

Introduction

Below, we include information pertaining to the coronavirus pandemic and its effects on education. Because the situation is changing daily, this information should not be considered all-inclusive; rather, it is a snapshot of what we know at the time of this posting. As more information becomes available, Education Commission of the States will add to this page with relevant education policy information. If you are a state policymaker wanting to be connected to another state, please reach out to your [State Relations liaison](#).

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Federal Guidance

- Information on the federal government’s response to and resources regarding the coronavirus can be accessed at [coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov), and a special landing page for schools and child care centers can be found [here](#).
- The U.S. Department of Education has a landing page with coronavirus-related information at [ed.gov/coronavirus](https://www.ed.gov/coronavirus). To highlight a couple of resources, see [here](#) for guidance on providing services to children with disabilities during the outbreak; and see [here](#) for guidance on assessments, accountability and ESSA.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture released a statement addressing “proactive flexibilities to feed children when schools close,” available [here](#).

Governors’ Executive Actions and State Guidance

- The National Governors Association provides a [resource page](#) covering governors’ actions across the states in response to COVID-19. This page includes a section on schools/childcare and universities.
- Below are examples of guidance from states on matters related to education:
 - **Alabama:** The state closed all public schools, starting March 18. The Alabama State Department of Education released a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document addressing questions about the length of the closure, student absences and how they will relate to school accountability; whether school staff will be required to work during the closure; whether employees will be charged annual leave during the closure; and food services. The state has also released an [LEA Guide](#) and a [Parent Guide](#). Both guides include information regarding expectations for schools, student attendance, online learning and testing.
 - **Arizona:** All Arizona schools are closed from March 16 to April 10. The Arizona Department of Education’s Office of Communications has posted [Guidance to Schools on COVID-19](#). The guidance includes information on pandemic preparedness for schools, school meals, statewide testing, special education considerations and graduation requirements. The state also provided a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document that addresses which schools are impacted by the closure, online learning, graduation, statewide assessments and student meals.
 - **Illinois:** The Illinois State Board of Education released [Mandatory Statewide School Closure Guidance for Illinois Schools and School Districts](#), last updated on March 23. The document answers questions related to assessments and accountability; board meetings; calendar and instruction/continuity of education; nutrition, meals, and food service; the scope of school closures; special education; and staffing. See [here](#) for extensive ISBE updates and guidance.
 - **Michigan:** With the state’s schools closed until April 5, the Michigan Department of Education has released a [series of memos](#) addressing potential concerns. The memos include information about [feeding children during school closures](#), [an update on student assessments](#) and [compliance requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act during a public health emergency](#).
 - **North Dakota:** All public and private schools in the state are closed indefinitely. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction has posted [School Guidance](#) that contains expectations and general guidance for schools, including, among other things, information on student well-being, how the closures impact special education, online learning, state aid to schools, teacher evaluations and professional development requirements, makeup days for school closures, student attendance, assessment and accountability, and school meals.

- **Washington:** All public and private schools are closed March 13 to April 24, subject to extension. The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction released [Guidance for Long-Term School Closures](#) on March 13. The released bulletin addresses allowable building activities, rulemaking, state and federal funding, assessments, federal accountability, special education, considerations for paid school staff, and meals and nutrition. It also includes contact information for any further questions individuals may have. Additional information can be found [here](#).
- **Wisconsin:** All public and private schools in the state are closed from March 18 to April 6. The governor has released a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document addressing questions about instructional hours, student meals, supports available for students with IEPs, testing requirements, athletics, graduation, parent conversations with their students, pay for hourly staff, and whether school staff are prohibited from reporting to work. Additional information can be found [here](#).

State Legislation in Response to COVID-19

Education Commission of the States tracks education legislation across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Because of the influx of legislation addressing the COVID-19 pandemic impacts on education, Education Commission of the States now tracks the topic in both its [2020 State Education Policy Watch List](#) and [State Education Policy Tracking tool](#).

The National Conference of State Legislatures is tracking [COVID-19 related legislation](#), which includes education topics.

Education Topic Areas

Remote/Virtual/E-Learning

Switching to virtual education may be one method to reduce the spread of coronavirus, but this move also can cause challenges for students who are not able to access internet-based education. [Florida](#) provides an example of virtual education used in response to COVID-19. In recognition of increased reliance on internet access for many students participating in online learning, [some internet service providers](#) have altered their policies, raised internet connection speeds and eliminated data caps. Below, we include some relevant Education Commission of the States resources; provide examples of state policy; and include external resources regarding remote, virtual and/or distance learning.

- While Education Commission of the States has not completed a 50-state scan on this issue, this [Virtual School Policy Snapshot](#) provides an overview of state legislative activity from 2017 to 2019 and may be useful. The snapshot provides information in three primary areas: attendance and engagement, authorizing and governance, and funding.
- This [50-state scan on charter school policies](#) provides information on virtual charter schools.
- Although Education Commission of the States does not have a comprehensive resource on states that permit e-learning during extenuating circumstances (for instance, snow days or a health emergency), below we provide several examples of related state policies. Note that while these states have a policy permitting e-learning for snow days, none appear to require it — so it may or may not be implemented at the district level in these states.
 - While it is not in state law, the department of education in [Indiana](#) has adopted formal rules and regulations for its e-learning day program.

