

Fox Chapel Area School District

**FCASD Board of Directors
Committee of the Whole
Meeting**

**Learning During Emergency
Closures**

October 12, 2026

Agenda

- Safety Requirements for Opening Schools
- Decision-Making
- Pennsylvania Department of Education Requirements
- Thinking About Learning During Emergency Closures
- Delivery of Education
- Virtual Instruction in the Fox Chapel Area School District During Emergency Closures
- Positives and Pinch Points
- Virtual Learning Attendance
- Frequency of Learning Mode Changes
- School Calendar Implications
- Educational Recommendations

The Priority is Always Student
and Workforce Safety

Safety Requirements for Opening Schools

Safety Requirements for Opening Schools

- Do buildings have power service?
 - Do buildings have water service?
 - Do buildings have adequate heating/cooling?
 - Are life-safety systems operational or within requirements for occupancy?
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- Are school buses operational?
 - Are road conditions acceptable for school bus travel?
 - Are school bus stops safe or are alternate bus stops/routes available?
 - Is the wind chill approaching -10 degrees Fahrenheit or lower?

Decision-Making

Information Gathering Begins as Early as 4 a.m.

- The facilities teams conduct building assessments – sometimes stationed overnight to monitor systems and physical plant.
- The bus company verifies school buses are operational – sometimes stationed overnight to keep buses warm and running throughout cold temperatures.
- The school police remain in contact with local emergency responders to gather updates on safety challenges (such as closed roads).
- The bus company and district administrators drive challenging routes throughout all six school communities to verify they are open and safe for bus travel.
- The school administrators consult the National Weather Service and other hyper-local forecasting to review current and future conditions.

Final Decision – Usually Before 5:45 a.m.

- Simultaneous Communication:
 - Rapid Calls to Families
 - Email/Website/Social Media Posts
 - News Station Announcements
 - Notification of Administrators
 - Notification of Labor Groups
 - Notification of Additional Transportation Sites (A.W. Beattie, etc.)
- If there is a school delay, the team discusses what conditions would need to change to open schools and the timeline for the next decision.

Other Considerations (Situation Dependent)

- Is it safe for students to walk to bus stops/safe for student drivers or would a delay help with visibility?
- Will building systems be operational by the delayed start time (power, water, heat/cooling)?
- Does the district have or can procure adequate food for service – especially after prolonged power outages, etc.)?
- How does a delay or closure affect planned activities in the buildings – do they need to be canceled/rescheduled?
- How does a delay or closure affect the required days/hours to receive state subsidy?
- Can the district operate in a virtual format, if required (is there adequate power, connectivity, technology system reliability across students/workforce)? We must consider both home and school.
- What is the forecasted weather throughout the day (at the delayed start time, during dismissal) and is the forecast reasonable for safety?

The district provides transportation to 53 locations daily, six of which are FCASD-operated schools.

Pennsylvania Department of Education Requirements

Requirements for School Days/Hours

Secondary Students

180 days
and/or
990 hours

Elementary Students

180 days
and/or
900 hours

Flexibilities for Pennsylvania Schools: In-Person Instruction, Virtual Instruction, Educator-Planned and Supervised Asynchronous Instruction

Thinking About Learning During Emergency Closures

Thinking About Learning

- The core mission of learning and teaching
- Physical well-being
- Emotional well-being
- Social well-being
- Mental well-being
- Relationship building
- Safety

Delivery of Education

Delivery of Education – Regular School Day

- Normal operations is always the preferred option.
- Full day of instruction and full hours count toward the state requirements for subsidy payments.
- All students have access to full complement of school services (food, health, school counseling, special services, etc.).

Delivery of Education – Two-Hour Delay

- Permits all students to have a shortened day of in-person instruction.
- Day of instruction counts toward the state requirements and diminished hour accumulation toward the state requirements and subsidy payments.
- All students have access to partial complement of school services (lunch – no breakfast, health, school counseling, special services, etc.).

Delivery of Education – Virtual Learning

- Permits all students to have a full day of virtual learning.
- Full day of instruction and full hours count toward the state requirements for subsidy payments.
- All students have access to partial complement of school services (health, school counseling, special services, etc.; no food service) and touch points throughout the day.

Delivery of Education – Asynchronous Packets

- Permits all students to have a full day of pre-planned asynchronous learning (not current topics of instruction).
- Full day of instruction and full hours count toward the state requirements for subsidy payments.
- All students have limited – if any – access to school services (health, school counseling, special services, etc.; no food service).

Virtual Instruction in the Fox Chapel Area School District During Emergency Closures

Virtual Learning in Grades 6-12

- All courses engage in synchronous virtual learning and asynchronous offline learning.
- For each scheduled course, approximately half of the instructional time is synchronous, virtual instruction by the professional educator.
- For each scheduled course, approximately half of the instructional time is asynchronous, application or practice of learning with available support from the professional educator and support staff, as needed.

