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*All new/updated information is highlighted throughout this FAQ.*

In This FAQ

- General
- Seat Time and Distance Learning
- Special Education
- LA 4
- Federal Child Nutrition Feeding Programs
- Assessment and Accountability
  - Statewide Assessments
  - Accountability
  - Educator Evaluation and Certification
  - Teacher Preparation
  - Instructional Preparation
  - Student Technology Support
- Data Systems
- Nonpublic School Choice Programs
- Teacher Leader Summit
- Events

General

Q: Where can we find general information about COVID-19, including the number of cases, symptoms, preventative actions and plans for families and businesses?
A: Contact the Louisiana 211 Network by dialing 211, or text the keyword LACOVID to 898-211 for the most current information about the outbreak as it becomes available. The CDC COVID-19 website, as well as the Louisiana Department of Health website, are also helpful resources.

Q: Has the State of Louisiana issued an emergency proclamation related to COVID-19?
A: Yes. On April 15, Gov. John Bel Edwards signed a proclamation to extend the closure of public school facilities to students for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, to curb the spread of COVID-19. School systems are currently engaging students in distance education.
Q: Is guidance available to school systems regarding academic and workplace decision-making amid the extended school closures?
A: Yes. Learn more about the Department’s academic and workplace planning toolkit.

Q: Are there waivers relative to charter board meetings, for example, allowing board members to vote via phone instead of in-person?
A: The Governor has requested that the legislature suspend quorum requirements for open meetings. Such would apply to charter board meetings as well.

**Seat Time and Distance Learning**

Q: Relative to attendance, what are the waiver opportunities for students who may not have the necessary 63,720 instructional minutes per year?
A: The annual 63,720 instructional minute requirement has been suspended via the Governor’s proclamation.

Q: Can our school system transition to an online learning platform or other distance education modality for the remainder of the school year?
A: Yes, instructional minute requirements have also been suspended for distance education courses and curriculum delivery via the Governor’s proclamation.

Q: Is there a state approval process for general online providers?
A: There is not a state approval process for general online education providers. School systems have the choice and autonomy to approve and use any online provider that delivers instruction within the provisions of Bulletin 741 Section 2326.

School systems also have an option to utilize online providers that have been vetted and approved as Course Choice providers by BESE. Supplemental Course Allocation (SCA) funds can continue to be used to pay associated course costs with these providers through June 30, 2020.

Q. Will the Department provide distance and homeschool learning tools to support school systems during this time?
A: Yes. The Department has released a suite of resources to support school system leaders with academic planning during this extraordinary time. They include:

- **Continuous Education Guide:** Guidance and tools to support school system leaders as they analyze available instructional and technology resources, develop an approach to providing distance learning opportunities, and implement a distance learning plan.
- **Academic Resources Guide:** A comprehensive listing of academic resources available for
distance learning formats, organized by subject and curriculum provider.

The Department is also working with Louisiana Public Broadcasting (LPB) to provide the following for students, parents and educators:

- “At-Home Learning” website includes links to Department-produced guidance.
- Educational programming closely aligned to Louisiana student learning standards, whenever possible. Access the LBP broadcasting schedule.

Q: Are school systems required to offer distance learning, or is this optional? Will a school system be penalized for not providing formal distance education and instead providing access to materials and resources? Will days or minutes need to be made up?
A: School systems are not required to offer distance learning. Schools may offer complete distance learning, as capabilities exist. The required 63,720 instructional minute requirement per year shall also be suspended and minutes will not have to be made up.

Q: Are students required to participate in distance learning if it is offered?
A: School systems may offer distance education and may keep track of which students are participating.

Q: What is the definition of “distance learning”? Does this include access to online curricular materials or the use of platforms like Google Classroom?
A: Distance education includes ongoing and regular teacher-initiated interaction for the purposes of teaching, evaluating, and providing assistance throughout the duration of the course and curriculum delivery. This may include but is not limited to synchronous or asynchronous instructive interaction, including emails, videoconferencing, satellite learning, online chats, phone calls, and feedback on homework and assessments. The components of a distance education program can be found in Bulletin 741 Section 2326.

