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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Eric C. Davis, Chairman

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION Mark Johnson, Superintendent of Public Instruction

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COVID-19 Response For North Carolina Public Schools

Issued by the North Carolina State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to public school district leaders in response to school closures resulting from the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Governor Roy Cooper has directed the North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) in collaboration with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to develop a plan to:



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- Ensure access to a quality education for students through the remainder of the school year;
- Provide students with remote learning while school buildings are closed; and
- Ensure that all school employees – including janitors, bus drivers, teaching assistants and cafeteria workers -- will work in safe environments and be paid.

In response, collaborative working groups consisting of agency staff and local superintendents are tasked with bringing recommendations to the State Board of Education for consideration and approval. The guidance outlined in this document captures the SBE, DPI, and or legislative action in response to the COVID-19 plan.

Our schools are playing a critical role in this public health emergency. While school buildings are closed for instruction, school employees will continue to ramp up efforts to ensure our most vulnerable children and their families have access to nutritious foods.

The teacher-student relationship provides extraordinarily valuable social-emotional support to our children. These ongoing interactions provide some sense of normalcy and structure for students during a chaotic time.

As we look ahead at this longer closure, state leaders will be providing further direction to local school leaders about what instruction should look like during these unprecedented times. We know, however, that remote instruction is going to look different in communities across the state. Inequities in local resources and digital access further complicate matters. We will take all possible steps to mitigate these inequities and to articulate best practices as thousands of teachers apply.

This COVID-19 response document provides relevant information and guidance on the plan and action taken by DPI and the State Board of Education. As we look ahead, we want to resume traditional in-school instruction this school year on May 18. We will reopen schools when our public health experts deem it appropriate.

II. EXECUTIVE ORDERS:

Governor Cooper's Office released a Frequently Asked Questions for Executive Order No. 141 that includes the following language on graduation ceremonies (page 7):

*"Are in-person high school graduation ceremonies allowed in Phase Two?
Phase 2 lifts the Stay at Home order but strongly encourages individuals to maintain at least six feet social distancing from other individuals. Phase 2 also limits an event that brings together more than ten people indoors and twenty-five people outdoors. Educational institutions are exempt from these mass gathering requirements. The intent of this exemption was to allow educational institutions the ability to gather more individuals together on their premises if necessary to support planning for summer learning and for the 2020 –*



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2021 school year. This exemption was not intended to allow for large, in-person events, such as graduation ceremonies.

Accordingly, the Governor's Office and NC Department of Health and Human Services strongly recommend that local school leaders continue to follow the [COVID-19: Guidance on High School Graduation Ceremonies originally issued on May 1, 2020](#), and the Recommendations to Promote Social Distancing and to Reduce Transmission outlined in Executive Order No. 141. These continued efforts will support local education leaders as they mitigate the spread of COVID-19 when considering how to safely and responsibly honor graduating students. This response provides clarification on the mass gathering exemption for educational institutions and does not change or override the terms of any Executive Orders."

Read the entire FAQ: <https://files.nc.gov/governor/documents/files/Phase-2-FAQ.pdf>

[Governor Cooper - All schools to remain closed for remainder of school year](#)

[Governor Cooper-Executive Order #117](#)

"a. Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-19.30(b)(5) which allows the undersigned to perform and exercise such other functions, powers and duties as are necessary to promote and secure the safety and protection of the civilian population, and with the concurrence of the Council of State, I hereby direct that all public schools close for students effective Monday, March 16, 2020 until March 30, 2020, unless extended beyond that date.

b. Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-19.30(a)(1), I hereby direct NCDHHS, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, and the North Carolina State Board of Education to immediately work together to implement measures to provide for the health, nutrition, safety, educational needs and well-being of children during the school closure period."

[Governor Cooper-Executive Order #120](#)

"For the reasons and pursuant to the authority set forth above: Executive Order No. 117 § 2 is amended as follows:

I hereby direct that all public schools close for students effective Monday, March 16, 2020, as set forth in Executive Order No. 117, through Friday, May 15, 2020, unless extended beyond that date."



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III. ATHLETIC ELIGIBILITY & PARTICIPATION EXAM

(1) Athletic Academic Eligibility

Regardless of the school organization pattern, a student who meets Local Education Agency (LEA) / Charter School Promotion standards for the 2019-2020 academic year automatically meets the courses passed requirement for the first semester of the 2020-2021 academic year.

