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Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**  
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

k12.wa.us

March 6, 2020

( ) Action Required  
(X) Informational

BULLETIN NO. 016-20 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

TO: Educational Service District Superintendents  
School District Superintendents  
School Principals  
School District Business Officers  
School Nurses

FROM: Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance on Online Learning, Waivers, and School Closures as of March 6, 2020

CONTACT: Martin Mueller, Assistant Superintendent, Student Engagement and Support  
360-725-6175, [martin.mueller@k12.wa.us](mailto:martin.mueller@k12.wa.us)

## BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

As of March 6, 2020, the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Washington state has been mostly limited to King and Snohomish counties. However, school districts statewide should be actively engaging in contingency planning now, should the need for closures arise.

Districts should be:

- Staying up to date with [current, accurate information from DOH](#).
- Sharing good hygiene practices with staff and students.
- Practicing routine cleaning and disinfecting procedures of commonly touched surfaces.
- Maintaining an open line of communication with their [Local Health Jurisdiction \(LHJ\) leadership](#), including ensuring the local health officer has current contact information for the superintendent.
- Communicating regularly with students, families, staff, and their communities.
- Intentionally and persistently combatting bias and stigma.
- Actively engaging in contingency planning for the possibility of extended school closures.

This bulletin includes information about school closure processes, online learning, and waivers for missed school days and instructional hours. Previous guidance can be found on [OSPI's Novel Coronavirus webpage](#).

## SCHOOL CLOSURE PROCESSES

Districts should understand the process the King and Snohomish county health departments are currently adhering to when determining whether schools should close. At this time, both county health departments have determined schools should not close until there is a student or staff member with a confirmed case of COVID-19. Districts in the rest of the state should be in contact now with their [local health jurisdictions](#) to understand the process they will take if and when the need arises.

Yesterday, [Public Health – Seattle & King County released clear guidance](#) explaining why they are not recommending schools close at this time.

## DISTANCE/ONLINE LEARNING

Many districts have requested additional guidance regarding the feasibility and legality of providing online learning in the event of an extended school closure. OSPI does not recommend closed schools transition to an online distance model unless the district can ensure each of the considerations below can be met.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring **all** students in the school or district will have equal access to the learning and required materials, including technology.
- Ensuring the online learning system can effectively support the district's different learning and teaching needs, including the ability to provide differentiated instruction as well as one-on-one support for students who need it. Regardless of *where* the learning is happening, supports identified on a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be provided if the district is operating.
- Ensuring the requirements of full-day kindergarten are met.
- Ensuring students can access the assessments associated with dual credit coursework.
- Providing training to staff, students, and parents and guardians on how the system works and what expectations the district has.
- The ability to track the attendance of both students and staff.
- Ensuring the systems in use are secure and will not allow for the release of protected student or staff information.
- The ability to provide school meals.

Taking a traditional school environment online is not a simple task – nor is it one that should be attempted without serious consideration of the practicality and risk.

## WAIVERS & MAKE-UP DAYS

As a reminder, OSPI expects districts to make every effort possible to make-up any days and instructional hours lost due to the COVID-19 outbreak, including extending the school year to June 19

if necessary. OSPI will file an emergency rule to allow the agency to waive the days and instructional hours that districts won't be able to make up after June 19. This rule will be in effect for the 2019–20 school year only. Districts should wait until they know the extent of their closures before submitting an application for a waiver. OSPI will provide more information about the submittal process within the next two months.

## OTHER REMINDERS

Throughout the acceleration of the COVID-19 outbreak in Washington state, OSPI has been working on the statewide response in collaboration with the state Department of Health (DOH), the Governor's Office, the Emergency Management Division of the Washington Military Department, and many local school districts. Our role in this is to help coordinate the flow of information from the state to districts, help districts solve problems, and provide guidance that will aid in districts' decision-making.

As this situation unfolds, please know that OSPI's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) includes provisions for ensuring ongoing apportionment payments and other school district supports in the event of emergency situations such as widespread infectious disease outbreak. School districts' COOPs and other contingency planning should include provisions to ensure payroll processes will continue in the event district operations are placed on hold.

## INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

For general questions regarding this bulletin, please contact Martin Mueller, Assistant Superintendent of Student Engagement and Support, at 360-725-6175 or email [martin.mueller@k12.wa.us](mailto:martin.mueller@k12.wa.us). The OSPI TTY number is 360-664-3631.

For specific questions about waivers, please contact T.J. Kelly, Chief Financial Officer, at 360-725-6301 or email [thomas.kelly@k12.wa.us](mailto:thomas.kelly@k12.wa.us).

For specific questions about distance/online learning, please contact Rhett Nelson, Director of Alternative Learning, at 360-725-4971 or [rhett.nelson@k12.wa.us](mailto:rhett.nelson@k12.wa.us)

For specific questions about civil rights compliance, please contact OSPI's office of Equity and Civil Rights at 360-725-6162 or [equity@k12.wa.us](mailto:equity@k12.wa.us). For relevant guidance regarding how schools can protect civil rights during an outbreak, see the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights [Fact Sheet](#) released during the 2014 Ebola outbreak.

This and previous guidance related to COVID-19 is available on [OSPI's Novel Coronavirus webpage](#).

Michaela W. Miller, Ed.D., NBCT  
Deputy Superintendent

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## Student Engagement and Support

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