

Governor's Office COVID-19 Daily Q & A

March 18, 2020

Education

Q: How long will schools be closed?

A: Pursuant to the Governor's 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.

Q: Can schools extend testing dates?

A: 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. ISBE is working to ensure 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.

Q: Is there any mandate relief potentially coming? What can be done via legislation?

A: ISBE is reviewing the School Code and other laws to identify sections that may need to be modified as a result of the mandated closure. ISBE and the Governor's Office will stay in communication with legislators once requested changes are identified.

Q: How can school districts retrieve access to iPads, chrome books and other items during the school closures?

A: ISBE sent a survey asking that every school district, special education cooperative, nonpublic school, and Regional Office of Education that administers an alternative learning program complete the Elearning Technology Needs Survey at www.isbe.net/covid19. The responses will provide ISBE with a clear understanding of exactly what schools need in order to provide e-learning to all students in the immediate future, should the mandated school closure need to extend beyond March 30. ISBE is working with the Governor's Office to explore opportunities within the philanthropic community and the private sector to meet your technology needs.

Q: How will days be counted during the mandated closure?

A: 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. 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.

School districts should consult with their local collective bargaining units about expectations for teachers and other staff. Decisions should be reached by mutual agreement. 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. The Governor's office and ISBE joined a statement with the Illinois Education Association, Illinois Federation of Teachers, Illinois Principals Association, and Illinois Association of School Administrators.

Q: How will a school deal with bus transportation reimbursement during the closure, when school buses may not be running regular routes

A: 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.

Q: Will kids be graded based on any homework during this time?

A: 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.

Higher Education

Q: Due to school closures, what will happen for the homeless students or those who cannot go home?

A: All public universities are making arrangements for, at minimum, students who are homeless, youth in care, and international students who lack other housing. For specific policies by institution, please see Please review policies by university on the Illinois Board of Education Website.

Q: Will universities have an action plan if a student contracts COVID-19?

A: All public university campuses have identified spaces in case of need to quarantine and will seek medical help for the impacted student.

Q: How will students continue online coursework if they do not have access to broadband?

A: The administration and universities are looking into options to assist in ensuring that all students have access to the technology needed to participate in online learning.

Q: Will campus childcare continue to operate?

A: Campus-childcare centers will remain open until further notice.

Q: Are all university employees to remain at work?

A: Universities are identifying remote employees/employees who serve students will be working.

Q: Are community colleges are not required to remain open?

A: Community Colleges campus will remain open and will move to online education.

Q: How will adult education programs be affected?

A: Community Colleges will be closing adult educator programs throughout the state but will not be penalized and will continue to be paid.

Q: How will this impact MAP Grants for students and federal work study?

A: No interruption for state financial aid programs is expected. With respect to work-study, the U.S. Department of Education has instructed institutions that participate in federal work-study that as long as they continue to pay other employees, they should continue to pay work-study recipients.

Q: What will happen to Veteran's Education Benefits?

A: Additional guidance is expected this week regarding veterans' education benefits. In the meantime the federal government has instructed that no changes in veteran eligibility for education benefits should be made.

Q: Will graduation be cancelled?

A: The University of Illinois systems has cancelled commencement services for all 3 schools and will mail diplomas. Decisions from other institutions are forthcoming.