This means if the student is promoted in 2019-20, they are eligible for athletic participation for the first semester of next year 2020-21. To continue athletic eligibility for the second semester, they will need to meet guidelines set forth in ATHL-001.

(2) Temporary Extension of Valid Preparticipation Examination (PPE)

All student athletes who have a valid Preparticipation Examination (PPE) form for the 2019-2020 season will be allowed a one-year extension through the end of the academic year 2020-2021.

An athlete planning to participate in a sport during the 2020-2021 season without a current PPE form (date of physical 4/1/19-5/1/20) will need to obtain an evaluation/physical before they will be allowed to participate.

IV. CHILD CARE

Guidance: 4.9.2020

[Guidance for Health and Safety of School Nutrition Personnel](#)

Guidance: 3.18.2020

[Joint Guidance for Superintendents from the NC Department of Public Instruction and the NC Department of Health and Human Services for the Operation of School-Based Emergency Child Care during the COVID-19 School Closure](#)

V. EMPLOYEE PAY AND BENEFITS

Authorizing Documents:

SBE Policy # [BENF-001](#)

In order to help protect the public health and safeguard the well-being public school employees, the North Carolina State Board of Education authorizes State of Emergency COVID-19 Sick Leave ("State of Emergency Leave") in response to the pandemic. The SBE extended this leave option through June 15. [Click here to read the policy presented to the SBE.](#)



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[State of Emergency Sick Leave - COVID-19](#)

Policy for public school employees-proposed to protect the health and well-being of school employees. More closely align public school to OSHR and workers in UNC System and Community Colleges. Guidance will be drafted for local leaders. This policy addresses the period from April 1 - April 30. NC State Board of Education extended the Emergency Sick Leave Policy on April 20. See [link here](#) for press release.

[Informal Guidance: State Board of Education State of Emergency COVID-19 Sick Leave Policy](#)

Guidance March 2020:

[Federal Family First Leave School of Government Summary](#)

Guidance: See the [Health Plan](#) information on premium invoicing, collection for employees with reduced hours, LOA and loss of pay

VI. EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

Authorizing Documents:

SBE Policy # [ALOT-003](#)

April 1, 2020 Child Count

The SBE approved the recommendation that for April 1, 2020 child count, a statistical formula will be used to project the normal increase from December 1 to April 1 child count, using the last five years of data. The current policy requires districts to submit a report and certify the number of students eligible for special education services. Due to COVID-19, this will be an extra burden on local EC departments and teachers, and could impact their State Aid funding from the State. This could include reduced funding due to IEP meetings not being held, or completion of initial referrals for special education, due to the Executive Order #120.

[Exceptional Children Division Educator Resource Website](#)

VII. FUNDING

[Schedule of COVID Funds as of May 20, 2020](#) : Thanks Alexis Schauss and the Division of School Business for this handy reference guide of the K-12 state and federal COVID funds.



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[Click here to read the memo issued by Federal Programs on 5.15.20.](#)

Authorizing Documents:

SBE Policy # [ALOT-003](#)

[Joint Presentation to House Select Committee on COVID-19 Subcommittee on Education](#)

[NC SBE/DPI Estimates of COVID-19 Emergency Funding Requests](#)

\$50 Million Dollar Allotment Distribution

The SBE approved Fifty-percent of the funds are distributed based on ADM multiplied by a low wealth percentage and fifty percent of the funds are distributed based on allotted ADM. These monies, per the approved funding formula will immediately go out to districts.

New COVID-19 Allotment and Public School Budget Flexibility

[Guidance for using the Textbook Fund to allow for flexibility to use the funds to purchase technology devices \(Chromebooks, laptops, tablets, mobile connectivity\) and digital subscriptions.](#)

Guidance: 3.18.20

[School Business](#)

VIII. INSURANCE

Guidance: 3.20.20

[Insurance](#)

IX. LICENSURE

Guidance from April 9, 2020 State Board of Education meeting

[Ease of licensure testing requirements & New teacher requirements](#)

Guidance: March 2020

[Pearson Assessment-Licensure Exam Testing](#)



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X. NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATOR EVALUATION SYSTEM

GUIDANCE:

[Click here to read the full guidance document issued on 5.13.20.](#)

Legislative Approval Required: [Click here to read the educator evaluation recommendations](#)

COVID-19 has made it impossible for most districts to complete required annual evaluation processes. Public schools should not attempt online, or virtual, observations for the evaluation process because:

- 1) the evaluation instrument has not been validated for online observation, and
- 2) teachers are currently engaged in training related to online instruction and there is variability in teachers' access to those trainings.

