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.

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.

This document includes highlighted sections denoting additions and updates made this week.

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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.

Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- On May 20, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released detailed reopening guidelines for schools and child care centers. The guidelines primarily focus on the following: scaling up operations to promote safety actions and social distancing; intensifying cleaning, disinfection and ventilation; training staff and creating plans to deal with child or staff sickness.
- On May 14, the CDC released decision tools on how schools and child care centers could begin the process of reopening. These decision tools are recommendations to state and local officials as they begin to prepare for all possibilities this upcoming fall.

CARES Act Information

- The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which was signed into law March 27, had many provisions relevant to education and education policy. The full text of the act can be found here and New America has published a summary of its education provisions here.
  - On April 9, U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos published a letter to college and university presidents describing CARES Act funding for higher education; on that same day the department of education published this list of allocation amounts for each higher education institution.
  - On April 14, DeVos announced that the nearly $3 billion Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund, which was authorized by the CARES Act, would be quickly made available to governors. The list of allocation amounts to each state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico can be found here.
  - On April 21, DeVos announced an additional $6.2 billion available to higher education institutions through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund authorized by the CARES Act.
  - On April 23, DeVos announced $13.2 billion in coronavirus relief through the Emergency and Secondary School Education Relief Fund. State education agencies must allocate 90% of the funds to local education agencies. The list of allocation amounts for each state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico can be found here.
  - On April 30, DeVos announced that nearly $1.4 billion in additional funding, as part of the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, will be directed to minority-serving institutions — including historically black colleges and universities and tribally controlled colleges and universities — and institutions serving low-income students.

U.S. Department of Education

- On May 18, the department released a fact sheet outlining states’ responsibilities to English learners and their parents during extended school closures.
The Office of Postsecondary Education released on May 15 updated guidance for interruptions of study related to COVID-19. The office expands regulatory flexibilities and provides information related to the CARES Act. See here for an FAQ regarding the temporary suspension of federal student loan interest and payments.

The U.S. Department of Education has a landing page with coronavirus-related information at ed.gov/coronavirus. See here and here for guidance on providing services to children with disabilities during the outbreak.

A press release from April 6 provides an overview of “new funding flexibilities to support continued learning,” as authorized by U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos.

Other U.S. Departments

The U.S. Department of Agriculture released a statement addressing “flexibilities to make it easier for children [and others] to get food during the COVID-19 national emergency and remove administrative roadblocks for the dedicated local staff who serve them,” available here. On April 3, the USDA announced it was opening an application window for a Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant program; that press release is 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. Additionally, the National Association of State Boards of Education provides a policy update on Continued Learning during COVID-19 that reviews state guidance for addressing a variety of issues.

According to Education Week, 48 states, 4 U.S. territories and the District of Columbia are operating under current orders or recommendations to close school buildings for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year. Below are examples of guidance from states on matters related to education:

- **Arizona:** The Arizona Department of Education’s Office of Communications has posted Guidance to Schools on COVID-19. Resources on that page include an interactive map showing where students can receive free meals and a Virtual Resource Hub for teachers and families “to assist them as they plan for non-traditional instruction.” 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.

- **Colorado:** On April 27, Gov. Jared Polis issued guidance for P-12 and postsecondary education under the state’s new Safer at Home plan. The guidance for P-12 education requires remote instruction for the remainder of the year, with very limited exceptions. The guidance for postsecondary education requires institutions to maximize remote learning with limited exceptions for specific learning opportunities that are not conducive to remote learning, such as clinical, occupational, and career and technical education programs.

- **Illinois:** The Illinois State Board of Education released Mandatory School Closure Guidance for Illinois schools and school districts, last updated on April 24. The document includes answers to questions regarding assessments and accountability; calendar and instruction/continuity of education; educator preparation and licensure; nutrition, meals, and food service; the scope of school closures; special education; and staffing. See here for extensive ISBE updates and guidance.
• **Kansas**: The Kansas commissioner of education convened a [Continuous Learning Task Force](#) to develop plans for moving education online, assisting students who do not have access to online tools and providing for students with Individual Education Plans. The Continuous Learning Task Force Guidance can be found [here](#).

• **Michigan**: The Michigan Department of Education released a [series of memos](#) addressing potential concerns about school closures. 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. The department of education also issued [Learning at a Distance Guidance](#) to “help address the immediate needs of staff who must address the immediate needs of children – at a distance – during a pandemic.” On May 15, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer issued [Executive Order No. 2020-88](#) to convene a COVID-19 Return to School Advisory Council.

• **Mississippi**: The Mississippi State Board of Education made policy changes to manage the impact of extended school closures that are described succinctly [here](#), and also hosted webinars on the changes which are available [here](#). Policy areas modified include graduation for the class of 2020, high school end-of-course assessments and educator preparation programs. Additional guidance and information are available [here](#).

• **North Dakota**: 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**: Washington compiled online resources for continuous learning that align with state learning standards [here](#), and published a Continuous Learning 2020 resource [here](#). The state also published updated [Guidance for Long Term School Closures](#) on April 15. Guidance for supporting [English learners](#) and [migrant students](#) and was released on April 27, and guidance for [student learning and grading](#) was released on April 21. Additional information can be found [here](#).

