



Texas Association of Community Schools

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TACS COVID Debrief Zoom Meeting with Sara Leon & Associates

Friday, October 30, 2020

11:00 AM

Note: After this week, these calls will be for paid TACS members ONLY. Our email invites/new call links will only be going to members. If you have found these calls helpful and of value to you, please consider joining us! If you're not sure of your membership status, please feel free to reach out to us any time.

October 29, 2020 Commissioner Call

There were 2,663 new student cases reported last week, and 1,567 new staff cases reported in DSHS. In total, there are 15,986 cumulative student cases out of 2,136, 847 on-campus students and 10,141 cumulative staff cases of an estimated 800, 078 staff count. The Commissioner spent a good amount of the call going over the new rapid testing pilot program, which is detailed in the public health card section below. Supplies will be given to districts and districts have flexibility on how they implement screening and testing; there are recommended testing approaches but TEA also recommends you reach out to local health authorities.

Changes to Public Health Card

Several new documents have been added to this section relating to the new K-12 COVID Testing Project. The goal of the project is to keep schools safe and open while helping schools prevent and/or respond to COVID. You can find the entire slide deck presentation on the program that the Commissioner reviewed yesterday [here](#). There is also a [10-page FAQ](#) that has been added as well as a [K-12 COVID Testing Project Playbook](#). The playbook is designed to be a resource to inform your school's decisions; it is not meant to be a detailed implementation plan or a strict set of requirements. In the [COVID Testing Project section](#) of the TEA site, you will find district examples of testing plans, discharge instructions, and sample cooperative agreements between an ISD and a 3rd party urgent care that can be used as a helpful resource. The commissioner reviewed the sensitivity (true positive rate - 97.1%) and the specificity (true negative rate – 98.5%). TEA will send you a biohazardous waste bag.

In this section, you will also find the application for LEAs to opt-in to the COVID rapid-testing project, via [Qualtrics](#) or a [PDF paper application](#).

Before submitting opt-in applications, school systems must:

- Meet and commit to TEA's eligibility requirements
- Consider the recommended testing approaches – screening and targeted responses.
- Review school system's test kit allocation
- Understand the critical roles and responsibilities of the test coordinator and test administer
- Implement the reporting and notification requirements (for example, testing is optional and provided at no charge to the students or staff)
- Review the resources and support materials available

Also available for download (under [Tools Templates and Resources](#)) are a spreadsheet showing the test allocation areas (based on October 16 trauma service area data) and the [test allocation methodology used](#). You will be able to look at the allocations by Trauma Service Area (TSA), ESC, County, District, or School. The counts for November are currently what is reflected.

If you scroll down below Tools, Templates, and Resources on the [Public Health page](#), you'll find more communication templates and a TDEM resource section with helpful links and guides.

Veronica Vijil of Fabens ISD is part of the pilot program and said the program has been helpful in identifying asymptomatic staff members who tested positive. Since the El Paso area is experiencing a big spike in cases right now, this program has been a great resource. Jessi Milam of San Vicente ISD said they chose to participate in the program because they are in a remote area and even one positive case could lead to a devastating spread for them. The rapid tests were found to be over 97% accurate, as one superintendent expressed concern about accuracy and false negatives.

If there is interest in reviewing more of the tools, templates, resources, or documents surrounding Rapid Testing, TACS will consider offering an additional Zoom meeting with representatives from the pilot schools, our attorneys, and TACS staff reviewing more information. Please contact Crystal via email at cdockery@tacsnet.org

Updates to Student Assessment Card

TEA has added a new document, [December 2020 STAAR Administration Guidance](#). This 2-page guidance pertains ONLY to the December 2020 STAAR EOC administration.

- Only the five STAAR EOC assessments required for graduation—Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History—are included in December administrations. These STAAR EOC assessments are administered at the end of the first semester (December), at the end of the second semester (spring), and in the summer (June), giving students three testing opportunities each year.
- To ensure equity for all students, a student must be present at a monitored testing session and must be supervised by a trained test administrator to participate in the Texas assessment program. The December 2020 administration has been extended to a two-week online testing window (December 8–18) to give districts more flexibility in scheduling assessments and more opportunity to test all eligible students. Remember to follow local and state guidance to ensure proper social distancing and handling of materials.

