



Guidance for Iowa School Districts and Teacher Preparation Programs

Relief from Required Instructional Hours or Days

The Iowa Department of Education (Department) is reviewing the instructional time requirement (180 days or 1,080 hours) and will have more information during the Governor's news conference today at 4:30 p.m.

Online Learning

Districts and accredited nonpublic schools 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.

School Lunches

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](#).

Students with Disabilities

The following is based on [guidance](#) provided by the U.S. Department of Education. These guidance topics are initial and respond to the needs of the moment. Additional "as applied" guidance (convening IEP Teams, amending IEPs and placements, return to instruction/reopening schools, etc.) will be forthcoming.

Schools Closed and No Services Provided. If a school district closes its schools to slow or stop the spread of COVID-19, and does not provide any educational services to the general student population, then it would not be required to provide services to students with disabilities during that same period of time.

Schools Closed and Services Provided. If a district continues to provide educational opportunities to the general student population during a school closure, the district must ensure that students with disabilities also have equal access to the same opportunities, including the provision of FAPE under Section 504 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

If services are provided to all students, the Department, school districts, and schools must ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, each student with a disability can be provided the special education and related services identified in the student's IEP developed under IDEA, or a plan developed under Section 504.

Early ACCESS services. Because Early ACCESS (IDEA Part C) involves four state signatory agencies, the four signatory agencies will collaborate to provide additional guidance.

Accountability and Assessment

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. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education will consider a targeted, one-year waiver of the requirement to identify a school for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) if the reason for the identification was related to the school being closed for a significant portion of the school year. The Department will pursue any waivers necessary to assist Iowa schools.

Graduation

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.

Practitioner Preparation Programs

Students currently studying to be teachers may have difficulty meeting the requirement for 14 weeks of student teaching and/or 50 hours of field experience [Iowa Code §§ 256.16(1)(a)(2)(m); 256.16(1)(a)(2)(d)]. The Department suggests teacher preparation programs ask faculty members overseeing student teaching to determine if they have sufficient data, when considered as a whole, to deem these requirements satisfied and recommend the preservice teacher for licensure, even if less than 14 weeks or 50 hours have been completed.

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.