



## COVID-19 SCHOOL OPERATIONS GUIDANCE (3/27/2020)

Pursuant to Governor Little's March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020, 21-day stay home order for non-essential services, Educational institutions—including public and private K-12 schools, colleges, and universities—are considered essential services for purposes of facilitating distance learning or performing essential functions, provided that social distancing of six-feet per person is maintained to the greatest extent possible. Detailed information regarding what are essential services can be accessed here:

[https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/127/2020/03/IdahoEssentialServices\\_updated.pdf](https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/127/2020/03/IdahoEssentialServices_updated.pdf)

**Soft Closure** – As used in the State Board of Education COVID-19 School Operation Guidance approved March 23, 2020, a soft closure is a shift from in-person school operations to school operations that use on-line, virtual, or distance learning to provide instruction to students and allow them to meet the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) social distancing guidance for other services and staff activities on school grounds. Idaho public virtual schools are already providing instruction virtually and therefore, would not be impacted by instituting the soft closure.

Based on a school's demographics and unique student population, a school or district may need to utilize a variety of learning modalities to meet the students' needs. School districts and charter schools are asked to think out-side of the box and do their best to meet their student and community needs while keeping their staff and students safe and following the CDC social distancing guidelines. School districts are encouraged to take advantage of online resources and training that is available through the Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA) and partnering with our virtual public schools. School districts and charter schools may encourage staff to provide their instruction from home where possible. Schools are also asked to consider the mental health of our students and families and where resources and circumstances allow, to encourage their staff, including pupil service staff and paraprofessionals, to interact remotely with their students as applicable to the local circumstances. In addition to instructional services, schools need to be planning for providing food services to underserved student populations. Additional guidance on child nutrition programs may be found here:

<https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/resources-for-schools/>.

Remote instruction may encompass a number of modalities. Some examples include the familiar on-line instruction and courses that have been provided through IDLA and virtual schools. Remote instruction could also include video conferencing with a class of students or class periods through a webinar, or providing assignments and instructions that can be sent through email or hard copies that can be picked up or dropped off in coordination with meal distribution or delivery.

In recognition of the wide range of services schools provide to their students and the needs of some of our special education students, schools may have students that need some in-person instruction or other limited school accesses. To meet these needs schools may still use their facilities for serving students as long as services are provided within the CDC social distancing guidelines, including small groups where the appropriate distance can be maintained between students and adults and the proper sanitization can be performed before and after individuals use the location. Additional guidance on serving special education students may be found at:

<https://www.sde.idaho.gov/coronavirus/sped/3-19-2020-SPED-COVID-19-Q-A.pdf>

Based on the community needs, and school resources, schools are encouraged to provide child care at their facilities or work with local child care providers who may need to use the school facilities to provide child care for individuals within their community that are providing essential services. Schools are not required to provide child care at this time. Essential services include first responders, medical/health care workers, and other unique workers that are critical to the continuity of operations within your local community. See additional information from the Department of Health and Welfare below. Schools should work with their local emergency command to identify these positions. Again, in providing these services, the CDC social distancing guidelines must still be observed. As the current crisis evolves schools may be activated to provide a role in the community and State of Idaho Emergency Operations Plan. At that time school administrators should work directly with their community emergency operations staff.

### **ADDITIONAL AREAS OF CLAIRFICATION**

Online Instruction vs. Online Course: Instructional staff used to deliver instruction in an in-person format do not need to recreate their entire course for the semester in an on-line format. Resources can be focused on those curricular areas that remained in the semester and delivering them through an online or distance learning format. The Idaho Digital Learning Academy in collaboration with some of our virtual schools and the Department of Education have resources available to help teachers convert the course content. Link to IDLA resources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aOqT4bGU-XmCAxZTcsOaOkijKN1xRqRaCllr5UBJtkE/edit#>

#### Additional Technology Resources:

The Federal Communications Commission has released an [agreement](#) stating providers will waive late fees, not cut off service for lack of payment, and open hot-spots.

- **Comcast** - [Comcast is offering an internet essentials package for free](#). To sign up for a free internet essentials package for 60 days, applicants can simply visit [www.internetessentials.com](http://www.internetessentials.com). The accessible website also includes the option to video chat with customer service agents in American Sign Language. There are also two dedicated phone numbers 1-855-846-8376 for English and 1-855-765-6995 for Spanish.
- **Spectrum** - [Spectrum is offering free internet access for students](#). Beginning March 16, Spectrum is offering free internet for 60 days to households with K-12 or college students who don't already have a Spectrum subscription. To enroll, call 1-844-488-8395.
- **Charter** - [Charter is offering free internet for 2 months](#).
- **AT&T** - [AT&T COVID-19 response](#). AT&T will offer open hot-spots, unlimited data to existing customers, and \$10/month plans to low-income families.
- **Verizon** - [Verizon](#) does have special offers, but is following the FCC agreement.
- **Sprint** - [Sprint](#) is following the FCC agreement, providing unlimited data to existing customers, and, starting Tuesday, 3/17/2020, will allow all handsets to enable hot spots for 60 days at no extra charge.
- **T-Mobile** - [T-Mobile](#) is following the FCC agreement, plus unlimited data to existing customers, and, coming soon, will allow all handsets to enable hot-spots for 60 days at no extra charge.