### Education Topic Areas

#### Assessments and Accountability

The U.S. Department of Education and President Donald Trump [announced](#) March 20 that schools can apply to [waive assessments](#) for the rest of the 2020 school year. Waivers have been approved for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The approval letters can be found [here](#). Below are examples of state action relevant to assessments and accountability:

• **Massachusetts**: On April 10, Gov. Charlie Baker signed [H. 4616](#) which, among other things, charges the commissioner of elementary and secondary education to modify or waive “the requirement for a comprehensive diagnostic assessment of individual students ... in order to address disruptions caused by the [COVID-19] outbreak.”

• **Mississippi**: The [Mississippi State Board of Education](#) ruled on March 26 that students in grades 7-12 who are currently enrolled in Algebra I, Biology, English II, and/or U.S. History are not required to “take and/or pass the corresponding end-of-course subject area test(s) or meet one of the options in lieu of passing the test(s) to meet graduation requirements.”


• **New York**: On April 7, the New York State Education Department [announced](#) the cancelation of the June 2020 administration of the New York State Regents Examinations. The memorandum also included information on the
adjustments that would be made “to the examination requirements that students must ordinarily meet in order to earn diplomas, credentials, and endorsements so that the cancellation of these exams will not adversely impact students.”

Broadband and Technology Access
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. Indeed, some of the challenges around remote-based learning (including internet and device access) have led schools to truncate their school year. 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; however, some programs for discounted hotspots are set to expire over the next few months. For additional information on virtual or remote instruction, consult this section of the resource.

The Federal Communications Commission extended the Keep Americans Connected Initiative through June 30. The FCC asked broadband and telephone service providers, and trade associations, to take the Keep Americans Connected Pledge. So far, more than 750 companies and associations have signed the pledge. The pledge includes a commitment to not terminate service of any individual or small business unable to pay their bills, to waive late fees, and to open Wi-Fi hotspots for individuals in need of internet access. Additional FCC efforts can be found here.

The National Digital Inclusion Alliance maintains 50-state information on state guidance and policies addressing internet and technological device access. The following examples were captured in their tracking:

• Nebraska: Nebraska’s Public Service Commission has issued an order allocating $1 million via the Nebraska Universal Service Fund to reimburse internet service providers for providing service to low-income families.
• Wyoming: The Wyoming Public Service Commission prohibited the suspension of services or issuance of late fees by internet providers statewide.

Many schools, local education agencies, states and others are seeking solutions to access issues for students who do not have internet access or devices capable of internet access. Below are some examples:

• According to America’s Public Television Stations, public media education partnerships have been made with school districts, governments and education agencies in at least 34 states. More information on those partnerships can be found here.
• A compilation of wireless networking options that may be available to students through telecommunications companies in various states can be found here.
• California: On April 1, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced a partnership with Google to provide Chromebooks and mobile hotspots to students in rural areas to facilitate distance learning. Google pledged to donate Chromebooks and “will fund the use of 100,000 donated mobile hotspots to provide free and unlimited high-speed Internet connectivity for the remainder of the school year.” These will be distributed by the California Department of Education, and rural communities will be prioritized in their distribution.
• The New York City Department of Education is lending 300,000 internet-enabled iPads to students. The iPads are being distributed to students gradually with priority for students living in shelters, temporary housing and foster care, and to students who are multilingual learners and/or students with disabilities. However, the process of distributing these devices at this scale encountered various obstacles, such as data entry issues, accurately assessing which students need devices, ensuring families know how to use the devices and more.
• South Carolina: The South Carolina Department of Education maintains a website that provides information and links to internet service providers offering free or discounted internet services for students impacted by
school closures. The department also houses a map that shows where Wi-Fi hot spots can be found throughout the state, including those offered by phone companies, around school buildings and on school buses that are equipped with Wi-Fi hotspots and that have been distributed in low-income neighborhoods across the state.

- **Texas:** The Austin Independent School District has developed a program to “get computers and internet access to as many students, homes, and neighborhoods as possible while campuses are closed.” This program has involved the delivery of Chromebooks and Wi-Fi hotspots to students in grades 3-7 who need these devices, as well as the retrofitting of 110 school buses with Wi-Fi capabilities in order to broadcast hot spots up to 200 feet to increase internet access for students. A map of these mobile Wi-Fi bus locations can be found [here](#).

**Continued and Future Learning**

Many schools, states, local education agencies and others are beginning to turn their attention toward what school will look like for students beyond the spring 2020 semester. ExcelinEd surveyed state education chiefs and governors’ offices and found that the majority of education leaders plan to allow local districts to determine their reopening schedules. According to data collected by Education Week, the majority of state’s education reopening decisions are currently being made at the district level, or reopening status is unknown. Below are links to resources that review a range of reopening options states may consider when crafting their reopening plans.

- In an article from NPR, public health experts, education officials and educators discussed nine key ideas for what reopening schools might look like.
- The National Institute for Early Education Research, [Initial Ideas and Resources on Planning for Reopening Following COVID-19 School Closures](#) (the resources broadly cover school reopening plans and are not limited to early education policies).
- The American Enterprise Institute, [A Blueprint for Back to School](#).
- ExcelinEd, [Reopening Schools After COVID-19 Closures: Considerations for States](#).

At least one study has projected that school closures will have a negative impact on student academic achievement. In a guest blog [post for ECS](#), the authors of that study discuss what states can and are doing to mitigate the projected negative impacts on academic achievement. FutureEd has an [article](#) questioning how and if summer schools could be used to keep students learning in light of spring school closures. A recent [article](#) in Chalkbeat highlights the issues many districts are grappling with when considering summer school offerings.