Q: How are Carnegie units addressed under minutes requirements? Will Carnegie credit be awarded by grade only?
A: Bulletin 741 §2314 Instructional Minute Requirements for Course Credit have been waived. Students can earn Carnegie credit by successfully completing all course requirements for the distance education courses authorized by the school system.

Q: If teachers are offering lessons through YouTube or other student-directed formats, must teachers take attendance? Can attendance be project-based?
A: If school systems offer distance education, the teacher does not have to take daily attendance as that has been waived.
Q: Is the Zoom platform CIPA compliant?
A: The LDOE provides CIPA Guidance in Louisiana’s Data Governance and Student Privacy Guidebook.

Q: What is the protocol for 12th-grade students who need to pass currently enrolled courses? Earn industry-based credentials?
A: Guidance related to the Class of 2020 is now available.

Q: What opportunities are available through Supplemental Course Academy/Course Choice for students to access online learning opportunities?
A: The Supplemental Course Academy/Course Choice program Frequently Asked Question document has information available regarding students currently enrolled in courses and opportunities for new enrollments including an Intersession catalog of options and directions for registering for intersession courses.

**Special Education**

Q: Has there been any guidance released to school systems and families regarding special education services amid the extended school closures?
A: Yes. Learn more about the information and resources that have been released to support school systems and families as they provide continuous learning to students in need of special education services.

**LA 4**

Q: Does the attendance requirement still apply for LA 4 payments?
A: Absences related to COVID-19 will be excused absences.

Q: What happens to LA 4 monthly payments if a school closes?
A: LA 4 payments will continue and will be based on enrollment.

**Federal Child Nutrition Feeding Programs**

Q: Can I continue to provide meal services during the mandatory closure of schools?
A: Yes. Meals may be offered to children at school sites via the Seamless Summer Option (SSO). School Breakfast Program (SBP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) meal patterns must be followed, with the flexibilities offered to schools, described below. Meals must contain all required components at this time (students are not allowed to select).
Q: Am I required to serve meals at all of my sites during the COVID-19 closure?
A: No. A school system may decide to provide meals at all sites or to consolidate operations at fewer sites.

Q: Are schools required to offer both breakfast and lunch meals?
A: No. Schools have the discretion to offer breakfast, lunch, or both. Through use of the Meal Service Timing Flexibility Waiver, schools may issue both breakfast and lunch simultaneously to children.

Q: How do I request approval from the State Agency for schools that wish to offer meals?
A: The Child Nutrition Program (CNP) online agreement must be updated to include the application for the Seamless Waiver for all school sites that plan to serve meals (Seamless Waiver Application Instructions). To expedite approval, email childnutritionprograms@la.gov with a complete listing of schools where meals will be served.

Q: What flexibilities are offered to schools that wish to offer meals?
A: School systems may request four USDA Feeding Waivers via the Seamless Waiver Application:

- Non-Congregate Feeding (grab n’ go, curbside pickup, etc.)
- Meal Service Timing Flexibility
- Operation of SSO by Non-Area Eligible Schools Food Authorities
- Alternate Feeding Method/Delivery of Meals (transporting meals to off-site locations)

The school system should list the waiver options that it wishes to exercise in the “sponsor comments” section of the Seamless Waiver application.

Q: Is notification to households still required during this time?
A: Yes. Schools must notify households of the availability of meals at specified sites and times through normal means (i.e. flyers posted at schools, school system websites, etc.).

Q: Are school systems responsible for providing meals to Type 5 charter schools?
A: If a school is operating an open feeding program, meals are available to all students 18 years of age and younger, regardless of where the child is enrolled in school. School systems/schools decide whether to operate meal programs, although if they do operate an open feeding program, they must serve all children.

Q: Are students required to pick up meals, or may caregivers pick up or receive meals on a student’s behalf?
A: Although it is preferable for children to be present to pick up their meals, we understand that might not always be feasible. For now, caregivers can pick up meals on behalf of a child/ren. The LDOE will communicate any changes USDA provides regarding this.
Q: Are transportation costs eligible for reimbursement in the event that school systems decide to deliver meals?
A: No. Only meals are eligible for reimbursement through the USDA’s child nutrition program.