XI. REMOTE LEARNING AND STUDENT GRADING

Authorizing Documents:

SBE Policies # [GRAD-001](#); [GRAD-003](#); and [GRAD-004](#)

NC General Statute-CPR Requirement (plan to seek legislative waiver)

The State Board of Education approved SPLN-006 on May 21, 2020 addressing the required RI Plans for all public school units, due to NCDPI by July 20.

The plans will have 15 required elements and will follow a template and process for submission outlined by NCDPI. NCDPI will be providing further written guidance by June 5.

[Click here](#) to read the press release regarding the Board's approval of the guidelines for the Remote Learning Plan in response to SL 2020-30, Senate Bill 704. In addition to the legislature's requirements, the board added two additional items that districts and schools must incorporate in their remote instruction plans – provisions to address the needs of students who are English-language learners, academically and intellectually gifted and those who are homeless and also an item addressing the local limitations that districts and school confront in executing quality remote instruction, such as availability of broadband and needed devices.

[Click here to review the document presented to the SBE.](#)



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As we continue remote learning, in light of COVID-19 and the extended school building closures, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) is providing some [FAQs regarding Credit by Demonstrated Mastery](#), CCRE-001. CDM remains an instructional practice that will help us to differentiate and accelerate students who have a clearly expressed need.

Please find the attached, newly issued guidance from the Division of School Business regarding 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 calendar requirements. You can also access/share the document by clicking here: [Guidance of Calendar Requirement- SL 2020-03 \(SB704\) Sections 2.1, 2.10 and 2.11-Created May 18, 2020.](#)

Joint Statement of Support for NC's Public School Students: In the uncertain times created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the NC Community College System and the NC Department of Public Instruction are working collaboratively to ensure that North Carolina students continue to have high-quality educational opportunities. North Carolina's community colleges are open-door institutions, committed to serving all students in pursuit of higher education and workforce preparation beyond high school. [Click here to read the joint statement.](#)

The SBE approved the following:

Adoption of new K-11 Grading Policy

- [NEW! GUIDANCE FOR REMOTE LEARNING, EVALUATION OF STUDENT PROGRESS, GRADUATION, AND GRADING for GRADES K-11 and SENIORS As of 5.5.20](#)
- [NEW! Detailed Grading: FAQ Document \(updated May 5, 2020\)](#)
- [NEW! Video-Dr. David Stegall talks to students and families about the K-11 grading policy](#)
- [Academic Policy Webinar-Overview of SBE Policy on K-11 Grading, Graduating Seniors and Promotion/Retention](#)
- [One-Page Grading & Promotion/Retention FAQ \(PDF\)](#)
- [Spanish-One-Page Grading & Promotion/Retention FAQ \(JPEG\)](#)
- [One-Page Grading & Promotion/Retention FAQ \(PDF\)](#)
- [One-Page Grading & Promotion/Retention FAQ \(JPEG\)](#)
- [SBE K-11 Grading Guidelines 4.23.20](#)
- [NCDPI/SBE News Release 4.23.20](#)
- [Graduating Seniors Grading Guidelines](#)
- [One Page FAQ-Senior Grading Guidelines \(PDF\)](#)



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- [One Page FAQ-Senior Grading Guidelines \(JPEG\)](#)

[Recommendations for Remote Learning, Guidance for Evaluation of Student Progress, and Graduation of the 2020 Class](#)

Remote learning is strongly encouraged across the state for all NC public school students to support continued student growth and well-being during this public health crisis. The intent is to continue supporting remote learning to the extent possible while not while penalizing students due to limited access.

Remote Learning Definition:

In NC K-12 public schools, remote learning is defined as learning that takes place outside of the traditional school setting using various media and formats, such as but not limited to: video conference, telephone conference, print material, online material, or learning management systems.

Critical factors for effective remote learning:

Remote learning...