Education Next compiled [state-by-state information](#), last updated May 4, on when schools may reopen. In a similar vein, Education Week frequently updates a [list](#) of each state’s current learning environment and provides additional context. From a postsecondary education perspective, the Chronicle of Higher Education maintains a [database](#) of reopening plans for colleges across the country. Below are some examples of education leaders who are considering what education will look like in the summer, fall and future semesters for K-12 schools and higher education institutions.

- **Arizona:** On May 1, the superintendent of public instruction convened a task force to discuss reopening schools for the 2020-21 school year. The task force expects to share initial guidance by the end of May.
- **Arkansas:** The state division of elementary and secondary education has updated guidance noting that local districts considering summer school options should plan for digital delivery only until at least July 1.
• **California**: In a [news conference](#) on April 14, Gov. Gavin Newsom outlined a [roadmap](#) to eventually move the state away from stay-at-home orders and less restrictive prevention measures. Newsom announced that he was beginning to have conversations with the state superintendent and others about what socially distanced schools could look like in the fall, including considerations of staggered school times for students to reduce physical contact. As of April 28, Newsom [suggested](#) that the state is considering the prospect of starting the next academic year earlier than usual on the precondition that schools can ensure safety measures are taken to safeguard the health of their staff and students. On May 12, the chancellor of the California State University system [announced](#) its 23 campuses will not hold in-person classes for most students during the fall 2020 semester. On May 20, the University of California Board of Regents [adopted](#) principles for reopening campuses in the fall.

• **Colorado**: On April 28, the Department of Higher Education [released guidance](#) suggesting that “institutions may, but are not required to, provide in-person classroom or laboratory instruction in programs and courses that cannot be taught remotely.” As conditions of this course of action, an institution must attest to meeting appropriate COVID-19 mitigation strategies and students must be allowed to opt-out of in-person instruction. The guidance is reportedly designed for career and technical programs but could also apply to school programs and courses like welding or automotive technology that may be more difficult to adapt to remote learning. The department of education has also released [considerations for summer school](#). The guidance recognizes the potential importance of summer school during COVID-19 closures and includes information on teacher training and professional development, flexible instructional options, funding sources and summer food services, among other things.

• **Hawaii**: The Legislature adopted [S.R. 144](#), requesting the Hawaii Department of Education to develop a reopening plan for the 2020-21 school year based on CDC guidelines.

• **Idaho**: The state board of education released (p. 18) school re-entry criteria for in-person instruction in line with Gov. Brad Little’s [Idaho Rebounds plan](#). All re-entry plans must be approved by local health districts and contain an immediate closure plan should a student or faculty member be diagnosed with the virus.

• **Illinois**: The state board of education released [guidance](#) strongly encouraging schools to use summer school to address learning loss and academic gaps. The guidance includes information on content selection, instruction, attendance and clock hours. Students must complete 60 instructional hours per credit earned. Summer school will be conducted remotely.

• **Kentucky**: The department of education released on May 15 the [Considerations for Reopening Schools—Initial Guidance for Schools and Districts](#). The department highlights recommended reopening steps and guiding questions directed at school administrators and staff.

• **Maryland**: The state superintendent of schools released [Maryland’s Recovery Plan for Education: COVID-19 Response and the Path Forward](#), which provides tools and resources for districts and schools to use when considering reopening schools.

• **Minnesota**: On May 20, the department of education published [Summer Programming Guidance for Schools](#). The department determined that a school district or charter school may open school buildings for a hybrid model of in-school learning and distance learning for summer school.

• **Mississippi**: Gov. Tate Reeves issued [Executive Order No. 1476](#), requiring local districts to submit a plan for summer learning and enrichment on or before June 1 to mitigate disruption caused by the COVID-19 closures and to enhance learning in preparation for the 2020-21 school year.

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*Education Commission of the States strives to respond to information requests within 48 hours. This document reflects our best efforts but it may not reflect exhaustive research. Please let us know if you would like a more comprehensive response. Our staff is also available to provide unbiased advice on policy plans, consult on proposed legislation and testify at legislative hearings as third-party experts.*
• **Montana**: The state rescinded the directive for school closures, allowing schools to reopen as early as May 7. According to the office of public instruction, **schools may continue to provide distance learning**, a mixed-delivery model or declare local emergency school closures. The office also released a working document with **guidance on school re-entry** and recovery after a pandemic event. For now, information collected by the state education agency indicates that **most school districts will continue with remote learning** for the remainder of the school year, while a few may pursue partial reopening for students without access to devices or internet or for students with special education needs.

• **Nebraska**: The education commissioner released a **message** on April 23 advising that all summer learning be provided remotely. Remote instruction will qualify the same as in-person instruction for summer school allowance. **Additional guidance** from the department leaves summer school offerings, including credit recovery programs, up to each local education agency, but notes that LEAs would be subject to any restrictions in place at the time.

• **North Carolina**: Part of the state’s COVID-19 Relief package (S.B. 704) requires schools to open on August 17 — a week earlier than usual — for the next academic year.

• **Oregon**: The Department of Education released **guidance** to assist the planning between May and the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. Effective June 1, the state is allowing limited in-person summer school, small group instruction and/or summer programing.

• **Texas**: As part of Phase 2 of the state’s reopening plan, on May 18, Gov. Greg Abbott **announced** that schools may begin offering in-person summer school beginning June 1. Teachers and staff are encouraged to continue working from home but may return to campus for in-person activities, such as summer school. The Texas Education Agency has released more detailed **guidance for summer school**. According to the governor’s announcement, higher education institutions may reopen campuses and are encouraged to establish standards that would allow for similar in-person summer learning activities.

