

ARCHIVE: COVID-19 Superintendent Call

April 1, 2020

The following are questions asked by directors of schools during this call and the point-in-time answers provided by the department. For additional guidance and up-to-the-minute supports, please check the TDOE website for more information:

<https://www.tn.gov/education/health-and-safety/update-on-coronavirus.html>.

Academics

- Please provide an update on the adoption of ELA textbooks.
 - **RESPONSE:** The TDOE continues to work on the adoption of high-quality instructional materials as required by Tennessee law. The TDOE has delayed the textbook adoption compliance deadline until June 15, 2020 to provide districts with additional time to complete required compliance forms.

Assessment and Accountability

- When will additional updates be provided regarding assessments, particularly the ACT? Who in districts will be receiving that information for dissemination within the district?
 - **RESPONSE:** Guidance regarding the ACT is located in the document entitled [ACT Guidance for Tennessee Districts and Schools](#) on the TDOE's [COVID-19 webpage](#). The TDOE will also be sending bi-weekly updates on assessments to the district testing coordinators (DTC) through the existing email listserve, as well as providing a monthly DTC webinar. Additionally, updates will be referenced in the Commissioner's Update for Directors as well as posted on the assessment LiveBinders site.

Staffing

- When will further information be released about teacher and administrator evaluation policies for the 2019-20 school year?
 - **RESPONSE:** This item will be discussed at the emergency State Board of Education meeting on April 9th. Once the board votes, TDOE will provide prompt guidance to districts to address this issue.
- Question: What is the best way for districts to manage staff that will not be rehired for the 2020-2021 school year?
 - **RESPONSE:** The TDOE will provide prompt guidance on this matter after the SBE's special called meeting on April 9.

Legal requirements or needs

- Announcement: Governor Lee's Executive Orders 21 and 22 were issued on March 30

- **FURTHER INFORMATION:** Among other things, Executive Order 22, which is effective from 11:59 p.m., Central Daylight Time, on March 31, 2020, until 11:59 p.m., Central Daylight Time, on April 14, 2020, provides that, “all persons in Tennessee are urged to stay at home, except for when engaging in Essential Activity or Essential Services.” Pursuant to Executive Order 22, Public and private Pre-K schools, K-12 schools, colleges, and universities are listed as essential services for purposes of facilitating distance learning, providing food or shelter, performing critical research, or performing essential functions, provided that the Health Guidelines set forth in Executive Order No. 22 are followed to the greatest extent practicable. Additionally, Executive Order 22 provides that schools providing food services to students or members of the public shall provide the food on a carry-out basis only and shall not permit the food to be eaten at the site where it is provided, consistent with Executive Order Nos. 17 and 21.

Governor Lee has issued nine Executive Orders related to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Here is a link to all Governor Lee’s Executive Orders:

<https://www.sos.tn.gov/products/division-publications/executive-orders-governor-bill-lee>

- Announcement: CARES Act
 - **FURTHER INFORMATION:** The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, also known as the CARES Act, is a law meant to address the economic fallout of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic in the United States. The TDOE has finalized two surveys, one for superintendents and one for the public, to provide feedback to the TDOE to utilize when applying for funding for schools through the CARES Act. Here are the links to the surveys:
 - [Director of Schools Survey](#)
 - [Public Survey](#)
- Questions: Where may directors find the proposed emergency State Board of Education (SBE) rules?
 - **RESPONSE:** As mentioned during the recent Superintendent call, districts may contact their local TOSS representative who can provide a draft of the proposed rules. The proposed rules will also be posted on SBE’s website next week.
- Question: Please provide more information about grading and retention policy updates.
 - **RESPONSE:** These issues will be discussed at the SBE emergency rules meeting on April 9th. The SBE is responsible for adopting general policy for districts to use when adopting their own local policies in relation to grading, promotion, and retention decisions.
- Question: Which waivers and other COVID-19 policies apply to private schools as well as public schools?

RESPONSE: Governor Lee has encouraged schools to remain closed for in-person instruction through April 24. In addition, pursuant to Executive Order 22, which is effective from March 31, 2020 until April 14, 2020, public and private Pre-K schools, K-12 schools, colleges, and universities are listed as essential services for purposes of facilitating distance learning, providing food or shelter, performing critical research, or performing essential functions, provided that the Health Guidelines set forth in Executive Order No. 22 are followed to the greatest extent practicable.

