

CONTINUOUS EDUCATION TOOLKIT FOR SCHOOL SYSTEMS

• STAFFING •

PURPOSE

Louisiana continues to monitor and respond to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak, which has closed school facilities to students. When school facilities close, the work of educators does not stop. School communities play a critical role in ensuring children continue to receive healthy meals and access equal opportunities to learn. This charge requires courage and creativity.

Among the challenges school leaders must navigate during this extraordinary time, they must consider staffing-related decisions, most importantly:

- ***“Which essential functions will I prioritize during school closures?”***
- ***“How do I create a staffing plan that supports the continuation of these essential functions?”***

This document is designed to support school leaders as they answer these questions and provides resources to support decision-making, including:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for on-site employee safety
- Continuous Learning for Students with Disabilities: Staffing Guidance
- Guidance for on- and off-site employees
- A template for managing employees’ work
- Resources for working off-site
- Next steps following school facility closures, including a resource to support virtual hiring efforts

WHICH ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS WILL I PRIORITIZE DURING SCHOOL FACILITY CLOSURES?

Before making staffing decisions, it is important to identify the essential functions school systems will prioritize during school closures, including:

- Ensuring meal services continue, to the maximum extent possible;
- Delivering high quality distance education to all students, including providing equal access to students with disabilities;
- Ensuring that finance staff is available to process payments to vendors providing services and payroll for employees that continue to work; and
- Ensuring that buildings remain secure, closed to the public, and in good repair.

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING MEAL SERVICES AND THE GOVERNOR’S STAY-AT-HOME ORDER:

To further combat the spread of COVID-19 in Louisiana, Gov. Edwards issued a Stay-at-Home Order on March 22, directing all Louisiana residents to shelter at home and limit movements outside of their homes beyond essential needs. As outlined in the Essential Infrastructure Fact Sheet, distributing food is an essential need. This means individuals may leave their residence to perform any work necessary to provide meal services to students.

The following process will support school systems in making staffing decisions related to these essential functions.



HOW DO I CREATE A STAFFING PLAN THAT SUPPORTS THE CONTINUATION OF ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS?

1

Determine which employees will be involved in executing each of the essential functions and whether they can do so off-site or if their on-site presence is needed.

When considering which employees need to be on-site and which do not, address the following questions:

- Is use of the building absolutely essential, or can the necessary tasks be completed virtually?
- Does the employee's presence in the building increase safety (e.g., employees who clean and sanitize the building) or decrease safety (e.g., lead to gatherings that put people at risk)?
- If use of the building is essential, how will the school and/or school system implement CDC-aligned protocols for employees' safety?

2

Contact the school system's personnel director and legal counsel to answer key staffing questions.

Working with the personnel director and legal counsel, school systems should consider:

- Any limitations school systems may have in directing staff according to the employee handbook, board policies, contracts, collective bargaining agreements, or any other related considerations; and
- Any considerations relative to paying employees during school closures. This might include questions surrounding:
 - › Paying hourly, part-time, or non-exempt employees who are unable to work off-site; and
 - › Paying employees time and a half or hazard pay for their services during these extenuating circumstances (e.g., cafeteria workers, janitorial staff).

3

Create a staffing plan aligned to the questions answered above.

Gather key leaders to create a staffing plan that will enable the school system to continue to provide the essential functions identified above. The plan should include:

- Where employees should report during the closures (e.g., their school building, central office, work from home);
- To whom employees should report during the closure;
- The duties that employees are expected to conduct during their work time, including ***how instructional staff can be utilized to support students with disabilities in accessing high quality instruction and materials through a continued learning environment*** (See appendix);
- How and when employees will be paid;
- What flexibilities are provided for employees who need childcare coverage or those who have been exposed to the virus and are quarantined (e.g., ability to work off-site or with flexible work hours); and
- How employees will be supported, including what tasks they can complete on-site and off-site to support school system operations.
 - › For educators, this may include guidance around preparing for delivery of instruction via multiple delivery models. The Department has compiled a number of resources, which are available in the Continuous Education: Guidance and Tools document.
 - › For non-instructional staff, principals and central office supervisors should develop lists of activities to be accomplished. School systems could limit the number of staff who need to report in person by creating remote access to systems, for example, finance systems or inventory systems. The Appendix includes a template that can be used to manage staff work during this time.



