



COVID-19 Guidance: Frequently Asked Questions, March 18

After School Programming

During a school closure, what is the requirement for after school programming?

Programs will not have to meet the 60 hour per month requirement. This is calculated based on the actual days a school is open.

Assessment

Will we have to administer federally mandated student assessments this year (ELPA21, ISASP/DLM)?

As you may know, Iowa Testing Programs has announced Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress testing is suspended until further notice. Beyond this, we anticipate updated guidance from the federal government very soon. Iowa will make decisions based upon most up-to-date federal guidance and communicate to the field as soon as possible. Previous guidance is included below:

The U.S. Department of Education notified states in new [guidance](#) that it will consider targeted, one-year waivers of the assessment requirements for those schools impacted by extraordinary circumstances due to COVID-19. The Department will pursue any waivers necessary to assist Iowa schools.

Graduation

What about graduating seniors missing classes – will they need to retake courses, or attend summer school?

If districts and nonpublic schools have graduating seniors who are unable to complete their classes for the year due to school closure, illness, family illness, or related COVID-19 issues, the Department suggests the district use local discretion to determine whether the students have completed sufficient course content to consider the units complete. We recommend that districts provide as much latitude for students to graduate on time as possible.

Online Learning

Can schools use online learning options for students?

Public districts may choose to use online learning options, but may not require student participation. If used, any online learning options should be offered as equitably as possible, taking into consideration the needs of

students living in poverty, students with disabilities, and students who do not speak English as their first language. Consideration should also be given to staff members and their health.

Can we require students to participate in online education while school is closed?

No. Public districts may not require any students to participate in online educational programming or any other services while school is closed.

Can we offer online educational opportunities while school is closed?

Yes. Public districts can offer educational services and opportunities, but cannot require participation. Districts choosing to offer any such options must do so in the most equitable way possible to allow access for students with disabilities, students living in poverty, and students and families for whom English is not the first language.

May online schools continue to run as normal (CAM, Clayton Ridge, Des Moines)?

The online school should follow the lead of the district. Specifically encourage social distancing and limit contact to others. Where this may become an issue is if the family has limited access to the internet and uses public spaces such as the public library or community centers for reliable internet. The district will need to ensure all students have equitable and reliable access to the internet.

Can nonpublic schools continue to provide and even require online educational services, even though public schools cannot do this while closed?

Yes. Nonpublic schools do not have the same legal considerations as public schools. Even so, we encourage nonpublic schools to consider accessibility of educational resources and services for their students with disabilities, those living in poverty, and those who do not speak English as a first language.

Preschool

Will the 360 required hours be forgiven for district preschools and their community partner locations should they have to shut down?

There is no requirement for an annual number of days/hours for preschool.

Do preschools need to make up hours from the closure?

There is no state requirement for preschool to make up days/hours missed during the shutdown.

Can we use teleconferencing to provide Shared Visions Programming/Preschool?

Continued support for children and families is important. The use of teleconferencing is allowable with attention to ensuring privacy and protection of information and in alignment with all relevant legislation.

School Improvement (Title I Section 1003)

Do we still need to submit our 1003 applications to receive funding this school year?

Yes, as soon as applications are available in CASA they should be completed and submitted by schools/districts. We are working to have the application available within the next week. A due date for applications will be forthcoming.

Iowa Department of Education guidance should be viewed as advisory unless it's specifically authorized by state statute, according to Iowa Code section 256.9A. This does not apply to administrative rules, declaratory orders, or materials required by federal law or courts.

School Lunches

How do we provide food services to families during the time school is closed?

The Department has received approval from the USDA to serve Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) meals in a non-congregate setting. This allows schools to provide meals by drive through, grab-n-go, or other methods during closures related to the COVID-19 outbreak. Schools need to apply through the Department's Bureau of Nutrition and Health Services to participate in SFSP and must ensure the meals are distributed in a site that is area-eligible. To apply, please fill out the [Google form](#).

Special Education

Specific questions are answered below. Further guidance on [COVID 19 and IDEA services](#) can be found on the Department's webpage. A [recorded webinar](#) is also available.

What is the difference between educational services and educational opportunity? What is the District required to provide?

Educational services, in relationship to IDEA services, are those services that are provided to an individual through the IEP. Educational opportunity is ensuring that the individual has equal access to what is provided to the general education population. If the District is closed, neither educational services or educational opportunities are required to be provided. If, however, the District chooses to provide educational services, the District must ensure that students with IEPs receive FAPE, including supplementary supports and services as they are written in the IEP. If the District decides to provide educational opportunities they must be accessible to all students.