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Pursuant to HB2818, Commissioner Schwinn has issued a blanket waiver of the 180 days of instruction required in the law for all schools. The TDOE will be issuing more information specific to non-public schools after the SBE's special called meeting on April 9.

- Question: Will Governor Lee close schools beyond April 24?
 - **RESPONSE:** The TDOE will provide further guidance on this matter when it is available.

Special Populations

- Question: Where can districts find all the Department's guidance related to IEPs?
 - **RESPONSE:** Guidance and resources regarding IEP meetings can be found on the department's [COVID-19 webpage](#) in the document titled [School Closures and Special Education: Guidance on Services to Students with Disabilities](#) as well as [School Closure Toolkit: Special Populations \(PDF\)](#).

Communications

- Question: How might districts access PBS shows if they are airing at times where other things may be scheduled, such as mealtimes? How might educators share videos of instructional content to be included in the PBS lessons?
 - **RESPONSE:** The instructional content airing on PBS can be recorded for later viewing or accessed through PBS online.

Nutrition

- Announcement: Meal pattern waivers for school nutrition
 - **FURTHER INFORMATION:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has released a nationwide waiver to states to permit school food authorities (SFAs) to vary from meal pattern requirements. In order to utilize the waiver, SFAs must send notice to the state agency for approval. Requests should

include a brief justification of the challenge creating the need and details of which meal pattern component is impacted. These requests should follow the template available on TDOE's COVID-19 page (Meal Pattern Flexibility Form) and be sent directly to Sandy.Dawes@tn.gov, School Nutrition State Director.

- While nutrition programs are encouraged to maintain and meet nutrition standards for each program to the greatest extent possible, approved waivers will allow districts to serve meals without all meal pattern requirements in place. The nationwide waiver is currently in effect until April 30, 2020, and will be reassessed on a rolling basis. (Waiver memo is available on TDOE's COVID-19 web page.)
- Is it still necessary for children to be present to receive their meal?
 - **RESPONSE:** Under a recently released nationwide waiver, TDOE is now waiving the requirement for children to be present at the time of meal service. Parents and guardians may now pick-up school meals from service sites on behalf of their children. SFAs must have plans in place to ensure accountability and program integrity, specifically ensuring meals go to children under 18 and duplicate meals are not distributed to any child. This waiver is effective immediately and remains in effect until June 30, 2020, or until expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier. (Waiver memo is available on TDOE's COVID-19 web page.)
- What guidance is available for providing meals to children in a way that protects both the children and the volunteers from spread of the virus?
 - **RESPONSE:** The Tennessee Department of Education's (TDOE) school nutrition team, in collaboration with the Department of Health, is developing a guidance sheet for best practices to maximize social distancing while continuing essential meal services. The guidance document will be available on the TDOE school nutrition website and shared with all school nutrition leads this week.
- Are districts required to document student names if parents pick up meals without the child present?
 - **RESPONSE:** Under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued nationwide flexibility allowing parents or guardians to pick up meals without children present to further limit exposure to the novel coronavirus. This flexibility may only be implemented if a school food authority (SFA) is operating under the noncongregate waiver. If the SFA chooses to implement the flexibility, a plan must be implemented to maintain accountability and program integrity, including maintaining the one type of meal per child per day requirement. If implemented, SFAs should record who is picking up meals, the date of pick up, and the types and number of meals served.

- Should districts continue requesting consent forms from families being served meals?
 - **RESPONSE:** Consent forms are only needed for meals being delivered through a door to door, home delivery type of service. If a door to door service is offered, schools should confirm the household's current contact information and the number of eligible children in the household to ensure the correct number of meals are delivered to the correct location. This type of service differs from a generalized bus route option, where the feeding locations become more general pick up locations. If you have specific questions, please reach out to your TDOE regional school nutrition consultant.
- Question: Will the ASD utilize the waiver for providing meals to students, or will meals be provided through Shelby County Schools?
 - **RESPONSE:** Shelby County Schools is responsible for all food services for ASD schools located in Memphis, and ASD schools have been utilizing meals provided by Shelby County. NOTE: one charter operator (Memphis Scholars) has offered services but generally this is Shelby County Schools.

IT

- Where can districts find additional guidance related to challenges with internet and device access?
 - **RESPONSE:** Guidance around challenges related to internet and device access can be found in the IT Resources: COVID-19 Guidance on the Department's website. This document provides information on wireless options, device options, and IT supports for learning. There is also a School Closure Toolkit for IT and Distance Learning which provides additional guidance around devices and connectivity.