

School Finance FAQ March 19, 2020

School days will generally fall into one of four categories:

- **Closed, Instructing:** Those who cease normal operations, so that children no longer come to the school site at all, but are instead provided support to receive instruction at home / off-site. The staff may be doing this work while on site or remotely or in some combination.
- **Closed, Preparing:** Those who cease normal operations, but campus staff are working (either on-site or remotely) in order to prepare so they can deliver instruction to students while they the students are at home / off-site. Non-instructional staff may also be working during this time, including at least school cleaning activities.
- **Closed, Temporary:** Those who previously announced a short term (likely one week or less) closure out of an abundance of caution, and at the time were not actively working to prepare to deliver remote instruction. Non-instructional staff may also be working during this time, including at least school cleaning activities.
- **Open:** Those who are allowed to re-open at some point, but who may face large absenteeism in terms of in-person student (and possibly staff) attendance.

As a note: school systems will continue to receive funding if they closed because of COVID-19 related concerns as long as the school system commits to supporting students instructionally while at home. See [this March 12, 2020](#) guidance document for more information, including information about the required attestation.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *How do I document student attendance for days I am “Closed, Instructing”?*

- a. You don't. School districts will apply for Missed School Day waivers in TEAL for each day they are “Closed, Instructing”, and will receive the waivers as long as they have submitted the required attestation with the waiver application. You should document these days in your student information system as non-instructional days, which will then be reported that way to PEIMS. Each “Closed, Instructing” for which a Missed School Day waiver is granted should be counted in terms of total minutes of instruction the same as it would have been if you had been able to operate normally. Note: you would still be reporting 75,600 operational minutes; however, you would be able to use these waivers to ensure you met that requirement.

2. *What documentation should I retain, in anticipation of any future audits, to prove that I have been providing instruction while closed?*

- a. For campuses that are “Closed, Instructing”, teachers will be continuing to review student work while they support the instruction being delivered off-site – whether done via an on-line learning system or from periodic phone check-ins with the students or parents. Schools should attempt to retain some documentation that instruction is happening. This could be grade books. For days when work isn't being graded, this could also be done by retaining a small representative sample of student work (with appropriate notations for the date). In terms of what a small representative sample

might mean, it could be a copy of one student's work per grade level subject team per school per day, with attempts to add an example for students from different program types (e.g., bilingual). If you have on-line learning systems, it's possible this would be done automatically in those systems.

- b. In the event there are any campuses that are "Open", there may be significant absenteeism. As described for the "Closed, Instruction" scenario, teachers will continue to review student work while they support instruction being delivered off-site. Schools should attempt to retain some documentation that instruction is happening for these students who remain home. The guidance on what that documentation should be is the same in these cases as for campuses as noted above for the "Close, Instruction" scenario.

3. *I may need several days to prepare to deliver instruction to students while they are at home or otherwise off-site. How many days can I operate as "Closed, Preparing" and still maintain compliance with the 75,600 minutes requirement?*

- a. When considering the year in total, schools will still need to meet 75,600 minutes of operation. Some schools will have sufficient minutes in their calendar when accounting for this (including by counting "Closed, Instructing" days as noted previously). If, however, when accounting for the year in total, you will need more time to prepare to make the instructional shifts to support students, you can apply for Missed School Day waivers for this purpose as well. The TEA wants to ensure districts have the time they need to prepare properly for the new instructional delivery method.

4. *Do I need to send in the attestation statement immediately? If I don't, will instructional support prior to filing not count toward my minutes of instruction?*

- a. We will consider attestations retroactively. We understand you have many operational concerns to address. Please file the attestations no later than July 1.

5. *If my school system is Closed for COVID-19 for an extended period of time, how will the agency calculate my Foundation School Program ADA funding for the 2019-20 school year given we won't have daily attendance information for a large number of school days this year?*

- a. For districts that are "Closed", we're working on the methodology for this now. We will get those details out as soon as possible. But we want to assure districts that funding will not be negatively impacted by COVID-19.
- b. In the event there are any schools that are "Open", ADA will be calculated as normal while the schools are open. See the question below with regard to how to handle high rates of absenteeism while Open.

6. *If my school is allowed to Open, but large numbers of students remain at home, will my funding be reduced?*

- a. No. If this happens for only a few days, you can seek low attendance waivers. If it is expected for extended period of time, as long as you provide support for those students to receive instruction at home, you can code those students in your student information system as Absent – COVID 19 (a choice should have been added by all SIS vendors in the

state for this), subject to your commitment to provide instructional support for those students while at home. (You will file [this attestation](#) document for that purpose). When calculating ADA, these students will be considered present for the purposes of state funding.

- 7. *We originally announced closure for a short term (ex: one week), but weren't actively preparing to deliver instruction remotely. Will our funding be reduced?***
 - a. No. For districts that were "Closed, Temporary," if you have adequate minutes in your remaining calendar you would be fine, or you can also use your first two bad weather days while you continue to comply with the 75,600 operational minutes requirement. You can also apply for Missed Day Waivers to cover up to one week, before you transitioned to "Closed, Planning".

- 8. *What actions do districts need to take to ensure 55% spending requirement for special programs?***
 - a. Districts should make every good faith effort to ensure additional weighted special program funds continue to be spent in support of student needs. TEA will wait until the final expenditure data is reported to the agency before making a determination about waiving the 55% expenditure requirements. The agency will continue to support flexibility where possible, but districts should remember that salaries make up the vast majority of district operating budgets and since funding will be uninterrupted it is the agency's expectation that those salaries for special program personnel will continue to be paid and coded to the proper program intent code.

- 9. *How will districts take attendance for students that were participating in the Optional Flexible School Day Program (OFSDP) but are now receiving online/distance learning provided by the district while the campuses are closed?***
 - b. For districts/campuses that are "Closed, Instructing", districts with students that were participating in the OFDSP should continue to take attendance per the usual program guidelines, with only change being that the teachers would now be tracking minutes of instruction for students while they are receiving instruction offsite. Schools in this situation will still need to submit an attestation.