



Texas Association of Community Schools

1011 San Jacinto Blvd., Ste. 204 Austin, TX 78701-1924512-440-8227 • FAX: 512-442-6705
• tacsnet.org

TACS Zoom Meeting Summary

Meeting with TACS and Sara Leon & Associates

Monday, March 30, 2020

11:00 AM

Instructional Materials Updates

EMAT is closing at noon on April 1, 2020. They will re-open for districts to order materials for the 2020-21 year on May 4th. Printing paper is an allowable allotment expense for the duration of the school closures, so this is a good time to order those materials and use your EMAT dollars.

Superintendent Call with the Commissioner Overview

As of the last superintendent call with TEA, there were 1,700 confirmed COVID-19 cases in cases in Texas with 24,000 people tested at that time. There were 23 deaths reported.

On TEA's and TACS's website, [sample letters from the agency](#) have been provided (in English and Spanish) for administrators to send out to their districts/student families to notify them about any staff/students and their families who are presumed to have COVID-19 and those who have tested positive. They are not to be identified by name, but rather in general terms ("A secondary student in our district..." etc.). There are 4 different letters. It's not a state mandate that districts send a letter out, but rather a helpful tool and starting point. It is also never too late to send them if a district has already had a case and would like to send a letter now regarding it. Rose Mary Neshyba reported that her district, Lake Worth ISD, used one of the sample letters this month and found it very useful as a starting point.

Many districts have already made decisions with their board to return to school later than April 5. Your ESC will contact you about what your re-open date will be.

The FitnessGram assessment has been waived.

The superintendent call also showed different guidelines for instructional continuity planning. [On their website](#) you can look at different phases they have set (from landscape analysis to providing monitoring and support). The agency also provides ideas for grading policy. They are using San Saba ISD's grading policy in their framework. They showcased Garland's at-home learning. There is an open source website, so anyone can look at it if they are wanting ideas for their own site. View it [here](#)

A new [To the Administrator Addressed was posted on teacher allotment incentive applications](#) Rural schools (which is defined as those having fewer than 5,000 students) are getting more funds. There are timelines and guidelines included.

Certification Questions

Crystal has been visiting with Tam Jones at TEA regarding the many questions TACS has received about teacher certifications. If you have clinical teachers or practicum students in your district, the government approved a waiver for them to fill out stating they completed their requirements. Clinical teachers need to have completed 35 days if they're in a full-day assignment or 70 days for a part-time assignment. They need to have demonstrated proficiency for the standards set forth by their assignment as well (the EPP determines this). Cooperating teachers for those students must sign off saying they believe the clinical teacher is ready for teaching.

Practicum students need to have completed 80 hours in their district, have demonstrated proficiency (as determined by the EPP) and receive approval by both their field and site supervisors.

Those that may not have finished their hours are allowed to complete in a non-traditional setting, like assisting in your online classroom or by performing planning or grading. Candidates need to document how they're completing hours.

We are waiting on answers for certain certification requirements and on the PEIMS questions for districts on 9-week schedules or whose fifth six weeks started prior to their spring break. Pearson isn't doing any testing for the Texas Ed Cert Exam Program until after April 16. If that date is altered, they will handle refunds the same way the others have been handled. Randy Brown of Alvord ISD reported that a teacher in his district was able to get registered for a test on April 20.

School Finance FAQ

Regarding documentation for instruction, TEA says if you are using online systems, it will be documenting the process for you. Check and make sure you are saving everything. If you're using another platform like paper materials, make sure teachers are documenting who is/isn't getting online and keep copies of lesson plans and the gradebook. Teachers should keep a representative sample of what students are doing and the dates the work is being done. A good guideline is to keep one per grade level, per subject, per day. If your district is audited, these documents will be helpful.

If districts start up school again but have a lot of kids who don't attend, they will need to have a plan in place for how they will continue to deliver learning to those students.