- is accessible by all students for which the learning is intended and is responsive to diverse learning groups;
- maintains consistent communication between instructional staff and students;
- addresses the curricular and instructional needs associated with appropriate standards;
- includes evidence of student learning; and,
- considers the whole child as well as the home learning environment.

[CDC Decision Tree on Reopening of Schools](#)

NCDPI staff are conducting a statewide survey to ascertain more detailed information about the scope of remote learning opportunities. This survey is due on March 31, 2020.

[Instructional Design Principles for Remote Teaching and Learning](#)

[Instructional Design Principles for Remote Teaching and Learning-ONE PAGE SUMMARY](#)

[Recommendations for Instructional Leaders](#)

[Recommendations for Instructional Leaders-ONE PAGE SUMMARY](#)

Summary of survey results 4.7.20

[Executive Summary - NCDPI Remote Learning Survey](#)



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[ELA Choice Boards for Remote Learning](#)

In the event NC public schools do not reopen for face-to-face learning after May 15, additional statewide guidance for final grading to ensure equitable treatment for all students will be provided by the State Board of Education.

Guidance: 3.27.20

[Career and College Promise with the NC Community College System, including Cooperative Innovative High School programs](#)

Guidance: 3.26.20

[PowerSchool Calendar & Attendance Coding for March 16-May 15](#)

XII. SCHOOL NUTRITION

The current waivers that allow meals to students in non-congregate settings will continue through August 31.

P-EBT Frequently Asked Questions & CDC Prevention Guidance for Schools (5.5.20) g
Guidance for the [Pandemic – Electronic Benefits Transfer \(P-EBT\) program](#).

The [P-EBT Fact Sheet with Questions/Answers](#) (issued last week) has now been [translated into Spanish](#).

Guidance: 4.17.20 (updated from 4.9.20)

[“Guidelines on General Health for School Nutrition Programs.”](#)

Guidance: 3.27.20

[Interim \(COVID-19\) Guidance for School Nutrition and Transportation Personnel](#)

XIII. TESTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Authorizing Documents:



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ESSA:NC State Plan for the ESSA

NC General Statutes (plan to seek legislative waiver)

The SBE unanimously approved the recommendation from Superintendent Johnson and the Department of Public Instruction to seek a waiver of federal testing requirements. This waiver was approved by the United States Department of Education on March 20, 2020.

The following response was issued by the US Department of Education:

Thank you for submitting a request on behalf of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to waive certain requirements in section 1111 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA) related to assessment and accountability requirements. Based on our review of NCDPI's request, it appears to meet all statutory requirements and, accordingly, we intend to issue a formal approval of the NCDPI's waiver request in the coming weeks. You may begin to implement the waivers while we process the formal approval.

In collaboration with DPI the SBE will request the North Carolina General Assembly grant waivers of the following State Statutes regarding testing and accountability for the 2020 school year.

Career and Technical Education State Assessments

After consultation with The Department of Education – Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, NC CTE has waived the requirement of a CTE State Assessment for state and federal reporting, which is typically included in 5S4. As a result, students enrolled in year-long or Spring 2020 CTE courses with a 100-item post-assessment will not be required to take the CTE State Assessment.

Guidance from April 9, 2020 State Board of Education meeting

[Requests for accountability waivers](#)

XIV. TEXTBOOK EVALUATION AND ADOPTION

The SBE approved the **indefinite postponement** of the 2020 textbook evaluation and adoption process that is currently in progress.

XV. TRANSPORTATION

Guidance: School Bus Use



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[Click here to read the memo issued to transportation directors on 5.15.20.](#)

- Yellow school buses may be used to distribute nutrition assistance and conduct other emergency operations (G.S. 115C-242(6)).

[Guidance for submitting legal claims for damages due to emergency management purposes.](#)

- LEA staff may ride on buses and assist with the operations.
- However, only LEA-employed drivers may operate the buses to ensure that the operation remains covered by the NCTCA (G.S. 143-300.1(a)).
- Volunteers and other non-LEA persons may ride on the bus and assist in operations only with permission from the local superintendent. (G.S. 115C-2469(c)).

Guidance from April 9, 2020 State Board of Education meeting

[Hold harmless from possible reductions in transportation funding for 2020-21 school year](#)