



Texas Association of Community Schools

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TACS Zoom Meeting Summary

Meeting with TACS and Sara Leon & Associates

Friday, April 17, 2020

11:00 AM

Non-Duty Days

Sara Leon from Sara Leon & Associates covered some common questions about non-duty days. Some have wondered that if they have staff who are working during regular calendar days, can these staff members be asked to come in on non-duty days to make up for lost time? The answer is that technically you can ask, but there is some risk in doing so. You can't require a teacher to work more days than what was on the adopted calendar when they signed their contract.

If the employee happily agrees to work, then it's not an issue. However, if you're going to ask, consider paying for those days or maybe trade some calendar days. Some districts have adopted a resolution allowing them to make changes to their calendar, but that solution is a little riskier. The issue arises because employees accepted duties according to the adopted calendar. If asked to work extra days, they can argue that they didn't sign on to work on those extra days. If your board amends the calendar based on the disaster circumstances, the board may be able to use that as a defense.

Non-duty days are a separate issue than premium pay, and FEMA does not allow you to recover pay that you would ordinarily pay. If your district has a policy that allows for premium pay for extra days worked in the case of a disaster, you can ask staff to work extra days for premium pay and document that this is because of the disaster. In this instance, you CAN seek FEMA reimbursement.

Some schools are handling this differently. For example, if you are offering premium pay because bus drivers are being exposed to greater risk of infection, you can ask for reimbursement for the premium pay from FEMA. Furthermore, some districts are paying extra to compensate for the extra work associated from instructing remotely. This all depends on local policy.

FEMA guidelines can be found at <https://www.in.gov/dhs/files/reimburse.pdf>

Because she has gotten so many questions about COVID-related unemployment issues, Sara Leon & Associates will be offering a 30-minute training next Wednesday the 22nd at 2 pm. We will have a link on the summary next week for you to be able to register for the training.

Cybersecurity Webinar

Melanie attended the Cybersecurity Webinar held by TEA yesterday. This is different than the training that will be required for teachers and was more of a basic overview of some best practices for holding virtual gatherings for staff meetings and board meetings.

Zoom has gotten some bad press lately because of the new phenomenon of "zoom bombing," which is when a person who shouldn't have access to the meeting comes in and posts graphic or offensive content. There are ways to prevent this and Zoom has also modified the software to help us mitigate those issues.

Another issue was for participants dialing in with their phone to Zoom meetings. Previously those calls weren't encrypted, but now they are, so Zoom employees do NOT have access to your calls. If you are still worried due to sensitive content being shared in your meetings, you can require that attendees only use the Zoom app itself.

Some other good practices;

- change account passwords often
- do not make classrooms public
- do not make link public; send it directly to those you want to join
- require meeting passwords
- manage screen sharing options; lock so only the host can share screen
- use a “waiting room” to manage participants coming in. (you’ll want a cohost if you do this)
- limit who can join meeting as presenter
- disable file sharing
- mute participants upon entry
- don’t record meetings unless necessary (if recording, let attendees know)
- ensure users are using most updated version of meeting software

Stay mindful of district policies and FERPA guidelines. See [“FERPA and Virtual Learning”](#) from TEA. Call the Open Meetings Hotline at 512-478-6736 or email TXTrainingCert@dir.texas.gov for questions. This webinar will be posted to the TEA COVID page and Texas Gateway.

SBOE Updates

Small and mid-size schools were discussed by SBOE member Tom Maynard on item 2 which was presented for second reading and final adoption of TAC Chapter 126 and Chapter 130 - TEKS for Technology courses, CTE, Ag, Arts, STEM, and Energy. Mr. Maynard wanted to make sure that there would be flexibility with regard to certification for teachers to teach the course.

Much of yesterday was spent discussing the new African American studies set to begin this fall.

They spent time discussing TEKS for health, PE, science, and ELPS. There was public testimony given, but most of it focused on the Health TEKS and concerns over sex education. Health, PE and Science were not discussed as several of the committee meetings had to be cancelled due to COVID19.

Both Proclamation 2022 and the Perkins Reauthorization and State Plan were approved.

In today’s board meeting, Lufkin ISD’s band performed virtually. The board approved the African American Social Studies class with a few more modifications. The board also discussed liquidated damages against Origo, who had issues with materials being out of compliance since 2016. There was a great deal of discussion about the over \$10 million dollars they have received in the past 6 years and liquidated damages vs. punitive damages.

Changes on TEA Website

Staff/Educator Issues

ETS and Pearson are having issues providing tests for teacher certification because of remote testing challenges. If you or someone you’re working with is needing the PASL test, the deadline for assessment has been extended (no specific date given yet, but check periodically with ETS).

Pearson has suspended testing until April 30. Candidates should check their emails often to find out what date they should be planning to test.