Changes to Instructional Continuity Card

The Commissioner briefly reviewed a short slide deck on [staffing solutions to consider for hybrid learning](#). He discussed the feedback they have received about the challenges involved with hybrid learning. The four models reviewed included: concurrent, split scheduling, split staffing, and virtual academy. There will be a longer webinar on this topic on November 10th at 9:00am. You can register [here](#).

TEA has posted the Asynchronous Plan Amendment Process webinar [here](#) (passcode: 1MxEk+q9) explaining the timeline, amendment resources and application requirements. Districts will have to complete an Intent to Amend form.

A couple questions have been added to the Asynchronous Plan FAQ.

Question 25: Does the board of trustees or governing board have to approve the Asynchronous Plan amendment before it is submitted to the Texas Education Agency?

All Asynchronous Plan amendments must be approved by the Board of Trustee or governing board unless the board of trustees or governing board has already given prior authority to the superintendent/executive director to develop and submit an Asynchronous Plan. For a consortium, the lead LEA's board of trustees must approve the Asynchronous Plan

amendment or have provided the superintendent prior authority to develop and submit the Asynchronous Plan. All members of the consortium should have the opportunity to view the amendment and approve it before the amendment is submitted to TEA.

Question 26: What is the best time to submit an Asynchronous Plan amendment?

The Asynchronous Plan Intent to Amend application survey is due by the close of business on December 4, 2020, to allow TEA time to review the application and to determine if an amendment is needed. All required Asynchronous Plan amendments are due by the close of business on December 18, 2020. Districts should make every effort to only submit ONE amendment.

Changes to Waivers, Finance, and Grants Card

There were a couple questions added to the [SY 20-21 Attendance & Enrollment FAQ](#).

New info under "On-Campus Attendance Requirements:"

Question 1: What constitutes on-campus instruction for purposes of generating funding?

The primary method of meeting the on-campus instruction requirement is by providing instruction in accordance with the Student Attendance Accounting Handbook (SAAH), without reliance on the COVID-19 based waivers for remote synchronous or asynchronous instruction methods. The SAAH provides considerable flexibility for schools in providing instruction, given, among other reasons, that a traditional school day constitutes more than the required minimum minutes of instruction necessary to generate full-day funding. It should be noted that the SAAH, for on-campus online courses not provided through the TXVSN, states that "[f]or the duration of [a] course, a certified teacher for the appropriate grade level must be present in the room in which the student is taking the course to answer questions and otherwise assist the student." For DOIs or other authorized innovative models that have adopted the appropriate exemptions, the certification requirement may not apply, though the school would still be subject to other teacher requirements.

Given the variances in staffing capacity at schools and the impact of COVID-19 on communities, an alternative method will satisfy the requirements for on-campus instruction for the 2020–2021 school year. The agency will treat on-campus instructional methods that would otherwise not generate instructional minutes for full- or half-day funding, due to a certified teacher not being present in the room with the students, as on-campus instruction if the students receive instructional support from staff who have the capacity and expertise to provide academic support specific to the student's grade level and content area. Some of the instruction may still be remotely delivered to on-campus students, but those students must also receive in-person instructional support for it to be considered on-campus attendance. It is important to note that this alternative method must otherwise satisfy the requirements of the SAAH. Students receiving instruction compliant with this method will be coded as on-campus learners in the LEA's Student Information System (SIS).

If students are on-campus and engaging in remote instruction with no in-person instructional support specific to their grade level and content areas, then that would be considered remote instruction and would need to follow all remote instruction requirements, including marking the students as RA-Present or RS-Present for funding purposes.

Question 5: Given the fact that we have over 150 of our employees' children on our campuses with their parents, does that meet the definition of "some on-campus instruction"?

It depends. Students who are on campus must receive instruction that satisfies one of the on-campus methods discussed in Question #1 within this section. An example that would not count for on-campus instruction would be a 3rd grade student of a high school teacher who remains with the high school teacher throughout the day; the teacher is providing

high school instruction, so the 3rd grader is not receiving on-campus instruction. An example that would count for on-campus instruction would be that same third 3rd grader present in the classroom with his or her 3rd grade teacher.