Q: Have the required components of a reimbursable meal been waived?
A: No. Schools must provide all required meal components to receive reimbursement.

Q: Must school systems update their CNP application and provide meals, or is a charter school able to partner with the school system by referring families to food delivery sites?
A: School systems (including charter schools) are not required to operate feeding programs during the school closure. If meals will not be served, the school system does not need to update the CNP application. School systems that do not offer feeding programs should refer families to schools operating food pick-up or delivery sites. Only the school system providing the meal may claim reimbursement. Districts, charter schools, private schools, and early childhood centers are encouraged to collaborate when possible to ensure that all children in the community continue to receive meals.

Q: Can school systems provide meals to students who are enrolled in a different school system? If so, must the school system claim and account for these students?
A: Yes. Schools operating open feeding programs must provide meals to all children 18 years of age and younger regardless of the school/school system in which the child is enrolled. In addition, overage students enrolled in public K-12 schools, including students with disabilities through age 22, are eligible for free meals at open sites. Children’s meals must be counted and claimed by the school site that served the meal.

Q: Must school systems track the number of meals served or the individual students who are served?
A: Yes. School systems are reimbursed by the meal and should keep count of all meals served to children 18 years of age and younger. Each site must maintain documentation (hash mark sheet, meal counter/clicker, etc.) as a record of number of meals provided to eligible children for each meal service provided.

Q: If a school provides meals to “full pay” students in private schools, must those students pay for meals?
A: No. Meals served at an open feeding program are free for all children (including reduced and full pay students) whether they attend public or private schools.

Q: Is there a plan for serving dinner?
A: Schools may serve a maximum of two of the following meals per child, per day: breakfast, lunch, snack, and dinner. Schools may not serve both lunch and dinner on the same day.
Assessment and Accountability

Q. What are the current 2019-2020 academic year waiver requests?
A. All waiver requests are archived in the COVID-19 library on the Department’s website.

Statewide Assessments

Q: How will the state handle testing as schools are closed?
A: On March 20, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education approved Louisiana’s waiver request of assessment, accountability, and reporting requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act. This means Louisiana will not require standardized testing for the 2019-2020 school year. Moreover, since testing data is required to be used in accountability systems, like Louisiana's annual report cards, the state will also exclude testing data from performance measures for the current school year.

Q: What happens to shipments arriving from the assessment vendor?
A: The Department is currently working with all assessment vendors to monitor and adjust the shipments of secure testing materials.

Q: Will the new ACT online reporting be available this spring?
A: Yes, superintendents will receive an email the week of April 6, which will be followed by a letter with login credentials. Superintendents should contact jennifer.baird@la.gov if they are unable to receive USPS mail due to the “stay-at-home” order to arrange for an alternate method of delivery.

Q: Has the state and national test administration of ACT been rescheduled?
A: Yes. The state administration of ACT has been rescheduled for June 2 and early fall.

This would be for all students in grade 11 and seniors who have no ACT score on file with the Department (see ACT No Match list). Seniors with an ACT score can test at the expense of the school system. Because no SPS will be released this fall, there is no penalty for grade 12 students who do not have an ACT on file for 2019-2020.

The national administration of ACT has been rescheduled for June 13.

All individuals who were registered to take the ACT in April will receive emails from ACT with directions for free rescheduling. Information is available on ACT’s website.

Q: Should schools return secured materials to ACT?
A: Yes. Schools that had selected March 17 standard time paper-based testing currently have secure materials stored in a secure location. All secure materials should be returned, however, and not saved for a future administration. If secure materials have not been picked up by FedEx, district test coordinators should:
- Contact ACT at 1-800-553-6244, ext 2800 and schedule a pickup
- Bring secure materials to FedEx for return to ACT

Q: What ACT Prep Opportunities will be available to students?
A: BESE approved opportunities to continue taking ACT through Prep programs through the Course Choice program June 30, 2020 as part of the BESE waiver process. This action will provide school systems the opportunity to enroll students in ACT Prep programs from 5 different ACT Prep providers such as Princeton Review, Cambridge, etc. through June 30. Additionally, the Department will be sharing free ACT Prep opportunities through the March2Success program which provides an free, non-obligational online study program to help students prepare for standardized tests, improve school work and review materials.