- **Ohio** has a [law](#) that allows districts to adopt a plan addressing online learning programs (“e-learning”) in the event of school closure.
- It also appears [Pennsylvania](#) had a pilot program to allow districts to permit students to complete work at home on snow days. It is not clear if the program continued beyond the 2017-18 school year.
- **Kentucky allows** schools and districts to offer nontraditional instructional days in lieu of school cancellations. The policy requires districts that wish to participate in the NTI program to submit a plan to the Kentucky Department of Education for approval. For districts that have yet to receive approval for an NTI program, they are able to apply for emergency approval to operate a program for the rest of the year. The Kentucky Department of Education released [guidance](#), last updated March 2020, highlighting three popular instructional approaches (p. 17-18) for NTI days, including:
 - Digital.
 - Project-Based.
 - Lesson Packet.

The guidance also outlined key methods districts can implement for students who do not have access to the internet or a device:

- Allowing students to check out or borrow a device.
 - Pre-loading content onto a device or jump drive.
 - Parking a Wi-Fi bus in the community.
 - Using an internet switch that can be activated at the district.
 - Opening school buildings for computer lab use.
 - Sending staff to community locations that have internet/devices.
 - Having agreements with a local utility company or internet service provider.
 - Assigning project-based work.
 - Alternating assignments/paper packets.
- **Minnesota requires** districts that wish to offer e-learning days in place of school closures to submit an implementation plan for approval by the Minnesota Department of Education that includes accommodations for students without internet or device access. According to guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education on accommodating students without a device or internet access: “All students must have similar learning experiences in terms of subject matter, task difficulty, and interaction with peers and their teacher(s). Tasks must be completed during the regular hours of the eLearning day. Students without access cannot be required to make-up the work on another day. Students may use physical texts or books and may handwrite their work, but those resources would have to be available at home. Teachers must contact students by telephone to conference with students, assess and support their learning.”
 - **Pennsylvania** allows for [flexible instruction days](#) that can be online or offline. For districts that opt to use technology to offer remote instruction, [they must outline](#) accommodations for students and staff who do not have access to technological devices or internet in order to receive plan approval.

Assessments and Accountability

The U.S. Department of Education provided a [fact sheet](#) on March 12 regarding the impact of COVID-19 on assessments and accountability. The department and President Donald Trump announced March 20 that schools can apply to [waive assessments](#) for the rest of the 2020 school year. [Assessment HQ](#) is maintaining a list of states’ school closure dates, assessment status and the status of their waiver request (if any), which was March 18.

Instructional Time

This [50-state resource on instructional time](#) offers information that includes minimum day, hour or minute requirements. Although it does not specifically capture information regarding exceptions or waivers to these

requirements because of emergencies (such as for an epidemic), many states make mention of such emergency provisions in similar or adjacent sections of code to those cited on [this page](#).

Special Education

As noted in the federal guidance section, the U.S. Department of Education produced a [fact sheet](#) for students with disabilities. Below are examples of state-level guidance for special education.

- [Illinois](#): The state board of education put forward special education guidance for Illinois schools and local education agencies, last updated March 18.
- [Virginia](#): The department of education released a memorandum March 23 on providing equitable access and support for a variety of student learning needs in preschool, elementary and secondary schools.

Nutrition and Homelessness

Although many states are shutting down schools or extending spring breaks as a method to prevent spread of the coronavirus, school closures can also bring about unintended consequences for students who rely on other services provided in schools, such as free or reduced-price lunches.

- This USDA webpage contains a [list of states](#) that have received congregate meal waivers.
- On March 20, the Food and Nutrition Service, within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, issued national waivers to the [meal time requirements](#), [non-congregate meal requirements](#) and the [activity requirement in after-school programs](#).
- [SchoolHouse Connection](#) provided on March 13 a [resource](#) with strategies for schools, early learning programs and higher education institutions that addresses COVID-19 and homelessness.

Teachers

As the situation evolves, issues continue to emerge around teacher certification and teacher pay. The [American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education](#) released [Educator Preparation Community Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Response](#), which includes information from the national office, member voices and AACTE advocacy. On March 11, [Brookings](#) provided [information](#) on using federal stimulus to help during the pandemic, including teacher pay. Below are examples from states on teacher topics.

- [Colorado](#): Denver Public School teachers will continue to get paid during the district closure.
- [Washington](#): On March 19, the Legislature passed [legislation](#) pertaining to emergency teacher certificates, as well as provided a document with [related frequently asked questions](#).

Early Learning

Resources relevant to early learning responses to COVID-19:

- [Resources for Early Childhood Policymakers on Preventing and Preparing for Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#), National Institute for Early Education Research
- [Latest COVID-19 Resources by State](#), Alliance for Early Success
- [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Childcare Programs](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Last updated March 26, 2020

- [Policies, Practices, and Resources for Child Care and Early Education Providers Amid the Coronavirus Crisis](#), Urban Institute
- [Coping with COVID-19](#), National Association for the Education of Young Children

Postsecondary

Resources relevant to postsecondary education responses to COVID-19:

- Crowdsourced, updating [list of higher education school closures and/or transitions to online-only classes](#). Last updated March 23.
- [COVID-19 Resources](#), EDUCAUSE
- [Higher Education Responses to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#), National Conference of State Legislatures
- [Coronavirus Impacting Colleges and Universities](#) (continually updated), Education Dive
- [Handling clinicals, apprenticeships and more](#), American Association of Community Colleges

Additional Resources

- [Education Week](#)
- [National Conference of State Legislatures](#)
- [National Governors Association](#)
- [State Higher Education Executives Officers Association](#)
- [National Institute for Early Education Research](#)
- [Council of State Governments](#)
- [Council of Chief State School Officers](#)
- [Child Trends](#)
- [Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education](#)
- [Hunt Institute](#)