#### Alternative Authorizations and Non-traditional Routes to Certification – Clinicals/Mentorships:

Instructional staff working on meeting the requirements for an alternative authorization or non-traditional routes need to work with their school administrators on completing any requirements for the current school year or adjust their plans accordingly. There are no state minimum clinical hour requirements. The mentor program requirements are based on academic years and not hours.

Attendance Tracking: Schools should continue to track student engagement in school work as necessary for them to determine mastery or completion as determined at the local level. Attendance tracking for state reporting purposes can be found in the Attendance Manual, provided by the Department of Education's Public School Finance Office. Please contact the Department's Public School Finance staff for more detailed information. During this time phones are still being monitored, so if you do not reach a staff person, please leave a message and your call will be answered. The Attendance Manual can be found on the Department of Education's website: <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/finance/#attendance>. Section 33-1003A, Idaho code, allows ... "When a school is closed, or if a school remains open but attendance is significantly reduced because of storm, flood, failure of the heating plant, loss or damage to the school building, quarantine or order of any city, county or state health agency, or for reason believed by the board of trustees to be in the best interests of the health, safety or welfare of the pupils, the board of trustees having certified to the state department of education the cause and duration of such closure or impacted attendance, the average daily attendance for such day or days of closure or impacted attendance shall be considered as being the same as for the days when the school actually was in session or when attendance was not impacted. A decision by the state department to disallow such a consideration shall be subject to appeal to the state board of education."

Career Technical Education Students/Internship Hours: The Division of Career Technical Education is reaching out to the agencies and boards who determine the occupational certification for guidance in this area. Additional instructional resources from the Division are available on their web site: <https://cte.idaho.gov/instructional-resources/>

Child Care: The Department of Health and Welfare has, at this time, determined that school districts along with city, county, community organizations or businesses, that request to operate a temporary child care to assist their employees or community due to COVID-19, and will be operating for no more than twelve (12) consecutive weeks are exempt from the state daycare licensing regulations. Schools should still check with their local municipalities to determine if there are any local ordinances that apply. See attached guidance from the Division of Health and Welfare.

Civics Exam: This is a statutory requirement and cannot be waived by the Board. Because school districts and charter schools can determine how this requirement is met, there is a large amount of flexibility within the requirements.

Section 33-1602, Idaho Code:

(7) Starting with the 2016-2017 school year, all secondary pupils must show they have met the state civics and government standards for such instruction through the successful completion of the civics test or alternate path established by the local school district or charter school that shows the student has met the standards. Assessment of standards shall be included as part of the course at the secondary level. A school district or public charter school shall document on the pupil's transcript that the pupil has passed the civics test pursuant to this subsection. The school district or governing body of the charter school may determine the method and manner in which to administer the civics test. A pupil may take the civics test, in whole or in part, at any time after enrolling in grade 7 and may repeat the test as often as necessary to pass the test. The applicability of this subsection to a pupil who receives special education services shall be governed by such pupil's individualized education plan. For the purposes of this subsection, "civics test" means the one hundred (100) questions used by officers of the United States citizenship

and immigration services as a basis for selecting the questions posed to applicants for naturalization, in order that the applicants can demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of United States history and the principles and form of United States government, as required by 8 U.S.C. section 1423. The state board of education may promulgate rules implementing the provisions of this subsection.

College Entrance Exam: The exam was waived by the Board for senior students who needed to take it this year and still graduate. Juniors who would have taken this year will be exempted through the normal rulemaking process so that the exemption is in place when they graduate, no matter what year that is. The Department of Education is exploring options to provide students who want to take the SAT an opportunity to do so at the state's expense this summer or next year.

Dual Credit Courses (taught at the high school): The public postsecondary institutions have indicated that they will still grant credit if a dual credit course has been moved to a virtual format to finish the school year. Boise State University, the University of Idaho, Idaho State University and the College of Southern Idaho will accept pass/fail grades and Lewis-Clark State College will accept on a case by case basis. At this time we do not have a determination from the other community colleges. While the grade may be accepted and in most cases will allow the student to move on to the next course in the sequence there could be other consequences that negatively impact the student. School districts are encouraged to work with the dual credit coordinators at the applicable institution(s) prior to moving to pass/fail grading for these classes to discuss all of the potential impacts.

Evaluations and Career Ladder: A single summative evaluation is still required to be completed for the 2019-2020 school year. The summative evaluation is used for movement on the Career Ladder. These evaluations may include only one observation. School districts and charter schools should update the staff person's measures of student achievement/success for the current term (semester/trimester). Individual Professional Learning Plans (IPLP) may be updated to reflect the current circumstances. The ISAT will not be administered in the spring. Any staff persons whose measure of student achievement or success is based on the ISAT will need to be updated for this year. Any measures based on a locally established assessment that can no longer be administered will also need to be updated.

Grading: Grading is determined at the local level. School districts and charter schools are asked to take into consideration the students future plans for going on to some form of postsecondary education or other scholarship considerations when evaluating the grading policies.

Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI): At this time, the State Board of Education has not suspended the May IRI administration, but will take up in a future meeting.

Online Training/Professional Development: Additional information is pending in this area.

Social Distancing: While educational institutions are essential operations, all organizations and individuals should self-isolate whenever possible to reduce community spread. The intent of the Order is to maximize the number of people in self-isolation and utilize work from home options to the extent possible. When work from home options are not possible, social distancing requirements should be maintained to the greatest extent possible.

Student Teachers: There are no state clinical or student teacher hour requirements. Students need to work with their postsecondary program providers on any remaining requirements they may need in order to meet their program requirement for this school year.