



# Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001  
www.isbe.net

**Darren Reisberg**  
*Chair of the Board*

**Dr. Carmen I. Ayala**  
*State Superintendent of Education*

## **Mandatory Statewide School Closure Guidance for Illinois Schools and School Districts**

**Last updated: March 18, 2020**

### **Executive Orders:**

- [Executive Order 2020-07](#) (March 16, 2020) includes Open Meetings Act flexibility.
- [Executive Order 2020-06](#) (March 25, 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 15, 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?**

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. Will the College Board still administer Advanced Placement (AP) Exams? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

The College Board's AP program is finalizing streamlined AP Exam options that would allow students to test at home, depending on the situation in May. College Board is working to give every AP student the opportunity to claim the credit they've earned. The AP Program will communicate the details of these additional solutions to educators and students by March 20.

Currently, the AP Exam administration remains as scheduled for schools that will be open on May 4–8 and 11–15, with late testing scheduled for May 20–22. Click [here](#) for the latest information from the AP Program.

**3. Are there resources available for virtual learning for Advanced Placement courses? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

The College Board is developing tools to mitigate the impact of school closures on students in the Advanced Placement Program. 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. These include free online AP lessons and review sessions from some of the top AP teachers in the country.

**BOARD MEETINGS/OPEN MEETINGS ACT**

**4. 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.

**5. 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**

**6. How will days be counted during the mandated closure? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

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.

**7. 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.

**8. 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](http://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.

**9. Should school districts take attendance during the mandated statewide school closure? (Updated 3/18/20)**

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

**10. 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.

**CONTINUITY OF EDUCATION**

**11. Are ROEs/ISCs required to approve e-learning plans during the mandated statewide school closure? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

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 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, in the event that the mandated statewide school closure extends beyond March 30. 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).

**12. Should student work be graded during the mandatory school closure? (Updated 3/18/20)**

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.

**13. May students' dual credit programs continue during the mandatory school closure? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

Schools that provide dual credit coursework as a component of serving pre-kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> 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**

**14. 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.

**15. Will the deadline for Title III Intent to Apply forms be extended? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

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.

**16. 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? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

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.

## **NUTRITION/MEALS/FOOD SERVICE**

**17. Are districts required to provide meals to students during closure? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

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.

### **18. 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](mailto:CNP@isbe.net) as soon as possible.

### **19. 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.

**20. 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.

**21. 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**

**22. If districts use buses to deliver meals, is that mileage reimbursable? What is a reimbursable transportation expenditure? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

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.

**23. Is ISBE reimbursing expenditures for school bus transportation during the closure if school buses are not running regular routes? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

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.

**24. Is the Illinois Secretary of State offering an extension period for obtaining school bus permits? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

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**

### **25. 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.

## ***COURSEWORK & ACTIVITIES***

### **26. 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.

### **27. 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.

### **28. 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.

### **29. 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.

### **30. Should extracurricular activities still be taking place?**

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.

**31. 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.

***EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & CHILDCARE***

**32. How does the statewide school closure impact prekindergarten programs?**

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](https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Guidance-Child-Care-Centers-COVID-19-closures.pdf). Additional information is available at [www.isbe.net/Documents/Guidance-Child-Care-Centers-COVID-19-closures.pdf](https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Guidance-Child-Care-Centers-COVID-19-closures.pdf).

**33. 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. Additional information is available at [www.isbe.net/Documents/Guidance-Child-Care-Centers-COVID-19-closures.pdf](https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Guidance-Child-Care-Centers-COVID-19-closures.pdf).

**34. 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***

#### **35. 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. This mandate applies to all Illinois public and nonpublic schools, including parochial and charter schools.

### ***RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES***

#### **36. Does the mandated school closure impact residential settings? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

[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.

#### **37. Does the mandated school closure apply to state operated schools? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

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**

#### **38. What if a district has a question regarding special education? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

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

### **STAFFING**

#### **39. What if a district has questions regarding teacher staffing during the mandated statewide school closure? (Updated 3/18/2020)**

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

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

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.