

The Nevada Department of Education will continue to work closely with local, State, and federal officials to address questions/circumstances related to COVID-19 and update this document as additional information becomes available.

The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) is coordinating with the Governor's Office and the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to support schools in prevention and response plans related to COVID-19, also known as the Coronavirus. The Department has developed the below Frequently Asked Questions Document (FAQ) to support district and school administrators in addressing local needs while ensuring the well-being and safety of students, educators, staff, and communities.

Please share this FAQ with relevant audiences and use it as a reference in concert with other resources, including the following:

- The [Frequently Asked Questions](#) released by the Governor's Office on March 7
- **Updated** The Nevada Department of Health and Human Services' [district/school administrator](#) resource for the novel coronavirus found on the Schools & Families page of the State's **new** [Health Response website](#)
- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools](#)
- **New** The CDC [Considerations for School Closure](#)
- **New** The U.S. Department of Education webpage on [Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel](#), including updated resources on FERPA, serving children with disabilities, and assessments and accountability as of March 12
- The CDC [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- The School Superintendents Association (AASA) [web resource](#) targeted at district leaders

Currently, schools do *not* need to take any special precautions beyond what is normally recommended to prevent the spread of germs. You can help students and staff reduce their risk for getting and spreading viral respiratory infections, including the flu and the common cold, by following the simple steps below:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands;
- Avoid contact with people who are sick;
- Stay home while sick and avoid close contact with others; and
- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash hands.

In addition, it is recommended that schools continue to follow their regular cleaning and disinfection program for facilities as well as transportation.

As always, the health, wellness, and safety of our students, educators, and staff remain our top priority. Please emphasize the importance of regular handwashing, hydration, and rest to your school communities. If someone feels ill, please encourage them to stay home, rest, and recover, rather than continuing to work or attend school.

Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

General

Updated Question (Q): What support is the Department of Education providing to schools and districts?

Answer (A): The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) worked with the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to develop an [updated resource](#) for district/school administrators and nurses. This resource is available on the [new Nevada Health Response website](#), which is the best place to go for the most up-to-date information. In addition, NDE continues to collect resources that have been made available by the federal government and other national organizations to support district and school administrators.

New Q: Is there a statewide contingency plan for schools that close or is this up to each individual district?

A: The Department of Health and Human Services maintains statewide plans for pandemic influenza. Decisions on school closures are made locally by district and school leaders in coordination with local health districts. Districts and schools should continue to work in collaboration with local health districts to ensure that all decisions are made with the safety of students, educators, and staff at the forefront and may consult the CDC's [new Considerations for School Closure](#) resource. District/school leaders may also refer to the recently [updated resource](#) developed by the Department of Health and Human Services in partnership with the Nevada Department of Education (NDE), which was first distributed on February 13th.

Q: Do schools have emergency plans in place in the case of a severe outbreak?

A: All schools must have Emergency Operations Plans in place, and they are on file with NDE. Because these plans address a wide range of issues, including potential active shooter situations, they are not available to the public. Districts and schools are encouraged to continue working in close coordination with local health districts and emergency management to prepare and respond to emerging issues.

New Q: How does the health or safety emergency exception to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act's (FERPA) consent requirement permit a district/school to disclose personally identifiable information (PII) from the education records of affected students?

A: Although districts/schools can often address threats to the health or safety of students or other individuals in a manner that does not identify a particular student, FERPA permits educational agencies and institutions to disclose, without prior written consent, PII from student education records to appropriate parties in connection with an emergency, if knowledge of that information is necessary to protect the health or safety of a student or other individuals. Districts/schools may reference the [Frequently Asked Questions document](#) released by the U.S. Department of Education's Student Privacy Policy Office.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions for Districts & Schools

Updated March 12, 2020

School/District Closures

Updated Q: Who has the authority to close schools/districts?

A: Nevada has a long-standing tradition of local control and, as such, decisions regarding school calendars are the province of local districts and their leaders. Districts and schools should continue to work in collaboration with local health districts to ensure that all decisions are made with the safety of students, educators, and staff at the forefront. Districts and schools should consult the Centers for Disease Control **new** [Considerations for School Closure](#) resource. District/school leaders may also refer to the recently **updated** [resource](#) developed by DHHS in partnership with NDE, which outlines recommendations for response to different COVID-19 scenarios.

Q: How long does a school have to close if one of its students or staff members has the coronavirus or has come in contact with someone who has?

A: Districts and schools have been and will continue to work in close coordination with local health districts, and NDE will continue to work with DHHS, to support appropriate decisions on a case-by-case basis. Districts and schools should consult the Centers for Disease Control **new** [Considerations for School Closure](#) resource. District/school leaders may also refer to the recently **updated** [resource](#) developed by DHHS in partnership with NDE, which outlines recommendations for response to different COVID-19 scenarios.

Updated Q: What happens if a school/district does not meet the 180 instructional days requirement due to closures or is not able to make up instructional time before June 30th?