Q: What ACT preparation is available through Supplemental Course Allocation/Course Choice and other providers through June 30?
A: Several Supplemental Course Allocation/Course Choice providers and additional providers will have content available through June 30 for ACT preparation.

Q: What guidance has been provided for Advanced Placement, CLEP, and International Baccalaureate Assessment?
A: The current guidance from the College Board and IB can be found here.

Q: What guidance has the College Board provided for spring 2020 Advanced Placement Exams?
A: The College Board released information on Friday, March 20, 2020. The Department has reconciled a set of AP Assessment Updates and AP Exam FAQs.

Accountability

Q: How does the school closure affect state and federal accountability?
A: Bulletin 111, Section 4501 and 4503, already provides for a one-year waiver of school and district performance scores and letter grades for schools closed from disaster for 18 or more consecutive days. The waiver is limited to the year in which the disaster occurred. In a memo from the BESE president, additional policy requirements around instructional time and graduation credential attainment were waived.
The BESE president and chairman of the House Education Committee sent a memo to the Governor reiterating this rule and further requesting that state law requiring school performance scores and letter grades be waived for one year. The Governor signed off.

The state superintendent also submitted a request to the U.S. Department of Education asking for a waiver of compulsory testing and reporting of accountability results, and it was approved.

Q: Has cohort graduation data certification been postponed?
A: Cohort graduation data certification has been tentatively rescheduled for May 13. Accountability contacts will receive information via individual emails when the schedule is confirmed.

Educator Evaluation and Certification

Q: Will educators be evaluated in the 2019-2020 academic year?
A: The Governor waived laws relative to educator evaluations for the 2019-2020 academic year. This included laws that require effective evaluations in order to renew or advance teacher or leader credentials.

School systems can continue to use and upload evaluation data for formative support and feedback in the Compass Information System. This information will be for internal school system use only.

Q: How will certification renewals be handled?
A: Certificates for educators who were employed in a public school in the 2019-2020 academic year (as reported in the Profile for Educational Personnel (PEP)) will be automatically extended for a period of one year, provided that the certificate:

- requires an evaluation in order to be renewed or in order to advance to the next level;
- was valid at any point during the 2019-2020 academic year.

The extensions are expected to be complete by the end of May. Once complete, the new certificate end date will be viewable on Teach LA.

Teacher Preparation

Q: May universities recommend undergraduate candidates for certification if the candidates were unable to complete 270 clock hours of student teaching or the yearlong residency?
A: Yes. If school or university closures due to the COVID-19 outbreak prevent undergraduate candidates from completing the required number of student teaching hours, universities may recommend
candidates for certification so long as they have successfully completed their courses. Each university will have its own policy relative to successful completion of courses during this time.

Q: In light of testing center closures, is ETS developing remote testing solutions?
A: Yes. ETS plans to introduce a solution that will allow educators to take a Praxis exam at home while test centers are closed due to Coronavirus (COVID-19). The solution will be proctored remotely by a trained specialist and the first exams should be available by mid-May 2020. The most frequently adopted tests will be released first. Please visit the [ETS Testing Updates webpage](http://www.ets.org) for additional updates.

Q: Given that Praxis exams are currently unavailable, may I admit candidates into an undergraduate teacher preparation program?
A: Candidates cannot be admitted into an undergraduate teacher preparation program until they have passed the Praxis Core (or received the appropriate score on the ACT or SAT exam). In cases where candidates have not passed the Praxis Core (or received the appropriate score on the ACT or SAT exam), providers may register candidates and allow them to begin coursework. However, providers must communicate to candidates that they are not admitted until they have passed the requisite exam.