We received a question via chat asking for guidance on how to handle employees who are funded 100% through special education for an individual, nonverbal student. Their district co-op is handling the instruction through the teacher. The employee is a paraprofessional who serves more as a caregiver.

Both TACS and Hans from Sara Leon and Associates agreed that in the cases of folks paid 100% special education, don't use them for any service other than Sp Ed because the time and effort may not be waived. Keep this employee in positions related to special ed (can be clerical work, as long as it's still related to special ed) in order to stay in compliance). Possible examples - assist the diagnostician with ARD invitations, communications, filing, etc...

UIL

UIL will be returning on May 4th. New information is on our website.

Guidance for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Every school district should have appointed a staff member to be the homeless liaison to facilitate the identification, enrollment, and academic success for students experiencing homelessness. The liaison can contact TEA at disasterinfo@tea.texas.gov for guidance. However, this email account does not respond with specific responses; it will simply log your question as one to address for everyone, so you'll have to keep checking back on TEA's site to find the answer.

For more direct help, you can also contact Texas Education for Homeless Children and Youth (TEHCY) at homelesseducation@tea.texas.gov or call 800-446-3142.

Resources providing meals for homeless students:

-FoodPantries.org Simply enter student zip code and the site will show all pantries in service area.

-[Aunt Bertha organization](#) - info about food, free medical care, job training

For students needing internet access, AT&T, T Mobile and Verizon are still offering either free or reduced rates for internet connectivity. Suddenlink, Spectrum, Comcast and Cable One are offering 30 to 60 days of free service to families who are new customers.

Remember their unaccompanied youth status means they are highly mobile, so it will be challenging to keep up with them and their needs. View the full list of guidelines [here](#)

School Board FAQ

If districts have postponed their board elections to November, the current members whose terms are expiring will continue to serve and retain powers and duties until the next election is held. Officers will continue in that office. Districts should preserve all candidate filings and ballot orders that have already been taken. Postponing the election does NOT re-open the election. If candidate filings have already been closed, then they must remain so. Superintendents need board action to move an election, and action must be taken before the first day of early voting. Districts can hold this meeting virtually or by telephone. If a video or phone meeting requires a signature, an electronic signature is a legal option.

If an election was cancelled because there were no challenges, then there is no reason to move the election. Stick with the May 2nd election date.

Other Questions

Cody Mize of Mineola ISD asked if and when the Governor may extend school closures for the entire state. Wood County Superintendents are considering a tentative return to school date of May 4th. At this time, they have zero reported cases of COVID-19 in their County. Barry stated that checking for updates daily is the best bet currently, as policies are always changing. TACS hasn't heard of anything stating the governor will be extending school closures, but it is possible, especially in light of the latest announcements federally of wanting to extend the social distancing through April 30th.

Marc Keith of Tarkington ISD asked what Worker Comp cost or liability the district needs to be ready for, should they have a staff member that has been infected with COVID-19 while working in a district capacity. Michelle Alcalá of Sara Leon and Associates stated that the staff member will have to have direct evidence that they contracted the virus through the work they're doing. We will have to wait on additional guidance for this instance, but there would have to be a decision by a medical provider saying the employee definitely contracted virus from their work. This may not be covered by worker's comp as right now it would be very difficult to know where people have been and/or where the virus was contracted.

We invite you to continue to visit [our website for updates and information](#),

Tomorrow's agenda items are:

- School Finance FAQ
- TEA superintendent call notes for 3/30/20
- TEA, Governor, and USDE Updates

Please join us tomorrow at 11 am by clicking here:

<https://zoom.us/j/220619743>

Meeting ID: 220 619 743

One tap mobile

+13462487799,,220619743# US (Houston)

+16699009128,,220619743# US (San Jose)

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+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

+1 301 715 8592 US

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+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

+1 253 215 8782 US

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Barry Haenisch, Executive Director

806-570-7876

Dr. Crystal Dockery, Deputy Executive Director

806.679.9690

Melanie Zumm, External Affairs Coordinator

mzumm@tacsnet.org

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