

COVID-19 Response Efforts
Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE)
March 14, 2020

Pennsylvania's top priority is keeping students and school communities safe. On March 13, Governor Tom Wolf announced all public schools in Pennsylvania will be closed for the next two weeks.

The spread of the Coronavirus has required everyone to work within rapidly changing circumstances. We are incredibly proud of the education leaders who've been navigating this extraordinary situation for weeks – the work that has been done helped inform the decision that was made by Governor Tom Wolf today.

The following will help provide greater clarity specific to today's announcements.

1. What schools are closed?

Statewide:

- All public K-12 schools, including brick and mortar and cyber charter schools, career and technical centers (CTCs), and intermediate units (IUs)
- Childcare centers operating within any of the above schools
- All universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education
- All other schools (including private, parochial, and institutions of higher education) should be consulted directly for the most current closure information

Within counties under aggressive social distancing guidelines:

- All schools – including private, parochial, and institutions of higher education – are required to close.

2. What staff may schools deem essential?

- These decisions should be made locally, in the context of school and community needs.
- Examples of essential responsibilities may include, but are not limited to, school administration, food preparation and distribution, information technology, and continuity of operations (e.g., payroll, and building operations).

3. What are the consequences for districts/schools that don't meet the 180-day/hours (990/900/450) requirements?

- PDE will not penalize districts/schools that fail to meet the minimum 180-day/hours (990/900/450) requirements as a result of COVID-19 response efforts.
- PDE will provide a simplified form that districts/schools can use to report any shortfall in days or hours.

4. How will students access meals while schools are closed?

- Pennsylvania sought and received approval from the Federal government to allow schools the option to distribute meals at no cost while schools are closed.
- Districts/schools that want to act on this Federal approval must apply to PDE.
- PDE has begun and continues to expedite approvals.
- Districts/schools may utilize essential staff to ensure students have access to meals.
- PDE is partnering with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, other state agencies, the American Red Cross, and public and private partners to expand these efforts.