Q: Given that Praxis exams are currently unavailable, may I admit candidates into an alternate teacher preparation program?
A: Candidates cannot be admitted into an alternate teacher preparation program until they have passed the Praxis Core (or received the appropriate score on the ACT or SAT exam) and passed the Praxis content exam. In cases where candidates have not passed the Praxis Core (or received the appropriate score on the ACT or SAT exam) or have not passed the Praxis content exam, providers may register candidates and allow them to begin coursework. However, providers must communicate to candidates that they are not admitted until they have passed the requisite exams.

Q: Is there an option for candidates to act as a teacher of record prior to admission into an alternate certification program?
A: Candidates wishing to teach prior to being admitted into an alternate certification program may do so by applying for a Temporary Authority to Teach (TAT).

Q: I recently completed a teacher preparation program, but cannot be recommended for licensure because I need to pass a Praxis exam and they are not available. What are my options?
A: The Department is monitoring the availability of Praxis tests and will release guidance in May around how new program completers can apply for certification to teach this fall, in the event that Praxis tests are unavailable.

Q: What are the requirements for mentoring in fall of 2020?

Last Updated: 04/15/2020
A: As of September 1, 2020 all under graduates and post- baccalaureate candidates must be supported by a Mentor who holds the Ancillary Mentor Certificate or the Provisional Certificate. Due to school closures as a result of COVID-19, the validity of the provisional certificate will automatically be extended from 12 months to 18 months, allowing for an additional six months for those with provisional certification to earn the full Ancillary Certificate.

Instructional Preparation

Q: Can our school system transition to an online learning platform or other distance education modality for the remainder of the school year?
A: Distance education is allowed under current BESE policy.

If school systems offer distance education, the school system must take student attendance every school day, and the teacher of record for each class must take attendance at the beginning of each class period.

For special education students: excluding a child from school on a temporary, emergency basis while utilizing distance learning will generally not require convening the child's IEP team to consider a continuum of placements. Once the exclusion reaches 11 consecutive school days, however, it is no longer considered temporary, and the IDEA's procedural protections for changes in placement apply.

Furthermore, exclusion of a child due to his or her susceptibility to an epidemic, no matter its duration, must be based on the child's unique susceptibility, as determined by established high-risk criteria, not on mere stereotypes regarding the child's disability.

Q: What planning resources are available to school systems?
A: The LDOE has released a suite of resources to support school system leaders with academic and workforce planning during this extraordinary time. They include:

- **Continuous Education Guide**: Guidance and tools to support school system leaders as they analyze available instructional and technology resources, develop an approach to providing distance learning opportunities, and implement a distance learning plan.
- **Academic Resources Guide**: A comprehensive listing of academic resources available for distance learning formats, organized by subject and curriculum provider.
- **Staffing Guide**: A guide to support school system leaders as they determine which essential functions must continue during school facility closures and how to create a staffing plan to ensure the continuation of those functions.

Last Updated: 04/15/2020
Student Technology Support

Q: How can we help students access computers?
A: Schools need to review their current device policies to decide if students will be able to utilize school-owned student devices at home in order to continue learning opportunities. To address school system/school concerns relative to tracking and managing school devices off-campus, the Department is working with Absolute Software to create a low-cost offering that will provide hardware tracking, monitoring, and reporting as well as investigating and recovering stolen/missing devices.

Q: What resources are available if students do not have internet at home and/or need assistance with accessing the Internet?
A: FCC Chairman Ajit Pai has launched the “Keep Americans Connected Pledge,” which many broadband carriers have signed. For the next 60 days, its provisions will:

- not terminate service to any residential or small business customers because of their inability to pay their bills due to the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic;
- waive any late fees that any residential or small business customers incur because of their economic circumstances related to the coronavirus pandemic; and
- open its Wi-Fi hotspots to any American who needs them.

Additionally, limited income households can apply for $5 to $10 per month internet access (AT&T Access, Cox Connect2Compete, CenturyLink Lifeline). Charter Communication will offer free Spectrum broadband and Wi-Fi access for 60 days to households with K-12 and/or college students who do not already have a subscription.