Develop a communications plan.

Effective communication should be a top priority during this time. Once the school system has finalized its staffing plan, it should develop a clear communication plan to inform all staff of the expectations for their service and to create opportunities for ongoing communication. The plan should include:

- Information from the staffing plan, including where employees should report, to whom, and expectations around work tasks. Specify that, as the situation evolves, requirements for staff may change and certain staff may become essential (i.e., must report to their building) who are not currently identified as so;
- Guidance for employees who must report to their worksites, including [CDC recommendations](#);
- Guidance on how staff should spend their time while schools are closed (see the Template for Managing Ongoing Employee Work in the Appendix);
- Protocol to follow if a staff member tests positive for COVID-19; see guidance from the [CDC](#) to support creating this protocol; and
- Contact information where employees can direct any questions.
- Regular communications to staff, students, and parents by leadership on a regular basis, for example, each Tuesday, even when there are no major announcements. This will keep your team up-to-date and aligned on next steps and will reassure students and parents.

School and central office staff are among the most trusted people for students, parents and families. School systems can help limit the impact of COVID-19 by influencing people, especially young people, to follow CDC recommendations when out of school. This could include, for example, talking to teens about playing sports in large groups.

While these are unprecedented and challenging times, with sufficient and creative planning, school systems have the ability to develop structures and processes that advance their primary purpose of educating students and ensuring the necessary functions of the system continue. A quality staffing plan will result in students continuing their learning and receiving nutritious meals, as well as schools that are prepared to re-open their doors as soon as they are able.

APPENDIX

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL GUIDANCE FOR ON-SITE EMPLOYEES

Plans should be in place to allow for social distancing to the extent possible, in line with [Centers for Disease Control and Protection \(CDC\) guidelines](#), for any employees who are continuing to work on-site.

As recommended by the CDC:

- Large gatherings and close contact should be avoided,
- Staff should practice hand hygiene,
- Frequently touched surfaces should be thoroughly and regularly sanitized,
- Symptoms of COVID-19 should be posted around the building, and
- Staff who are feeling sick should not report to work

Note that staff who are asked to report to their building may have concerns, such as a lack of access to childcare or being a member of a population that has been identified as especially vulnerable. These employees may need accommodations or contingency plans.

CONTINUOUS EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: STAFFING GUIDANCE

When planning for continuous learning, school systems must ensure that students with disabilities are provided with equitable access to high-quality instruction and materials, to the extent possible. School systems offering continuous learning can use current staff in novel ways to continue to provide special education and related services, to the extent possible. The planning and delivery activities outlined below can assist schools in assigning staff actions that will support equitable access to high-quality instruction and materials for students with disabilities.

	Action	General Education Teachers	Special Education Teachers	Para-professionals Staff	Related service providers & Other Support	Technology Support Staff
Planning	Asses student and family access to technology and resources through the Continuous Learning Survey .	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Prioritize distribution of technology resources to students who need read alouds and other computer-based accommodations.		✓			✓
	Provide training and resources for educators and support staff on accessibility features.		✓		✓	✓
	Share planning for instruction across grade-level teachers to provide additional capacity for providing accommodations and modifications within high-quality instructional materials.	✓	✓		✓	
	Engage in common planning time, either by phone or video conferencing, between general education, special education teachers, and other related service providers.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Review instructional materials to ensure appropriate accommodations and modifications are included, according to IEPs.	✓	✓	✓		
	Provide real-time read aloud support of instructional materials either by phone or virtually, or pre-record read alouds to share with students.		✓	✓	✓	