• **West Virginia**: The department of education has released **guidance** on summer learning opportunities. Free books will be available for early elementary students, free credit recovery will be available for students who were failing courses as of March 13, all fees for the West Virginia Virtual School will be waived for middle and high school students, and teachers will have free access to professional learning opportunities.

• **Wisconsin**: **Schools will remain closed** for the remainder of the school year, but the **plan for a phased reopening** of the state includes resuming in-school operations for K-12 schools in Phase One.

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**Early Learning**

Resources and state guidance 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

• **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

• **Child Care’s Struggle to Survive COVID-19: State Impacts and Responses**, National Women’s Law Center

Below we list some examples of relevant policy changes and guidance:
• **Georgia:** On March 15, the commissioner of the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning published [this guidance](#) to child care and Georgia pre-K providers, detailing, among other things, that “Georgia Pre-K payments will not be impacted, and Pre-K lead and assistant teachers will still be paid” and that child care and parent services scholarship payments would be continued regardless of program attendance. On March 25, [updated guidance](#) from the commissioner stated that all scheduled scholarships would be converted to “full-time” to allow providers to receive the highest rate possible. On May 12, [updated guidance](#) for child care programs provided a checklist to ensure compliance with health and safety protocols. The state also released an [FAQ document](#) related specifically to early learning, last updated May 26.

• **Illinois:** Gov. J.B. Pritzker established a [COVID-19: Illinois’ Early Childhood Care and Education Response guidance document](#) on March 30. This document established that early education programs funded through the state board’s Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative programs will not have their funding affected by a decision to close. Additionally, Pritzker established, through an executive order, that Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative funding was to be used to meet child care and related needs of the children of essential workers who were not already enrolled. On April 7, the state issued updated [COVID-19 Guidance for Child Care and Early Learning Programs](#), following the extension of the governor’s stay-at-home order. On April 20, the state released [updated guidance](#) to complement the previous releases. Most recently, on May 22, the state released [reopening guidance](#) for child care programs.

• **New Mexico:** On May 1, the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) [announced](#) that it will use a portion of its federal CARES Act stimulus funding to offer incentive pay to early childhood professionals who are working in centers that remain open during the public health emergency. ECECD, in partnership with the New Mexico Economic Development Department, also made $12 million in grant funding available to child care providers through the Childcare Stabilization and Recovery Grant Program. This funding is to be administered in conjunction with the administration of small business funding provided through the CARES Act.

• **Vermont:** The Vermont Agency of Education released [Prekindergarten Education and Continuity of Learning guidance](#) on April 13. The guidance covers social and emotional support, pre-K learning resources and tuition payments. On April 28, the agency released [this document](#) on pre-K learning at home. Vermont also released on May 13 [health guidance](#) for child care, summer and after-school programs.

### Finance

The federal government, states, state education agencies, local education agencies, schools, postsecondary institutions and others are grappling with how the coronavirus pandemic is affecting finances and education funds. Below we list resources and examples of responses to these financial questions.

Resources related to CARES Act funding:

- FutureEd published “[What Congressional Covid Funding Means for K-12 Schools](#)” which lists 12 allowable uses of the $13.2 billion dedicated to K-12 relief in the CARES Act. The resource also covers funding implications for students with disabilities, child nutrition and student-based health care, information on Rethink K-12 School Models grant, and includes state-by-state education stabilization fund amounts as reported by the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#). The resource was updated May 26 to include summarized provisions from the HEROES Act, recently passed in the House.

- This [Education Week article](#) features analysis on the economic impact that CARES Act funds will have on states’ school funding.
The American Council on Education created a searchable database simulating and forecasting the distribution of CARES Act funds to higher education institutions, available [here](#).

Bellwether Education Partners is releasing a series of briefs on CARES Act funding to help state and local policymakers make informed decisions about how to use the funds.

The Student Success Through Applied Research Lab provides an interactive tool for CARES Act funding allocations, specifically at the postsecondary level. The tool provides a map of CARES Act allocations and college score card characteristics, total CARES Act allocation by state and institution type, funding per student and total allocation.

Resources related to state and local funding:

- **How Much Will COVID-19 Cost Schools**: Using data provided by the Learning Policy Institute, Education Week built an interactive calculator to project increased education costs for states.
- Brookings has a blog post from April 9 titled “How the coronavirus shutdown will affect school district revenues,” which includes information on how each state relies on state funds for education, projects how 2020-2021 budgets may be more directly impacted by coronavirus cuts than 2019-2020 and warns about the potentially inequitable impacts of a recession. Brookings also has a running blog post series exploring Congressional decisions to provide federal aid for schools during COVID-19.
- This interactive funding tool provides a range of information on additional sources of funding during COVID, including an overview of the CARES Act, information on LEA stimulus funding, IHE stimulus funding and governor’s funding broken down by state.
- On May 22, Education Commission of the States published COVID-19 and School Funding: What to Expect and What Can States Do. The blog post provides an analysis on determining state budget cuts and links to an interactive tool for budgeting scenarios and suggestions for education leaders around this issue. A blog post from the Learning Policy Institute examines the amount of funding necessary to stabilize falling state and local revenues.
- This Center on Budget and Policy Priorities fact sheet shows the preliminary estimates of declines in general fund revenue for several states, providing an initial glimpse at potential state budget conditions.
- The Pew Charitable Trusts looked at state funding trends during past recessions to examine how state support for postsecondary institutions could change during the pandemic and economic crisis.