New info under "Enrollment:"

Question 5: Does an LEA have the right to refuse to accept a prospective out-of-district transfer student, including an out-of-district student seeking remote-only instruction?

Per TEC, Chapter 25, Subchapter B, school districts can choose to accept or deny out-of-district transfer students. As indicated in Question #3 in the Enrollment section of this FAQ, this choice applies to out-of-district students seeking instruction through any of the instructional methods offered during the 2020-2021 school year (i.e., on-campus, remote asynchronous, and remote synchronous). The transfer student selection process for school districts is subject to TEC, Section 25.032, which requires districts to accept or reject student transfers on an individual basis and prohibits LEAs from accepting or denying transfer requests for reasons related to the national origin of the student or the student's ancestral language.

Regardless of school system type, school systems are prohibited from making decisions regarding student transfers in a manner that constitutes illegal discrimination under state and federal law.

The Commissioner also discussed additional changes made to the Equitable Services and FIRST ratings under Waivers, Finance and Grants. Those were outlined for you in the summary that was sent last Friday by TACS.

Changes to Special Education card

They have added the [Supplemental Special Education Services \(SSES\)](#) page.

• What are Supplemental Special Education Services?

Supplemental Special Education Services (SSES) are online accounts made available to eligible parents of students with disabilities that have been impacted by COVID-19 school closures. To ensure additional educational progress, families can use the online accounts to obtain goods and services up to the dollar value in the account which will supplement and bolster services a child is already receiving in school.

• How many SSES accounts are available?

Up to 20,000 accounts will be available for families across Texas whose children have eligible disabilities.

• What is the value of an SSES account?

\$1,500 per eligible student for reimbursement of qualified services, which will be increased in the event there are fewer applicants than available accounts or proportionally reduced for non-low-income families in the event there are more applicants than available accounts.

• Who is eligible for an SSES account?

Families of students who are enrolled in a Texas public school this year (2020-21), were enrolled during the initial COVID-19 school closures (2019-20), and were identified as having a low incidence disability (e.g., an intellectual disability, a developmental disability, a visual impairment, hearing loss, a significant physical disability, multiple disabilities, or are on the autistic spectrum).

Around 59,000 Texas students fit the SSES eligibility category. If more families apply than there are available accounts, priority will be given to those with financial need (i.e. families whose children are eligible for a free/reduced price lunch).

If fewer families apply than there are available accounts, remaining funds will be added to existing parent accounts at the end of the 4-month application window.

Please make sure that your special education directors see this information.

Changes to Texas Home Learning

There are about 400 districts now using some components of Schoology.

New content has been added – Math

The [Stay Updated](#) link will allow you to receive a weekly newsletter.

Popular links on the homepage will allow you to access the [THL webinar library](#).

Hold Harmless Attestation

For those who asked, the ADA Hold Harmless Attestation statement can be found [here](#).

FAFSA Reminder

The [2020-21 FAFSA application](#) is now available – remember to remind your students to apply! MANY students are eligible for some form of financial aid for their higher education.

Upcoming Events

-TACS is planning a series of Legislative Calls where we will be joined by legislators to talk about education in the 87th session. Starting off our Friday, November 13th call at 11:00 AM, we will be joined by Chairman Dan Huberty! If you have any questions for him, please email them to a TACS staff member ahead of time.

-TACS Conference at Region 17 ESC in Lubbock: November 4, 2020

-Walsh Gallegos Legal Webinar: “The A’s of Leave: ADA, FMLA & FFCRA”

November 10, 2020 at 10:00-11:30 AM

Free for paid TACS member districts only. Email info@wabsa.com to get signed up.

-Germinator Mobile Sanitizing informational webinar: November 16th at 11:00 AM. Germinator is offering FREE consultations to interested districts; they are a great resource for fast, effective disinfection/sanitizing during COVID-19. An informational email and the registration link will be going out to members next week and will be in the next Communique.

-TACS Book Club

Our first meeting will be covering the book “Thrive Through the Five” by Jill Siler of Gunter ISD. We will meet over Zoom on January 12 at 9:00 AM. TACS members should have received an email this week to sign up; we will send out more reminders.

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Disclaimer: This information is accurate as of October 30, 2020. It is intended for informational and educational purposes only, and is not a substitute for legal advice.