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) compliance requirements for the 2019-2020 school year.**
- **Require calculation of grades, class rank, graduation credits and GPA for graduating seniors based on either the end of the first semester or the end of the first nine weeks of the second semester and waive any remaining graduation requirements** for seniors who were on track to graduate by the end of the school year, if they hold a minimum of 22 credits.
- **Provide guidance/policy on handling graduation eligibility for high school seniors and how colleges/universities will accommodate them** under current admission requirements without penalty.
- **Allow districts the flexibility to issue Pass/Fail grades for K-11 students as determined by teachers, with principals retaining authority to place and promote students to the appropriate grade level for the next academic year.**
- **Allow districts the flexibility to offer A-F letter grades in grades 9-11 if feasible.**
- **Suspend NCFE, EOC and EOG requirements for the 2019-20 school year.**
- **Suspend EVAAS for the 2019-20 school year.**
- **Do not issue A-F school performance grades for the 2019-2020 school year.**

- **Hold schools and districts harmless under the A-F accountability requirements** and any designation of low-performing schools that would otherwise subject that school for possible inclusion in the Innovative School District (ISD).
- **Waive Read to Achieve accountability requirements for the 2019-20 school year.**
- **Provide guidance on handling career-technical education (CTE) classes**, especially those requiring certain hands-on skills being taught in person.
- **Issue Occupational Course of Study graduation work requirement waivers.**
- **Issue waiver for certified nursing assistant (CNA) clinical-hours requirement.**
- **Grant statewide flexibility or waivers on AP/IB requirements for the 2019-20 school year.**

Step 4: Provide flexible relief funding for LEA mitigation and response costs.

- **Provide additional funding to offset unplanned costs districts have incurred** due to the virus response. Funding should be provided on an ADM basis with maximum flexibility to cover:
 - **Sanitizers and other cleaning supplies** for more frequent sanitation of facilities, surfaces and buses.
 - **Student connectivity support through additional bandwidth at schools and in community locations** to serve students without home access to the internet.
 - **Additional medical supplies and protective clothing** (masks, gloves, face shields, and gowns) for cafeteria workers and those delivering meals.
 - **Child care LEAs are providing** for medical and emergency personnel, and LEA employees, required to work during closure.
 - **Additional support needed for Exceptional Children**, especially those most medically fragile.
 - **Technology costs associated with ongoing remote learning:** additional devices (Chromebooks), mobile hot spots, professional development for teachers on how to implement online instruction, and instructional materials distributed to students.
 - **Copying costs and additional paper and instructional materials for student learning at home.**
 - **Meal reimbursements for students not on free and reduced lunch but now receiving meals** at schools or through school support at community locations.
 - **Adding high school seniors to North Carolina Virtual Public School classes** to facilitate graduation eligibility.

- **Additional fuel for buses** unless DPI allows delivery of meals to be included as part of the fuel allotment.
- **Additional building security with schools closed** for longer periods of time.

Step 5: Provide greater policy flexibility and ease regulations on LEAs.

- **Provide calendar flexibility** for 2020-21 to give school districts needed flexibility to support students, especially those not performing at grade level, in catching up on missed classroom instruction during the shift to remote learning in 2019-20.
- **Indemnify school districts from liability that may originate from essential staff continuing to work on school grounds, as well as off school grounds**, in delivering food on school buses or working remotely elsewhere.
- **Allow all 2019-20 funds to carry over into the new fiscal year.**
- **Allow flexibility to move funds between line items to accommodate staff transitions into new roles**, i.e. child nutrition workers delivering meals on buses or teacher assistants providing child care.
- **Restore ABC Transfer Flexibility (conversion of teacher funding to other needed personnel positions) at the LEA Average Salary** rather than the first step on the teacher salary schedule (PRC 001, PRC 005).
- **Allow PRC 130 (Textbooks) to be used for Computer Devices** to afford increased unexpected costs for online learning.
- **Relax some of the DHHS child care regulations that might be prohibitive as schools set up child care centers** to support health care and emergency service providers and LEA employees required to work during the closure.
- **Hold school districts harmless in transportation efficiency ratings** by rolling forward ratings from the 2018-2019 year.
- **Provide districts the flexibility to include students in transition (e.g. homeless students) in child-care services that are currently being offered to students of frontline workers.**
- **Provide waivers or extensions for bus inspection requirements.**

Step 6: If the Governor determines cancellation of school is needed for the remainder of the school year, we recommend the following:

- **Implement all previous steps as outlined but provide any needed clarifications or changes on previous implementation guidance.**
- **Issue guidance from the UNC System on the impact of school cancellation on currently enrolled students and 11th grade students.**

- Provide guidelines for high school students who are enrolled concurrently in higher education coursework.

NC & Other States' Actions during Long-Term School Closures:

To further assist state leaders in consideration of next steps needed for NC public schools, additional information on handling of long-term school closures is linked here:

- [Hurricane Katrina and Other States' Policy Changes during Previous School Closures](#)
- [Kansas Executive Order Closing Schools For Remainder Of School Year](#)
- [California Governor: Most Schools Likely Out Until the Fall](#)
- [Texas Suspends State Testing Requirements](#)
- [Florida Suspends State Testing Requirements](#)
- [Georgia Suspends State Testing Requirements](#)

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