State Responses:

- **Colorado**: Gov. Jared Polis announced several budget cuts for the current fiscal year because of insufficient revenues. Some of the programs for which funding was cut include the Educator Loan Forgiveness Fund, the Colorado Second Chance Scholarship, teaching fellowship stipends and the teacher mentor grant program. On May 18, Polis issued an executive order directing CARES Act funds: $510,000,000 to K-12 school districts and $450,000,000 to higher education institutions. The School Finance Unit maintains a COVID-19 Questions and Answers webpage. Joint Budget Committee expects to release the School Finance Act by the end of May.
- **Montana**: Montana is expecting to receive $41.3 million of CARES Act funds. The Montana Office of Public Instruction has published guidance for the allocation of these funds, including preliminary estimates of how these funds will be allocated to individual schools throughout the state.
- **North Carolina**: On March 24, the North Carolina superintendent of public instruction released this memorandum, announcing a new $50 million “flexible allotment for all public school units to address COVID-19 related expenses” and newly granted flexibilities for districts to use existing allocations to meet student needs.
needs. Recently enacted S.B. 704 also provides additional state funds for education: $75 million for school nutrition programs, $70 million for summer learning programs and $30 million for local school districts to buy computers for students.

- **Virginia**: On April 7, the Virginia superintendent of public instruction announced that the U.S. Department of Education had approved the state’s application for additional flexibility in using federal education funds, as detailed in this press release.

**Instructional Time and Grade Promotion**

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.

Several states have introduced legislation, published guidance or enacted new policies regarding graduation requirements for high school students in light of coronavirus disruptions. ExcelinEd provides a database that includes, among other things, information on graduation requirements across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The database is no longer being updated but provides historical information on state action. The National Association of State Boards of Education published an overview of state board adjustments to graduation policies, available here. Education Week is tracking changes to state graduation criteria for the class of 2020, as well as other graduation requirement flexibilities, in its weekly updated resource here. Below, we detail recent policy changes in several states:

**Graduation Requirements**

- **In Colorado**, graduation requirements are currently determined by the district, which offers flexibility in the ability to adjust graduation requirements. The state department of education has published guidance to districts that suggests:
  - Giving credit for internships, work, and other extra-curricular responsibilities.
  - Waiving work-based hour requirements.
  - Alternative learning experiences, such as capstone projects.
  - Using 2021 graduation requirements menu of options.

- **Mississippi**: The state board has implemented the following changes:
  - Current seniors who meet all district and state requirements may graduate this school year.
  - The requirement that students take end-of-course assessments in Algebra I, English II, Biology and U.S. History has been suspended for seniors, as these cannot be administered in spring 2020.

- **The North Carolina State Board of Education** announced that seniors will receive a pass/fail designation (rather than a letter grade) for their spring courses based on their course performance as of March 13, the last day students were in school. This update from the state board of education also states that seniors who had a failing grade should be provided remote learning opportunities to help them pass.
  - Board guidance also adjusts graduation requirements that currently state that no district can require students to earn more than 22 credit hours, the state’s designated minimum. According to the press release, many school and district requirements exceed the state minimum. Details of the guidance plan can be found here.
• Ohio: H.B. 197 (enacted) permits public and nonpublic schools to grant a diploma to any student on track to graduate and for whom the principal, in consultation with teachers and counselors, determines has successfully completed the high school curriculum or individualized education program at the time of the order to close schools.

• Section 10 of Washington H.B. 2965 (enacted) authorizes the state board of education to administer an emergency waiver program to ensure that students on track to graduate before February 20, 2020 are not negatively affected. On April 8, the state board approved emergency rules “that allow school districts to apply for greater flexibility in awarding a diploma to high school seniors impacted by closures”. More information on the board rulings can be found here.

Grade Promotion

• Arizona: H.B. 2910 (enacted) waived third graders from requirements to “demonstrate sufficient reading skills as established by the state board” in order to be promoted from the third grade for the 2019-20 school year.

• Mississippi: The Mississippi State Board of Education made policy changes so that “current 3rd graders will be promoted to 4th grade for the 2020-21 school year if the student meets all other district requirements for promotion.”

• Ohio: H.B. 197 (enacted) exempts schools from retaining a student under the third-grade reading guarantee based solely on the student’s academic performance in reading in the 2019-20 school year, unless the student’s principal and reading teacher determine the student is not reading at grade level and is not prepared for fourth grade.

• New York: A.B. 10417 (pending) allows students to voluntarily repeat a grade if they missed any in-person instruction.

• Virginia: The Virginia Department of Education published Guidance on Graduation Requirements, Awarding of Credits, and Continuity of Learning, updated April 16. Among other guidance, this includes the following provision for students in pre-K through 8th grade: “The school division’s plan to address missing content should not prevent student promotion to the next grade level or next sequential course.” The guidance suggests that schools provide flexibility for missing content and for students who were not passing classes at the time of closure. Guidance also suggests that school divisions review the board of education’s Emergency Guidelines for Local Alternatives to Awarding Standard Units of Credit.

