

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When will school closures begin? How long will they remain closed?

A: DoDEA schools operating in mainland Japan and Okinawa will be closed to students from March 23 to April 3. Schools are scheduled to reopen following spring break on Monday, April 13.

Q: In town halls and online recently, it has been communicated that schools would only close if there is an increased health threat in our local community. Is the environment in Japan getting worse?

A: First of all, we are not aware of any increased health threat to our students, or in the community. Out of an abundance of caution, and in close coordination with U.S. Forces Japan, we have made the decision to make a short transition to digital learning.

We have developed a number of mitigation strategies in the event that COVID-19 presents an increased threat to our communities, and this action will allow us the opportunity to ensure we are appropriately prepared for any issues that may arise. We will also take this time to ensure the cleanliness and disinfection of our schools using CDC-recommended guidelines.

We will continue to remain in close communication with U.S. Forces Japan, local military commands and military public health officials to assess conditions both on-base and in the communities around our schools.

Q: What does DoDEA mean when it says schools will be thoroughly cleaned during the closure?

A: DoDEA schools routinely maintain a high standard of cleanliness. During this period, custodial staff will follow Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protocols for the cleaning of schools. This includes environmental cleaning of surfaces (i.e., floors, walls, windows) that removes germs, dirt and impurities, and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces (i.e., doorknobs, light switches, countertops, etc.).

Q: I've read that Japanese schools are re-opening. Why is DoDEA closing?

A: DoDEA is temporarily closing schools and transitioning to online learning for this period of time to address concerns brought forth by families, complete a thorough cleaning of schools in accordance with CDC guidelines, and ensure all schools have the resources, training, equipment and supplies needed to maintain a safe environment for students and employees.

Q: How many schools will be affected by the school closures?

A: This short period of digital learning will impact all 20 schools on mainland Japan and all 13 schools in Okinawa.

Q: Will graduation dates be impacted?

A: As in other DoDEA districts that have been affected by COVID-19, we are paying close attention to our high school seniors and will continue working to mitigate any potential impacts to graduation and post-secondary plans.

Q: How will online learning work for my student?

A: While our schools will be closed for face-to-face instruction, online learning opportunities will be provided to all students beginning Wednesday, March 25 – April 2. Teachers will provide interactive instruction for students using various learning platforms (Google, student email, Clever, ThinkCentral, Khan Academy, MackinVia, Schoology). You will receive additional information from your child's teacher.

Expectation for assignments will vary depending on the age, grade, and ability of your student(s). If there are any questions regarding assignments, please contact your child's teacher. Families with students with special needs will be receiving additional information about services for their child.

Q: How will teachers transition their lesson plans from in-person instruction to online? Will online learning be more or less work for them?

A: Our teachers are a vital part of successfully implementing a short-term digital learning strategy. As DoDEA schools closed to students across South Korea and Europe, teachers and administrators worked collaboratively, developing instructional models to support continuity of learning through this unprecedented period in our school system's history. There have been challenges along the way, but we have been able to apply lessons-learned progressively to each successive impacted district to maximize opportunities for student engagement and growth.

Q: Will there still be a school lunch program during this closure? If not, will the school refund monies already paid?

A: We are working closely with NEXCOM and The Exchange, our student meal program providers, to provide 'grab and go' meals for students during this period. As with any credit balances that occur on student meal program accounts, parents can request a refund of account payments.

Q: How will students who receive special services such as occupational, speech, behavioral and physical therapy be affected?

A: DoDEA is committed to ensuring that its students who benefit from special education programs and services continue to make meaningful educational progress toward their goals. During this short period, students on IEPs may not receive in-person services and supports; however our special education service providers will be working diligently with families and students to develop plans for providing virtual special education and related services to the maximum extent possible. Parents will be receiving more information shortly from their child's principal and service provider(s).

Q: Is the IT infrastructure in place to support on-line or distance learning?

A: DoDEA's IT team is working diligently to ensure that conditions are set for teachers to provide digital learning and will continue to monitor connectivity, bandwidth and other network indicators throughout the two-week period.

Q: Will the schools be providing the equipment necessary for students to work from home? Computers?

A: Families with multiple students or challenges accessing adequate devices can work with their principal to sign out computers and/or peripherals on a temporary basis.