

School Closure and Virtual Ed March 16, 2020

Resources:

Latest email to districts includes the Governor's [FAQ](#) on school closures: <https://dpi.wi.gov/administrators/e-mail>

DPI Virtual Learning Time Implementation page continues to be updated daily and adding district examples <https://dpi.wi.gov/cal/innovation/virtual-learning-time/district-planning-and-implementation-resources>

Questions Submitted to SCW from today's conference call with Schools

Today's announcement banning gatherings of 50 or more people

<https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2020/03/16/wisconsin-bars-restaurants-required-limit-number-patrons-50/5057772002/>

1) Does this mean schools must close tomorrow instead of Wednesday?

- No. Per DPI, schools are not mandated to close until Wednesday, March 18th but schools need to eliminate gatherings of more than 50 people in a confined space.

Hours of Instruction/Documentation/Attendance in Remote Learning Mode:

2) Waivers:

⇒ Will we be required to make these days up? Will there be any forgiveness of hours or school days for this year? How do I ask for a waiver of hours of instruction if needed? What are the chances that we do not come back to school until May 1 or even not finishing this year?

- *DPI will waive the hour requirement for any school district that requests the DPI to do so due to this ongoing public health emergency. SCW is waiting to confirm if this will extend to private schools also.*
- Definitely fine to use scheduled snow days for teacher planning days.

3) Documentation:

⇒ How to track attendance? How will these days be reported? Will these days count if students are participating in virtual learning? If we do a daily check-in can that count for attendance?

- Most schools will measure completion of learning targets not a time demand as the true measure for completion. Competency-based learning is the true measure of completion; have flexibility with completion dates, particularly considering illness.
- One-time attendance, not per class usually.
- There is NO mandated requirement for *public districts* to turn in attendance. SCW is seeking clarity for Choice schools in terms of documentation.
- Most frequently, Google Forms or your SIS could be used to track attendance. The mechanism is a school decision and will vary. It is too late to adopt new tools, so keep it as simple as possible, using mechanisms families are already familiar with.

⇒ Do Choice schools need to submit a Virtual Online Learning Plan to DPI?

- No. There is no plan that needs to be submitted and DPI does not keep plans on file. There is flexibility that applies to both private and public. DPI does have some templates and some examples on file. It is recommended that schools have something on file for their own stakeholders.

4) Can we count teacher planning time days as learning days?

- No, districts that are doing this are using snow days or emergency minutes built in.

Virtual Learning:

Contact Janice Mertes, Assistant Director, Teaching and Learning Team at Janice.mertes@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 267-1054 if you have additional needs or questions.

5) Acceptable criteria:

⇒ Level of online access -- Not all families have access to utilize virtual instruction. Are there guidelines for certain participation levels before e-learning is a viable option to count as hours of instruction?

- No specific guidelines; Survey families to find out how many devices per household and if internet access sufficient to download a YouTube video. Smart phones will be only device some families have; Paper/books are fine; journaling the old-fashioned way, etc.
- Some communities are gearing up hot spots for internet access in creative ways. It's probably too late to get access to individual homes.

⇒ Easy access to teachers for communication highly recommended

- Consider developing teaching teams for point of contact (esp. in case of teacher illness)

⇒ What criteria must be followed for e-learning? For K-6, for 7-12?

- DPI Suggests 1.5-2 hours of engaged learning time for early grades; up to 4 hours for middle ages; and 5.5-6 hours for high school

⇒ What constitutes engaged learning? If we plan 30 minutes of independent practice time for students per class, does that count as engaged learning?

- Yes. Think creatively, include physical activity and family involvement. Don't assign too much, "less is more" and keep it simple in order to be successful. You do not want students just sitting at home doing packets or in front of a screen all day. Consider projects so students engage with content in creative ways.

⇒ Is blended learning an option?

- Absolutely yes.

⇒ Is it possible for Virtual Ed to be something like sending home or emailing packets/project-based learning activities with the teachers being available by phone/email to answer questions during the day?

- Yes

⇒ Can you clarify, there is no mandate/requirement for delivery of content (online vs physical books, etc.)?

- There is no mandate. Refer to FAQ.