Postsecondary

Postsecondary institutions — and the students who are both currently enrolled or who soon hope to be enrolled in their programs — are facing much disruption related to the coronavirus. Resources relevant to postsecondary education responses to COVID-19:

• Data You Can Use: Will COVID-19 Affect High School Seniors’ Access to Financial Aid?, Education Commission of the States


• Immediate Next Steps for Helping High School Seniors Transition to A 2-/4-Year College or Certificate Program, National College Attainment Network
• Planning for Fall 2020 and Beyond, Inside Higher Ed.
• Survey results: How enrollment leaders are responding to COVID-19, EAB
• The Coronavirus and Test-Optional Admissions, Inside Higher Ed
• Tracking How the Coronavirus is Impacting Colleges (continually updated), Education Dive
• When the Crisis is Over, Student Ready Strategies

Each of the four regional education compacts have websites dedicated to COVID-19 resources:
  o Midwestern Higher Education Compact
  o New England Board of Higher Education
  o Southern Regional Education Board
  o Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Below are some institutional policy examples that aim to address the financial needs of postsecondary students:

• California State University will issue a one-time $500 payment to full-time, low income students, who have attended the university for at least one year. Undocumented immigrants are eligible to receive these grants.

• The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, among other institutions, has adjusted its fall 2020 schedule to end the semester before the Thanksgiving holiday. Institutions are looking to stave off a second wave of COVID-19 in the late fall or early winter with these decisions.

• On April 29, Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education Board of Governors approved a tuition freeze for the 2020-21 academic year.

• The University of Washington announced that it will use funds from the CARES Act to provide $1,200 per student who qualifies for financial need. Students who meet financial need and have dependents will receive $1,700. Funds are not available to international students, undocumented students, non-matriculated students or students enrolled in distance-only degree programs. The university is also keeping the campus food pantry open by taking orders online.

Below are examples of postsecondary education policy responses to COVID-19:

• California: The University of California and the California State University systems provide examples of higher education institutions relaxing admissions procedures (suspending or considering changes to standardized test requirements, accepting pass/fail grades rather than A-F for spring 2020). A joint statement from the California State Board of Education, the California Department of Education, California State University, the University of California, California Community Colleges and the Association of Independent California College and Universities addressing “university admissions and placement challenges presented by the suspension of in-person instruction” can be found here.

• Colorado: The Colorado Department of Education has published guidance FAQs on both concurrent enrollment and higher education admissions.

• Georgia: This Georgia Department of Education guidance from March 31, titled “State Board of Education Waivers for Local Education Agencies,” includes information on college admissions and scholarship eligibility. The University System of Georgia will not require students applying for admission in fall 2020 to submit an ACT or SAT score, though students who have scores are still free to submit them for consideration. The Technical College System of Georgia is suspending placement exam requirements, as well as high school transcript or equivalency transcripts for admission in summer and fall 2020 classes.

• Maryland: S.B. 329 and H.B. 187 (enacted) require a public institution of higher education to submit an outbreak response plan to the Maryland Department of Health on or before August 1 each year, beginning in 2021. Additionally, the bills outline certain conditions under which a public institution of higher education is required to implement the outbreak response plan and certain processes that must be included in the plan.
New Jersey: S.B. 2356 (enacted) exempts the spring 2020 semester from counting toward the number of semesters a student is eligible for a scholarship award. Additionally, the bill waives any costs a student would have to pay back when moving from full-time to part-time enrollment status if the status change was caused by COVID-19 closures.

South Dakota: The South Dakota Board of Regents provided temporary policy exemptions in response to COVID-19. Policies listed under the exemptions include academic probation and academic suspension, acceptance of AP credits, alternative grading options for spring 2020, alternative math placement, maximum number of course withdrawals, registration and course attempts, tenure review extension and transfer of credit.

West Virginia: The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission and Council for Community and Technical College Education voted to improve flexibilities for students, as summarized here. Among other things, the commission approved suspending GPA requirements to renew certain scholarships and grants. Similarly, the council suspended the community service and GPA requirements to maintain the West Virginia Invests Grant.

Remote/Virtual/E-Learning

States, districts and schools have developed and implemented remote learning plans for the remainder of the school year in response to school closures caused by the spread of COVID-19. The Center on Reinventing Public Education collected some publicly available district plans for supporting students and noted that after approximately six weeks of school closures, more of these districts are offering more robust remote learning plans. The American Enterprise Institute has also been tracking the implementation of remote learning plans. In AEI’s most recent analysis, released on May 6, they found that over half of schools rely most or completely on online platforms to provide remote instruction. For information on how states and districts are addressing internet and technological device access, consult the Broadband and Technology Access section of this resource.

State education agencies continue to release and update guidance and resources for remote and online learning. A couple of examples include Ohio’s remote learning resource guide and Massachusetts’s remote learning guidance. The Digital Learning Collaborative has a resource from December 2019 called “eLearning Days: A Scan of Policy and Guidance,” available here.

Florida provides an example of virtual education used in response to COVID-19; the Florida Virtual School also formed a partnership with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to offer the Alaska Statewide Virtual School, which is intended for students in Alaska to supplement remote learning opportunities provided by their local schools.

A survey of state guidance from MIT Teaching Systems Lab, last updated on April 1 and available here, found that “the most substantial point of divergence in remote learning policy guidance” was whether local education agencies were advised to focus on “enrichment,” emphasizing the review of previously taught skills, or to focus on “new material,” seeking to advance standards-based learning. The question of whether to emphasize enrichment or new material will be an important question for education leaders when considering future semesters.

On May 14, Education Week released a review of state remote learning directives and guidance. It found that states largely focused on providing recommendations rather than guidance, loosened seat time requirements, shifted from enrichment to new material and adopted hold-harmless grading provisions.
Below, we include some relevant Education Commission of the States 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.

**Special Education**

As noted in the federal guidance section, the U.S. Department of Education produced a fact sheet for students with disabilities. The Center on Reinventing Public Education released a 50 state database on how states are providing local districts with resources, learning plans and help with compliance issues. Below are examples of state-level guidance for special education.