Virtual Learning in Grades K-5

- All courses engage in synchronous virtual learning and asynchronous offline learning.
- Students follow their normal schedule as follows:
 - Grades K-5 Mathematics (20-30 minutes minimum)
 - Grades K-5 Reading/ELA (20-30 minutes minimum)
 - Grades K-2 Foundations (15-20 minutes minimum)
 - Grades 3-5 Writing & Grammar (15-20 minutes minimum)
 - STEAM or Social Studies (15-20 minutes minimum)
 - Special Areas (10-15 minutes minimum)
 - Interventions and Enrichment (10-15 minutes minimum)

Materials are primarily review or skill-building in nature.

TOTAL SYNCHRONOUS TIME: 80-115 minutes

Positives and Pinch Points

Positives and Pinch Points of Virtual Learning

Positives

- Continuity of instruction
 - Especially important for high school students who are on a block schedule and have deadlines outside of the district's control (AP Exams, Keystones, graduation date, military deadlines, college summer sessions)
- Educator/staff and student interactions
- Relationship enhancement
- Schedules and routines
- Counts as a school day for state requirements and/or subsidy

Pinch Points

- Primarily review and skill-building concepts at elementary level
- Variability of learner independence
- No food service
- Limited activities (sports, arts, etc.), depending on the situation

Positives and Pinch Points of Asynchronous Learning

Positives

- Counts as a school day for state requirements and/or subsidy
- No need for connectivity

Pinch Points

- Limited or no educator/staff and student interactions
- Primarily review and skill-building concepts
- Variability of learner independence
- Limited or no relationship enhancement opportunities
- No schedule/routine continuity
- No food service
- Limited activities (sports, arts, etc.), depending on the situation

What We Believe for Learning...

- The core mission of learning and teaching
- Physical well-being
- Emotional well-being
- Social well-being
- Mental well-being
- Relationship building
- Safety

Virtual Learning Attendance

Virtual Learning Attendance

- Educators note if a student is present during online instruction.
- If a student logs on to live instruction, they are counted as present.
- If a student does not log on to live instruction, they are counted as absent.
- This is the same procedure as on any other school day.

Virtual Learning Attendance Data

District Attendance on Virtual Learning Days December 2025 - January 2026 (12/02/2025, 1/20/2026, 1/27/2026, 1/28/2026, 1/29/2026, 1/30/2026)			
School	Average Membership	Average Attendance	Percent (%) Present
Fox Chapel Area High School	1352.40	1265.56	93.51%
Dorseyville Middle School	979.03	930.15	95.01%
Fairview Elementary School	399.49	385.88	96.59%
Hartwood Elementary School	405.59	386.82	95.37%
Kerr Elementary School	455.67	432.73	94.97%
O'Hara Elementary School	760.78	727.73	95.66%

Virtual learning attendance mirrors typical in-person day attendance.

Frequency of Learning Mode Changes

Frequency of Learning Mode Changes

FCASD School Schedule Changes			
School Year	Virtual Learning Days	Full Closure Days	Percentage
2021-2022	2	0	> .1%
2022-2023	0	1	> .5%
2023-2024	0	0	0%
2024-2025	5	3	> 5%
2025-2026	6	1	> 4%

Only full district learning mode changes included in the chart.

*2025-2026 – There was one asynchronous learning day for Fairview Elementary (water issue) and two asynchronous learning days for O'Hara Elementary (no power).

School Calendar Implications

Calendar Implications

Required School Holidays in PA School Code

- Saturday (with exceptions, if necessary)
- Sunday
- Memorial Day
- Fourth of July
- Christmas
- Thanksgiving
- First of January

Non-Contractual School Holidays in FCASD

- Spring Break

*All other school holidays are embedded in a contractual agreement.

Options to Make-Up Closure Days (No Virtual)

Spring Break

- The district could identify spring break days as snow make-up days.
- For each day of school closure, the district would replace the originally scheduled spring break day with in-person instruction.

*This arrangement would retain in-person instruction.

*Families who have scheduled plans for spring break may not change them.

Add Days at the End of the Year

- The district could add a day(s) of in-person instruction after the scheduled end of the school year.
- Graduating seniors may need a different schedule (longer days, Saturdays, etc.).

*This arrangement would retain in-person instruction.

*Families who have scheduled plans for the beginning of summer vacation may not change them.

*If the graduation date changes, military/summer term college students may miss graduation.

Educational Recommendations

Educational Recommendations

- In-Person Instruction When Safe and Possible
- 2-Hour Delay When Necessary
- Virtual Instruction If Unable to Safely Hold In-Person School and When Possible
- Asynchronous Packets Only When Absolutely Necessary

Questions?