A: Nevada has a long-standing tradition of local control and, as such, decisions regarding school calendars are the province of local districts and their leaders. Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 387.151 gives the State Superintendent of Public Instruction broad authority to count days when schools/districts are closed as session days in cases of emergency and district leaders make a compelling case. If more than 75% of district facilities are closed, the district must first use its 3 scheduled contingency days. If a less than 75% of district facilities are closed, the State Superintendent may declare a session day without the use of contingency days (NAC 387.120).

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction will work with districts/schools to address concerns regarding closures on a case-by-case basis. If a number of districts/schools close for a period of time beyond their contingency days, the Department may follow recent precedent and issue guidance allowing instructional time to be counted by minutes rather than days; in such cases, districts/schools may choose to shift to an extended day or extended school year to maximize students' opportunity to learn (NAC 387.125 & 387.131). NDE will work in consultation with districts and be flexible in this time of uncertainty. Annual instructional minutes minimums are as follows:

- Kindergarten: 21,600 minutes
- Grades 1-2: 43,200 minutes
- Grades 3-6: 54,000 minutes
- Grades 7-12: 59,400 minutes

[Answer continues on next page]

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions for Districts & Schools

Updated March 12, 2020

Districts/schools submit their instructional calendars to the Department each year on May 1 for the school year that begins that fall (NAC 387.120). In prior years when schools have faced significant closures due to extreme weather, the Department has allowed districts to submit updated calendars during the school year. Some schools and districts operate on alternative schedules such as 4-day weeks or longer school days; arrangements like this allow flexibility in making up lost instructional time.

Q: If schools close, will virtual learning be an option to continue operations?

A: Currently, Nevada statutes and regulations related to attendance and session days do not allow for traditional schools to count days in session if students are not physically in attendance. NDE is aware that some schools/districts have made devices available to every student as part of their instructional plans and will consider virtual learning opportunities on a case-by-case basis, rather than unilaterally for any school/district that may be affected.

A major concern when shifting to virtual learning is equitable access to learning for students who have severe cognitive disabilities, are English learners, or experience other challenges in reaching proficiency; virtual learning has a high probability of exacerbating achievement gaps by failing to reach and support our most underserved and vulnerable students, including those who may be homeless, highly transient, low-income, etc. To support a shift to virtual learning, the Department of Education would also need to be assured that educators have the training and experience necessary to provide quality, full-time instruction virtually.

NDE has a [distance education policy](#) in place that is under review for flexibility to address potential long-term school closures due to COVID-19.

New Q: How will schools continue to provide nutrition services if there is a school closure or local outbreak?

A: The Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) is prepared to implement a two-tier strategy to mitigate possible National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program interruptions.

- The first tier uses existing programs to serve meals and snacks in a “grab and go” style to children 18 and under when school has been canceled due to COVID-19. In preparation of school closures, the NDA is working with partners to identify alternative locations for meal distribution. Those locations will be communicated and will be chosen depending on which school has closed. The NDA and its partners will endeavor to have food available within 24 hours’ notice of a closure.
- If widespread school closures result in reduced capacity of school central kitchens to provide prepared meals, the second-tier strategy uses USDA Foods through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). TEFAP resources offer household food, not prepared food. If the second tier is necessary, sites where food is available will be communicated.

The NDA has secured a waiver from the USDA to provide “grab and go” type meals to children experiencing school interruptions. The NDA will continue to work with its food bank partners to provide emergency food response as needed.

[Answer continues on next page]

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions for Districts & Schools

Updated March 12, 2020

In the event of a school closure, school districts should contact NDA program staff directly:

- First contact: Joe Dibble, School Nutrition Supervisor, 775-353-3751, j.dibble@agri.nv.gov
- Second contact: Patricia Hoppe, Deputy Administrator, 702-668-4562, pxhoppe@agri.nv.gov
- Third contact: Ashley Cone, Administrative Assistant. 775-353-3758. acone@agri.nv.gov

Assessments / Accountability

New Q: What if district/school closures affect the administration of statutorily required assessments?

A: Districts and schools administer statewide assessments during a broad window that began on February 20 and closes on May 20. If there is a disruption due to COVID-19 that prevents a district/school from administering assessments before the window closes, NDE will work with districts on a case-by-case basis to adjust the window accordingly.

If a number of districts/schools close for a period of time beyond their contingency days, the Department may follow recent precedent and issue guidance allowing instructional time to be counted by minutes rather than days; in such cases, districts/schools may choose to shift to an extended day or extended school year to maximize students' opportunity to learn. At such time, NDE may provide guidance to districts/schools so that all eligible students can complete statutorily required assessments. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) issued a [fact sheet](#) indicating that the Secretary of Education has the authority to issue targeted one-year waivers of certain accountability requirements for schools impacted by extraordinary circumstances.

New Q: Will there be consideration of the impact of COVID-19 on State accountability ratings?

A: NDE will continue to work closely with districts/schools to support their needs and address emerging issues on a case-by-case basis. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) issued a [fact sheet](#) indicating that the Secretary of Education has the authority to issue targeted one-year waivers of certain accountability requirements for schools impacted by extraordinary circumstances.