Assessment

Because all districts and campuses will not be rated due to the declared state of disaster, ATAC and APAC will be working with TEA to determine the effect of this rating on accountability for the 2020-21 year. These committees will help the effect of lagging PEIMS data and how it will be applied in the 2020-21 accountability system. For the 2020-21 year, your district will pick up where you left off with your last rating, as if this year didn’t happen. This year’s accountability will simply be skipped and won’t affect your rating positively or negatively.

See the [Accountability FAQ](#) provided by TEA for a full run-down of these topics.

Waivers/Funding

For those wondering about their superintendent evaluation, the Commissioner said that the educator/principal/administrator waiver will also apply to superintendents and their evaluations. Superintendents and the school board can choose to not do an evaluation for the year.

On the [COVID-19 Related Waivers PDF](#) the agency has also added more situations that will not require TEA or LEA action to implement.

School Board Issues

The deadline for school boards to adopt goals has been extended to the first day of instruction for 2020-21. Goals are not required to be part of superintendent evaluations, but it is considered a best practice. It is recommended that a school board engage with a Lone Star Governance Coach to help with the process of setting the vision and values of the district and aligning these to the superintendent's evaluation. Once you've established goals, you can change and modify throughout the year to make everything work together.

More info can be found on the [School Board FAQ](#).

Special Education/Special Populations

Many districts are wondering how to offer occupational and physical therapy remotely. TEA acknowledges that this is difficult, but they have consulted several practitioners and have provided resources that your staff can use to provide these services that might be in a student's IEP. They also provide links to best practices.

LEAs must provide FAPE to Special Ed students, including students with dyslexia and those being served under Section 504. Not being face to face is not a reason to stop providing services. However, any service that can't be provided remotely should be documented so you know where to pick up when you return to school. Governor Abbott has waived any restrictions related to teletherapy for licensed dyslexia therapists, so it is okay to provide services to them remotely.

The state is providing a speech therapy platform with 10,000 seats available. The initial link sent out didn't work, but they will be sending a corrected link. Those who don't get one of the seats will be given a discounted rate through AmplioSpeech.

Changes to Instructional Continuity Planning Framework on TEA Website

Some information regarding Texas At Home learning and printing/shipping services has been added. TEA had a webinar on this issue and it will be posted to the TEA website. The paper packets and electronic packets they'll be making available are not mandated. If you don't want to use their materials, you don't have to. You can also just use pieces of it. They are 8-weeks of curriculum.

Both the paper packets and online packets are available in English and Spanish. They can be shipped directly to students, but there is a cost for printing and mailing. If you need help with printing, some of the ESCs are providing this service and they are listed on the TEA website. If you want to use e-packet, there is no cost for that.

They have also posted a "Summer Programming Survey" so TEA can make decisions about summer school. It will be posted for a week, so leave your feedback.

2020-21 Grants

The deadline is extended to April 27. There are 5 grants available:

1. Lone Star STEM Cycle 2
2. Public Charter School Start-Up Program
3. CTE Perkins Reserve Grant

4. Additional Days Planning and Execution
5. P-TECH Success Grant

Other

Next week, TEA will be spending time talking about tracking student progress. The agency realizes there may be some academic regression after this period, so they'll be rolling out some diagnostic tools educators can use to measure the extent of that regression. These tools will be coming out next week.

Just a reminder that grading is always a local decision during this time.

If you are worried you won't meet your instructional minutes for this year, contact TEA. They'll help you navigate the best solution for your district. Contact waivers@tea.texas.gov or 512-463-9630 for help.

Outstanding Questions to TEA

The following are the questions we have asked TEA on behalf of our members, to which we haven't received a response yet:

- Since certification tests are not happening right now, some districts are concerned that teachers who are currently employed will be unable to complete requirements for them to continue employment. With the 10 days before the end of instruction rules, will any of the certification requirements be waived - for example, will TEA give teachers another year to complete certification requirements?
- Is TEA working on any type of checklist for re-entry for students and/or teachers?
- For the PEIMS information addressed in question 1 of the FAQ for Finance, could you give some examples for the following scenarios: 9-week reporting, and situations where the 5th six weeks started prior to spring break.
- ~~Will the waiver for CPR for seniors be placed on the waiver page?~~ **Waivers will be up soon!**
- In looking at vetting the instructional resources (as addressed in the latest information on Information Technology as of 4/9/2020), we wondered if the resources on TEA's pages have been vetted?

If you have heard from TEA on any of these issues and have a response in writing, please forward it to Barry or Crystal so we may share the resource with our other members.

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

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Disclaimer: This information is accurate as of April 15, 2020. It is intended for informational and educational purposes only, and is not a substitute for legal advice.