6) Young students:

⇒ Any ideas or support for teachers especially in 4K-2 on how to deliver Virtual Learning?

- K4 – Expecting no digital work is fine; interaction is best

⇒ Does the school closure mandate extend to daycares/childcare? No.

- See WI Dept of Children and Families (DCF) for guidance: As of 3-15-20, “The department is committed to helping keep childcare programs open during this time of crisis.”

7) Students with special needs:

- Per DPI, “the school should make all reasonable efforts to provide students with disabilities equal access to the same opportunities.”

8) Teacher support:

⇒ What about opportunities for our teachers to connect in professional groups that are content specific? Any way we can get them connected?

- Reach out to local public district to share ideas and see DPI’s Virtual/Digital Learning site to see helpful examples from other districts and states:

<https://dpi.wi.gov/cal/innovation/virtual-learning-time/district-planning-and-implementation-resources>

State Testing:

9) How will the Forward testing window be handled? Will there be an extension?

- DPI says, “It is increasingly clear that it will not be possible to complete testing this year due to the pandemic. The DPI will aggressively pursue a waiver request to the United States Department of Education (USDE) from this requirement and will work with the legislature and governor’s office around suspending the state test requirements this spring.”

Choice Misc:

10) Payments -- Will all choice and snap payments in May occur as scheduled?

- DPI has no plan to close and their staff are working hard to avoid delays.

11) WPCP application window closes April 16th – will this be extended?

- SCW will monitor this closely and communicate any changes

SNSP

12) Will SNSP payments be withheld by DPI if schools are not able to fulfill the parent/school agreements?

- We do not know. SCW will pursue an answer.

Building Access:

13) Some public schools are not allowing their teachers back in the buildings after Tuesday of this week, is it okay to allow teachers who want to be in the building to come and go as they please?

- Yes, teachers can be in your buildings. See the Governor's K-12 FAQ : https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/administrators/e-mail/K-12_FAQ_3.14.20.pdf

“The order only applies to pupil instruction and extracurricular activities, not to other functions. School leaders will make determinations on a case-by-case basis regarding access for other purposes, such as virtual learning, cleaning, food service, payroll and clerical functions. If school facilities are used for other purposes, districts should follow guidance from public health officials to ensure that appropriate health and safety measures are in place.”

14) We have field work for our audit scheduled this week. Given the Governor's mandate to close schools, are we breaking the law if we still host our auditors in the building?

- No. Same as above.

15) Can we invite students in to do *small group instruction* in areas that require materials they cannot access in the home? Can we have elementary students come into school to do running records with a teacher?

- No, the mandate from DHS closes schools “for purposes of pupil instruction and extracurricular activities.” https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/WIGOV/2020/03/13/file_attachments/1400831/DHS%20School%20Closure%20Order_3.13.20.pdf

Meal Program: <https://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/child-nutrition-program-covid-19-information>

16) Can private school students pick up meals from their local public school?

- Each district makes their own decision on how to handle this. MPS will have all of their serving sites open to resident students, public or private: <https://mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/News/MPS-offers-packaged-meals-for-students-during-school-closure.htm>

Virus Management:

17) If we receive word that one of our students, parents, or employees tests positive, are there additional procedures that need to take place?

- See guidance from the CDC and, Department of Health Services: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/index.htm>

Misc.

18) Will these calls be recorded?

- Yes

Contacts: *DPI Staff Resources*

- State School Nurse/Health Services Consultant Louise Wilson at louise.wilson@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 266-8857.
- Special Education Team via the web form at <https://dpi.wi.gov/support/contact-special-education> or at (608) 266-1781.
- Janice Mertes, Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning - Learning Team at Janice.mertes@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 267-1054.
- Viji Somasundaram, Director, Office of Student Assessment at visalakshi.somasundaram@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 267-1072.
- Tamara Mouw, Director, Teaching and Learning Team at tamara.mouw@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 266-2364.
- Jessica Sharkus, Director, School Nutrition Team at jessica.sharkus@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 267-9121.
- Amanda Cullen, Director, Community Nutrition at amanda.cullen@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 267-9123.
- Jennifer Kammerud, Senior Policy Advisor at jennifer.kammerud@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 266-7073.