Funding/Cost/Salary Considerations

Updated Q: Will schools/districts lose funding if they have to close? Is there a hold harmless if there are excessive student absences?

A: Monthly Distributive School Account (DSA) payments are based on Average Daily Enrollment (ADE) - *not attendance* - for the previous quarter and the number of days school is scheduled to be in session in the specific month, based on the approved school district calendar. Student absences do *not* impact ADE. School closures do *not* impact scheduled days in session.

The hold harmless provision currently in place for DSA payments is activated if a school district experiences a drop of 5% or more in the ADE for a given quarter. If a school district experiences decrease in ADE of 5% or more from one quarter to the next, the hold harmless provision adjusts the ADE to the same quarter of the previous fiscal year.

In the extreme circumstance that a district/school is unable to meet the minimum instructional requirement (whether days or minutes), the State Superintendent of Public Instruction will address DSA

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions for Districts & Schools

Updated March 12, 2020

true-ups on a case-by-case basis and be as flexible as possible. In the case that districts/schools change their scheduled days in session (with the Superintendent of Public Instruction's approval), it would *not* affect the monthly DSA payments through the end of the fiscal year.

New Q: Will schools be reimbursed for costs associated with COVID-19?

A: NDE is in close communication with the Governor's Office as well as our federal partners to make sure the State is taking advantage of all resources available for districts/schools and communities that have to respond to cases of COVID-19.

Local governments are the first resource for emergency funding for districts/schools. For a district to be eligible for local emergency funding, a county must declare an emergency. Depending on what transpires, funding could become available through funding packages authorized by the federal government to address the costs COVID-19. NDE has asked all district/school leaders to track all expenses related to COVID-19.

Q: Will school/district employees get paid in the event of a long-term closure?

A: Employee compensation is defined through individual collective bargaining agreements (CBA). As such, any modification would be addressed through the collective bargaining process.

Quarantine / Absences

Updated Q: How long should a student or staff member who may have come in contact with the virus wait before returning to school?

A: [Centers for Disease Control Interim Guidance for Preventing the Spread of Coronavirus in Homes and Communities](#) indicates that individuals should consult with healthcare providers or local or state department of health staff before returning to normal activities. School districts have been and should continue to work in close coordination with local health districts. Districts/schools may also refer to the CDC's **new** [Considerations for School Closure](#) resource as well as the updated DHHS [resource for district/school administrators and nurses](#), which outlines recommendations for response to different COVID-19 scenarios.

Updated Q: If a student is absent for an extended time due to illness or quarantine, how will they make up instruction?

A: Schools/districts have established practices working with families to put learning plans in place for families in unique situations, including prolonged illnesses and chronic medical issues. Schools/districts are advised to review and revise contingency plans for supporting a greater than normal percentage of its population in the case of quarantines that do not result in a full school closure. Schools/districts will also need to coordinate with families to ensure that students who are healthy enough to participate in learning, but unable to attend school, receive services to which they are entitled under state and federal law, including nutrition services and special education services. Districts/schools may also wish to reference the [guidance](#) from the U.S. Department of Education regarding providing services to children with disabilities during the coronavirus outbreak.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions for Districts & Schools

Updated March 12, 2020

New Q: Do schools have to withdraw students after an extended period of absences?

A: There is no federal or state law or regulation that requires withdrawing or disenrolling students due to absence. Disenrolling students affects average daily enrollment, which affects DSA payments.

New Q: How should schools code COVID-19-related absences in Infinite Campus?

A: NDE has a history of working with districts/schools on a case-by-case basis to address Infinite Campus (IC) coding in unique circumstances. NDE's Office of Assessment, Data & Accountability Management (ADAM) is designing recommendations for different scenarios and, if necessary, will convene an emergency meeting of the IC governing board to receive feedback from district/school representatives before providing statewide guidance on coding to promote consistency. If your district/school has immediate circumstances among students/staff that requires coding in IC, please reach out to the ADAM team at ADAMinfo@doe.nv.gov.

School Cleaning

Q: Should schools take extra precautionary measures with regard to cleaning?

A: As it is flu season, schools should maintain a regular schedule of cleaning high-touch surfaces, which includes desks and tables, doorknobs, bathrooms, and computers, as well as regular cleaning of buses. On March 5, 2020, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a list of [EPA-registered disinfectant products](#) that have qualified for use against COVID-19. It is important to note that there may be additional disinfectants that meet the criteria for use; the EPA will continue to update its list with additional products as needed.

Updated Q: How/Will schools be reimbursed for the extra costs of cleaning?

A: NDE is in close communication with the Governor's Office as well as our federal partners to make sure the State is taking advantage of all resources available for districts/schools and communities that have to respond to cases of COVID-19.

Local governments are the first resource for emergency funding for districts/schools. For a district to be eligible for local emergency funding, a county must declare an emergency. Depending on what transpires, funding could become available through funding packages authorized by the federal government to address the costs COVID-19. NDE has asked all district/school leaders to track all expenses related to cleaning for COVID-19.