- **California**: The California Department of Education published special education guidance on March 20, which includes an FAQ section for schools and local education agencies. This guidance was updated on April 9. The Marin County Office of Education is running a Spring Pilot Program, with protocols in place to reopen alternative and special education classrooms. The pilot program is scheduled to run May 18-26.
- **Illinois**: The state board of education put forward special education guidance for Illinois schools and local education agencies, last updated March 18. An FAQ on this topic was last updated on April 20.
- **Massachusetts**: The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released an FAQ for schools and districts regarding special education, which was most recently updated on May 15. This document provides guidance on such topics as district obligations to provide education to students with disabilities, state and federal timelines, and recommended educational resources for students with disabilities. The department also has a COVID-19 Information and Resources for Special Educators landing page, which includes slides from recent special education directors’ meetings.
- **New Jersey**: Legislation enacted in April (A 3904) allows for special education and related services to be delivered to students with disabilities through the use of electronic communication or a virtual or online platform and as required by the student’s Individualized Education Program to the greatest extent possible.
- **Virginia**: The department of education has compiled an FAQ page on special education student services, last updated on May 20, providing information about equitable access and support for a variety of student learning needs in preschool, elementary and secondary schools.
- **Washington**: The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has several resources available on a special education guidance landing page, including an FAQ, a Supporting Inclusionary Practices during School Facility Closure guidance document, an Online (and Offline) Resources to Support Continuous Learning for Students with Disabilities resource list and a list of Professional Development Opportunities for Supporting Students with Disabilities resource list.

In compliance with a provision of the CARES Act, the U.S. Department of Education recently reviewed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to recommend if certain waiver authorities are necessary to provide flexibility to state and local education agencies to comply with the provisions of IDEA. The U.S. Department of Education “is not requesting waiver authority for any of the core tenets of the IDEA or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.”
**Student Health and Wellness**

Although many states have are shutting down schools 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 to maintain and promote student health and wellness, such as free or reduced-price lunches, physical and mental health care, and services for students who are homeless.

- 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 (updated April 4).
- SchoolHouse Connection provided a resource, updated May 7, with strategies for schools, early learning programs and higher education institutions that addresses COVID-19, homelessness and health. An FAQ on COVID-19 and homelessness, last updated May 26, is available here.
- The Urban Institute published Strategies and Challenges in Feeding Out-of-School Students in April. The report provides a landscape of state and federal policy changes around this issue.
- Many postsecondary institutions are providing telehealth options for students and staff to receive remote consultations and counseling for mental and emotional health.
  - In 2019, the Higher Education Mental Health Alliance published “College Counseling from a Distance: Deciding Whether and Where to Engage in Telemental Health Services,” which discusses at length the potential benefits, risks and limitations of such services.
  - The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced that its Office for Civil Rights will “not impose penalties” for certain types of regulatory noncompliance “in connection with the good faith provision of telehealth during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency.”
  - An Education Commission of the States Ed Note blog post from December 2019 titled “Connecting Students to Mental Health Care Through Telehealth Technology” provides some examples of telehealth service implementation in rural communities.
- The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) maintains social and emotional learning (SEL) resources to support school communities during closures. CASEL also released guidance for reopening schools in a way that supports positive social and emotional development.

Below are some examples of education policy responses to COVID-19 related to student health and wellness:

- **California**: The California Department of Education has published guidance on School and Child and Adult Day Care Meals, last updated May 22. The department has also created an interactive CA Meals for Kids mobile app, which offers maps, directions, service times and more information to help students and families find meals during COVID-19 related emergency school closures.
- The Hawaii State Department of Education provides a health hotline and telehealth services to students and their families. Services are provided at no cost to students. Families with medical insurance will be asked to provide their insurance information but will not be billed for services or co-pays.
- **Maine**: Maine S.P. 789 (enacted) authorizes the governor, in consultation with the commissioner of education, to implement a plan to “continue to provide nutrition services to students when schools are closed in response to the threat posted by COVID-19,” for elementary and secondary schools.
- **Massachusetts**: Massachusetts H. 4626 (pending) would appropriate an additional $10 million for the state emergency management agency to fund services for people in homeless shelters, including telehealth behavioral health services and the provision of necessary technology and materials to ensure students “may continue their studies in the event of school closures.”

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Education Commission of the States strives to respond to information requests within 48 hours. This document reflects our best efforts but it may not reflect exhaustive research. Please let us know if you would like a more comprehensive response. Our staff is also available to provide unbiased advice on policy plans, consult on proposed legislation and testify at legislative hearings as third-party experts.
- **New Jersey**: New Jersey [A. 3840](https://www.njlegisa.gov/3840R02/billnumber/A3840) (enacted) directs school districts to “implement a program during the period of the school closure to provide school meals to all students enrolled in the district who are eligible for the free and reduced-price school lunch and school breakfast programs.” The bill also specifies the identification of delivery sites and the use of school buses to deliver up to three school days of food per delivery to students who are not within walking distance of those delivery sites.


- The **Ohio** Department of Education released guidance around student health and wellness. Their telehealth [guidelines](https://www.education.ohio.gov/Topics/Health-Wellness), including an FAQ for service providers of mental and behavioral health services to students. Additionally, they offer [guidance](https://www.education.ohio.gov/Topics/Health-Wellness) around preventing abuse and neglect, including suggesting a reporting procedure if there is a case of suspected abuse. On May 8, the Ohio Department of Education released [guidance](https://www.education.ohio.gov/Topics/Health-Wellness) for supporting students in foster care to ensure educational stability during a school closure.