If we just post a list of resources for students and parents to use during the school closure, does that count as "educational services" and do we need to be concerned about accessibility?

Posting a list of resources that may be used would be considered an educational opportunity as no instruction is provided. If you post a list of resources, consider whether it is universally designed for accessibility by all families and students. For example, a reading list should include books for all levels of readers. Websites that students and parents can access should be supplemented with sites accessible by those with disabilities, and also available in other languages. Districts are encouraged to add contact information for those families who may need additional supports.

What does it mean for the provision of a free appropriate education (FAPE) if the District decides to provide educational services to all students via online or virtual learning?

A District deciding to provide instructional services to all students through online or virtual learning must carefully consider a number of factors as moving to online education entails a number of major commitments. Chief among them is the provision of FAPE. Using online learning to provide educational services implies that all students in the district can learn using that instructional methodology. The IEP team must, therefore, identify the supports and services will be needed for each student to participate in the instruction and learning activities. For example, what will be provided to the student who has significant intellectual disabilities and physical disabilities to participate in the online learning? If it's not feasible for the individual to participate in that manner, the IEP team must determine what will be provided to the individual to ensure FAPE.

If we offer a variety of options for distance learning opportunities (optional – in either paper or electronic formats) for all of our students, attached with a message that says, “if these activities aren’t appropriate for your child, please contact your teacher for additional options,” what else should we take into consideration?

It depends. If the options include a variety of ways to access, for example different languages, or websites accessible to individuals with disabilities, then a statement of who to contact for more supports is helpful. If, however, the District has not attempted to provide broadly accessible materials, then such a statement is not sufficient. The responsibility to ensure educational opportunities are for all students belongs to the district, not parents. If the district is providing any options for educational activities, it needs to ensure from the outset that the opportunities are universally accessible. If the district is using the materials as educational services, special education teachers need to adapt and modify the materials as appropriate to the individual.

Is it okay for teachers to send things home for students rather than the district sending them? Does this keep districts from needing to worry about accessibility for all students?

No. Teachers cannot provide any educational resources or services without representing the district. The district should be coordinating any effort to provide resources or services during a school closure.

If a student with a disability is participating in a 4+ program that is still open, can the student be required to participate while school is closed? Can they do so voluntarily?

The student cannot be required to participate. The IEP team will need to review each individual situation to determine whether the student can continue to participate if the District is closed. For example, the student may need District supports to participate which may not be available during District closure. The IEP team may find alternate methods to provide those supports or decide that the student does not participate until the District re-opens.

If a student is currently taking a concurrent enrollment course and that class still meets virtually because the community college is providing it online, can the student continue to take it even though the district is closed? What if it is a student with a disability for whom the course is part of their transition plan?

Yes. Even though the public school is closed, if the community college remains open via virtual courses the student may continue to attend the class. The student cannot be required by the district to attend, however, because school is not in session. Course attendance will be solely governed by the community college. This is the same for a student with an IEP.

If a student with a disability is participating in a work study program that is still operating, can the student be required to participate while school is closed?

If the student with a disability is participating in a work study program available to all students and the work study program is no longer available for other students, then the student with a disability would no longer participate in the work study program. If the work study program is a part of the student's IEP, the IEP team may meet to determine whether the student should continue in the work study program. If the school is closed, the student cannot be required to continue in the work study program.

What, if any, supports can be provided to students with challenging behaviors while schools are closed?

If schools are closed for all students, then no IEP services are required to be provided to students eligible for special education services. Teachers cannot provide any educational resources or services without representing the district. The district should be coordinating any effort to provide resources or services during a school closure.

Are IEP teams required to meet in person while schools are closed?

The Department will adhere to the following new guidance from the Office for Civil Rights, the federal office with jurisdiction over Section 504:

Additionally, IEP Teams are not required to meet in person while schools are closed. If an evaluation of a student with a disability requires a face-to-face assessment or observation, the evaluation would need to be delayed until school reopens. Evaluations and re-evaluations that do not require face-to-face assessments or observations may take place while schools are closed, so long as a student's parent or legal guardian consents. These same principles apply to similar activities conducted by appropriate personnel for a student with a disability who has a plan developed under Section 504, or who is being evaluated under Section 504.

Questions

If you have questions please contact your [school improvement consultant](#). If they are unable to assist you they will connect you with the appropriate person.