Q: Will the current E-Rate application deadline of March 25, 2020, be extended?
A: Yes. The FCC has extended the deadline for schools to submit Funding Year (FY) 2020 FCC Form 471 applications by an additional 35 days. E-Rate applicants will now have until Wednesday, April 29, 2020, at 11:59 p.m. EDT to submit. This also means, any school system that may need to post a new Form 470 for additional service(s), can file a form 470, post an RFP for 28 days and file a Form 471 for FY2020 E-Rate funding.

The FCC has also directed USAC to provide all applicants undergoing Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) reviews with an automatic, 14-day extension for all PIA requests.

Waivers for additional deadlines and Requests (Form 486, Form 472, COMAD, invoicing, etc.) have been requested and are under review.
Applicants are encouraged to also monitor USAC’s webpage (https://www.usac.org/) and news feed for relevant information in addition to Department communications.

Q: Are school systems required to provide internet access?
A: If a school system enrolls a student in a distance education program, the school shall ensure that all students enrolled in a distance learning course are provided with the necessary course materials and technical support.

Q: How quickly do you anticipate access to hotspots and WiFi? What does it mean for a hotspot to be “open” and how will caregivers access these hotspots?
A: FCC Chairman Ajit Pai has launched the Keep Americans Connected Pledge, which many broadband carriers have signed. For the next 60 days, its provisions include opening its Wi-Fi hotspots to any American who needs them. Information specific to the pledge can be found here.

Data Systems

Q: What adjustments have been made for statewide data collection periods?
A: Data system EOY collections with deadlines in May–June will proceed as normal. Data system collections with deadlines in March will be extended once normal business hours resume. All other data system work will be at the discretion of the school systems and their vendors.

- Sending of files to eScholar (Staff ID, Unique ID, LocationID, etc.)
- Sending of EdLink 360 extract files to the EdLink FTP server

Q: Who should I contact for assistance with LDOE data systems?
A: Email requests from school systems for support will proceed as normal. LEAs may contact the system data manager or systemsupport@la.gov. Vendor discussions and weekly check-ins (eScholar, Hoonuit, EdLink 360 Pilot) will proceed as scheduled.

Q: Are Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development Program (NSECD) payments going to be paid as scheduled also?
A: Yes, all payments for NSECD and other early childhood programs will be issued as scheduled.

Nonpublic School Choice Programs

Q: Are payments for the Louisiana Scholarship Program, School Choice Program for Students with Certain Exceptionalities, and Tuition Donation Credit Program going to be made as scheduled?

Last Updated: 04/15/2020
A: Yes, all payments for all school choice programs will be issued as scheduled.

Q: Will award notifications for the Louisiana Scholarship Program and School Choice Program for Students with Certain Exceptionalities proceed as scheduled?
A: At this time, Louisiana Scholarship Program awards and awards for continuing students in the School Choice Program for Students with Certain Exceptionalities are still on track to be released in April or early May.

**Teacher Leader Summit**

Q: What is the status of the 2020 Teacher Leader Summit?
A: In light of ongoing COVID-19 health concerns and at the direction of local and national authorities, the 2020 Teacher Leader Summit will not occur this May, as scheduled. The Department will shift to a virtual session presentation platform for as many sessions as possible. Additional details, including the list and schedule of these sessions, will be announced in the coming weeks via upcoming newsletters.

All registrants will automatically be unregistered from the event. Those who paid for a ticket will automatically receive a refund by the end of April to the card on file. Confirmation of the cancelation will be sent to the purchaser’s email address. The Department will cancel all hotel rooming blocks listed in the Overview Document. However, individuals should contact the hotel directly if they require proof of cancellation. Please contact ldoeevents@la.gov with questions.

**Events**

Q: Have any events or meetings been postponed or canceled?
A: Out of an abundance of caution, the following events or convenings will be postponed or canceled:

- Student of the Year events (Postponed)
- April School System Planning Call (Canceled; presentation will be posted to the School Improvement Library on April 8)
- Spring 2020 Counselor Institutes (April; rescheduled as virtual institutes)
- 2020 Teacher Leader Summit (May, in-person convening canceled; virtual session offerings will be shared in coming weeks)
- 2020 Jump Start Super Summer Institutes