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**Teachers**

As the situation evolves, questions continue to emerge around issues impacting teachers, including certification, teacher pay and teacher evaluations.

Given abrupt switches to online instruction and the cancellation of state assessments, some states have waived teacher evaluation requirements, provided guidance, or allowed local flexibility around evaluations. Examples of adjustments are below. Additional examples of state action around teacher evaluations can be found in this recent Education Commission of the States [information request](https://www.educationcommission.org/).  

- **Colorado**: In an executive order, Gov. Jared Polis suspended the requirements “regarding the frequency and duration of employment performance evaluations” with the goal that this would “enable schools and districts to focus on providing alternative learning opportunities for students.”

- **Louisiana**: Gov. John Bel Edwards issued an executive proclamation that, among other things, suspends provisions that make teacher evaluations a necessity in order to advance or renew teaching credentials. The department of education offers additional guidance on evaluation questions in this [FAQ, last updated May 22](https://www.education.ohio.gov/Topics/Health-Wellness).

- **New Jersey**: Gov. Phil Murphy issued an executive order that, among other things, waives the use of student growth data and requirements for observations in educator evaluations.

- **Ohio**, **Texas** and **Virginia** issued some guidance to localities on teacher evaluations to provide flexibility at the district level, especially for districts unable to complete educator evaluations.

This public health crisis not only impacts current teachers but also those who are preparing to become teachers. Deans for Impact released a [COVID-19 Teacher Preparation Policy Database](https://www.deansforimpact.org/2019/Teachersprep/) detailing the guidance every state has issued. The Southern Regional Education Board also identified policy areas in which states may act to “ensure that current policies do not prevent student-teachers from graduating and becoming licensed to teach in the upcoming school year.” National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) collected several state examples of changes to student teaching and initial licensure requirements in an April 16 blog post. Below are some examples of state responses related to teacher preparation and licensure:
- **Kansas**: The Kansas State Department of Education has issued guidance on [Licensure Policies during COVID-19 Pandemic](#) that includes information on emergency substitute licenses, one-year nonrenewable licenses, testing and renewal processes.

- **Mississippi**: Guidance from the Department of Education states that candidates seeking admission to state board-approved educator preparation programs through the end of 2021 are exempt from the program entry testing criterion. Spring 2020 educator licensure candidates are exempt from the 12-week full-day student teaching requirement to become licensed.

- **Washington**: On March 19, the Legislature passed legislation pertaining to emergency teacher certificates, and has provided a document with related frequently asked questions. This Education Commission of the States resource discusses how some states have turned to alternative teacher certification to mitigate teacher shortages. Although this report is from 2016, some states may consider alternative teacher certifications in light of the coronavirus’ impact on educator preparation programs. Similarly, this Education Commission of the States information request response from 2019 provides examples of state legislation that allows greater flexibility in teacher licensing.

As the public health crisis continues and economic conditions create uncertainty around education funding, other teacher workforce issues are emerging. Below are resources that touch on teacher workforce related policies such as pay, working conditions, and the teacher labor market.

- On March 11, Brookings provided information on using federal stimulus to help during the pandemic, including teacher pay.

- Education Week has an article that discusses “this year’s statewide initiatives to increase salaries,” with an interactive map showing the status of some statewide teacher pay proposals.

- The National Council on Teacher Quality published an article assessing how district policies on emergency school closures in 41 large districts across the country address and adapt teacher policies during emergency closures. NCTQ updated this data in a May 11 blog post. In a similar vein, the New York Times published an article about how unions, teachers and districts are navigating teacher work policies during this public health crisis.

- An article featured on The 74 discusses how the new economic conditions that states face may affect teacher pensions and how states handled changes to public pensions in the previous recession.

- On ECS’s blog, Ed Note, a recent post looks at data that can provide insights about potential changes in the educator workforce.

- A recent blog post from the Learning Policy Institute discusses the impact of the COVID-19 recession on teaching positions.

**Workforce**

Responses to the coronavirus pandemic are also impacting workforce development, particularly those efforts related to education. Below we have compiled some resources regarding these impacts:


- **Handling clinicals, apprenticeships and more**, American Association of Community Colleges

- **We Must Sustain Apprenticeship in a Post-Pandemic Downturn**, Jobs For the Future

Below are some examples of responses to workforce education policy:
• U.S. Department of Education: On April 27, Secretary Betsy DeVos announced the allocation of $127.5 million for Reimagining Workforce Participation Grants. The Reimagining Workforce Preparation Grants are designed to expand short-term postsecondary programs and work-based learning programs.

• **North Carolina:** The North Carolina Legislature enacted S.B. 704, which grants students in community college apprenticeship programs a tuition waiver if they were unable to complete coursework or field experience related to their program due to COVID-19.

• **Ohio:** The Ohio Department of Education issued this guidance, last updated May 21, around career and technical education during the COVID-19 health crisis. This guidance addresses testing requirements that are normally required for postsecondary credit and high school equivalency degrees.

**Additional Resources**

- Center on Reinventing Public Education
- Chiefs for Change
- Child Trends
- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
- ¡Colorín Colorado!
- Council of Chief State School Officers
- Council of State Governments
- EAB
- EDUCAUSE
- Education Week
- Hunt Institute
- Institute for Public Policy and Social Research (Michigan State University)
- NASPA, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
- National Association of State Boards of Education
- National Association of State Budget Officers
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- National Governors Association
- National Institute for Early Education Research
- The Journal