	Action	General Education Teachers	Special Education Teachers	Para-professionals Staff	Related service providers & Other Support	Technology Support Staff
Delivery	Provide individual support to students in navigating instructional materials either by phone or video conferencing.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Develop a family “toolkit” of supports such as weekly to-do lists, flexible schedules, or guidance on assignment-specific use of tools and assistive technology.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Create a special education hotline for parents to call for in-the-moment instructional support needs.		✓	✓	✓	
	Establish weekly check-ins with families to discuss special education supports and services and problem-solve challenges.		✓	✓	✓	
	Support the continued implementation of social-emotional learning to support IEP goals.				✓	
	Plan to continue related services as noted in student IEPs. See <u>Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities: Direct Services</u> for additional guidance.				✓	

GUIDANCE FOR ON- AND OFF-SITE EMPLOYEE DUTIES

POTENTIAL DUTIES FOR ON-SITE HOURLY EMPLOYEES

School systems may choose to identify alternative work for hourly employees. Options are noted below.

Administrative professionals or other hourly personnel

Organization: Filing, organization of library books or materials, long-term projects

Bus drivers

Cleaning and disinfection: Cleaning and sanitizing school buses ; meal delivery for children

Custodial staff

Cleaning and disinfection: Cleaning and sanitizing school buildings, equipment, etc. in accordance with CDC environmental cleaning and disinfection recommendations

Emergency and safety personnel

Checking fire alarms, IT, safety equipment, building locks, etc.; reviewing and updating safety and evacuation plans

Maintenance staff

Repairs or maintenance of the building or grounds that are currently needed or that may normally have been completed during scheduled breaks when students are out of school

Nutrition staff

Meal creation, packaging and delivery for children, ensuring that all school nutrition programs meet CDC guidelines around minimizing large crowds and sanitization processes

Paraprofessionals

Professional development, materials development, or organization:

- **Professional development:** Online professional development resources or other professional development resources that can be completed remotely and without direct instruction
- **Materials:** Photocopies; laminating, or other support for developing instructional materials
- **Organization:** Filing, organization of library books or materials, long-term projects

OFF-SITE EMPLOYEES

Responsibilities for off-site employees will vary as determined locally by the school system. Teachers and administrators will most likely be focused on providing high quality instruction or on continuing professional learning through online formats. The template below provides guidance on managing employees' work. The [Continuous Education: Guidance and Tools](#) document from guidance around implementing high quality instruction.

TEMPLATE FOR MANAGING ONGOING EMPLOYEE WORK

On-site employees should follow regular hours in accordance with their employment contract. For off-site employees, implementing clear protocols around communication, as well as daily and weekly expectations is vital. Below is a template to assist in communicating schedules and procedures.

TEMPLATE FOR COMMUNICATING WORK EXPECTATIONS

Employee Title:

Reporting Location (select one):

Regular worksite (insert address):

Alternate worksite (insert address):

Schedule: The workday will begin at: _____ and conclude at _____ .
(start time) (end time)

Check-ins and Communication:

The following includes with whom to check in and at what frequency.

Expected Duties:

The following is a list of tasks to complete during your time onsite.

Expectations:

The following includes information on what it looks like to successfully complete your duties.

Resources to Complete your Tasks:

Questions? If you have any questions, contact _____
(name and contact information)

RESOURCES FOR WORKING REMOTELY

TIPS

1. [15 Questions about Remote Work, Answered](#)
2. [COVID-19 has my team working remotely: A Guide for Leaders](#)
3. [Leading Remote Workers: The Coronavirus' Impact On Effective Management](#)

TOOLS

1. [Microsoft, Google, and Zoom are trying to keep up with demand for their now free work-from-home software](#)
2. [Microsoft Teams](#)
3. [Google teamwork tools for online collaboration](#)

NEXT STEPS FOLLOWING SCHOOL CLOSURES

1. Put into place plans to hire employees virtually. This [guide](#) includes tips on how to do so.
2. Once school facilities reopen, meet to debrief the event and the school system's response. Document areas of strength and areas that could be improved. Use this information to update the school system's emergency response plan.