



Texas Association of Community Schools

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TACS Zoom Meeting Summary

Meeting with TACS and Sara Leon & Associates

Monday, April 6, 2020

11:00 AM

Superintendent Call with TEA Overview

The Commissioner is reducing calls with Superintendents to just Tuesdays and Thursdays at 3 pm. After a vote, TACS has decided to move our daily Zoom calls to only Monday/Wednesday/Friday at 11:00 AM. We will continue to give a summary of the Superintendent Calls, address new postings on the COVID-19 sites on TEA and USDE, and try to support each of you in any way possible.

As of Monday morning, there have been 70,938 people tested for COVID, with 6,812 current cases and 127 fatalities.

The Commissioner recommended districts visit the resources offered through the Secretary of State's website if they have questions on postponing elections; TASB is working on more guidance. TASB also has a [COVID resources page](#) that is helpful. Their website has a [link to fill out teacher appraisal waiver](#), and even more helpful is their list of [pros and cons for educator appraisal waivers](#). This would be a good resource to review before you decide to submit a waiver.

With regards to accountability, keep in mind that a rating of "Not Rated" does not break the chain of consecutive years of unacceptable ratings for purposes of accountability intervention and sanctions.

Request for public assistance through FEMA is due April 24. Make sure you are keeping good records and keeping receipts for all additional costs you've incurred as a district.

TEA will have a webinar at 2:00 PM today covering Special Education and documentation; they will publish it online afterwards. We recommend having your special ed staff participate if possible.

By Tuesday, TEA will have their at-home learning link live.

When looking at the documents in the Instructional Continuity Planning Phases on TEA's website, you will see they have now been color-coded. A good way to remember each of the document types is to the of the acronym "IT REAL:"

Information (green)

Template (orange)

Resources (purple)

Example (red)

Articles (blue)

Lists (burgundy)

One of the questions asked during the call was if TEA had started thinking about calendars for the 2020-2021 school year since this is the time that most districts are adopting them. The commissioner said that guidance for next year's calendar planning is coming soon.

Updates to FAQ Documents

Barry Haenisch covered updates to the FAQ documents posted on TEA's site.

[School Board FAQ:](#)

Electronic signatures for school board minutes are valid. TEA's advice is to consult your attorney for appropriate electronic format to use in signing documents.

Hans Graff from Sara Leon and Associates said that state law dictates that the district's board shall adopt policy specifying what type of e-signature is required. There's not any specific format required. Adobe has an electronic signature feature, but boards can use something else as long as they have a local policy adopting whatever style of e-signature they'll use. Specifically, CQ(Legal) is the policy: "A digital signature may be used to authenticate a written electronic communication sent to a district if it complies with rules adopted by the board. Before adopting the rules, the board shall consider the rules adopted by the Department of Information Resources (DIR) and, to the extent possible and practicable, make the board's rules consistent with DIR rules. Gov't Code 2054.060; 1 TAC 203." A board trustee can also give someone else, such as the board secretary, the authority to sign for them.

Sara Leon added that there's also a provision in state law that allows you to use e-signatures as identical to their original. You can give permission to the superintendent to approve trustee signatures.

Even if you are having board meetings virtually, you still need to post the meeting link and agenda for the public to allow for public comment.

[Discipline FAQ: DAEPs](#)

No waivers of the requirements of TEC and TAC regarding DAEP students are in effect at this time, but these issues are currently addressed in a new FAQ for discipline. Title 19, Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Section 103.1201, provides the standards for the operation of school district DAEPs. If you're allowing DAEP students to be involved in distance learning, it is a local decision whether you want to return the student to DAEP or allow them to return to the classroom when school resume by counting their time in the alternative delivery instruction. There is nothing in law/regulation that prohibits a district from reducing DAEP placement time and allowing a student to re-enroll at his/her home campus.

If a student displays inappropriate behavior during online instruction and your district wants to place them into a DAEP, the same due process rights are maintained. You may place them into a DAEP how you normally would. The campus behavior coordinator or other appropriate administrator shall schedule a conference among the campus behavior coordinator or other appropriate administrator, a parent or guardian of the student, the teacher removing the student from class, if any, and the student. At the conference, the student is entitled to written or oral notice of the reasons for the removal, an explanation of the basis for the removal, and an opportunity to respond to the reasons for the removal. These requirements could be met online using Zoom, Skype, etc.

[Informational Technology Guidance FAQ:](#)

The Department of Information Resources (DIR) is still requiring all staff to be trained in Security Awareness and reported on by June 14 per House Bill 3834 requirements. If more than 20% of your staff is involved in remote instruction, they must participate in a training session (there are several vendors providing this training). If school closures and online instruction continue longer, the training will have to be repeated each year. Districts can find a list of vendors on DIR.texas.gov under "Texas Cybersecurity Training Certification Requirements" and then clicking "Certified Training Programs (.docx)". This document is also linked in the summary email you received.

Just a note, the two education service center programs we cited in our call are NOT eligible to be used for this training, because they are not offering the cybersecurity awareness program. However, there are many pages of programs that you CAN use found in that document!

[School Safety FAQ:](#)

Districts CAN use the School Safety Allotment in SB 11 to defray expenses associated with COVID-19 as long as it pertains to improving school safety and security through actions that include securing school facilities, providing

security for the district, providing safety and security-related training and planning, and/or providing programs related to suicide prevention and cyber-bullying. Document any expenditures, because if you are reimbursed through a federal or state program, you can't use the allotment for that.

[Mental/Behavioral Health Grief & Trauma Informed Virtual Support and Statewide Resources List](#)

As Texas schools continue to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak, it is important for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to recognize students and families may be struggling with stress, anxiety, grief, and loss. TEA has provided a list of statewide resources that can help schools connect families with specific resources as needs are identified. The list can be found at the link above.

Updates to Instructional Continuity Framework Resources

Texas Gateway is now listed under [Phase 1 resources](#) in the Instructional Continuity Planning section (1.3). There is a TEKS guide available for staff as well as Texas lesson study. Cyber security tips and tools with a webinar has also been added.

Section 1.2 now has technology partner resources. There are several free resources listed such as Book Creator, BrainPop (K-12), Cognition (math, free for grades 1-9), Flocabulary, Writable, and Peppy Pals (social and emotional skills, pre-K through 3rd). Even more educational tools are offered at reduced rates.

[Phase 2:](#) Section 2.2 has added new grading guidelines with examples of what how other districts are approaching grading. A few examples:

- Bryan ISD is spelling out for parents how many grades will be given each 6 weeks, and will be taking the higher averages of the 4th and 5th 6-week period.
- Ft Worth ISD is doing pass/fail grading and has new grading guidelines posted. The first semester grades determined the Valedictorian and Salutatoria, as well as Latin Honors for Seniors.
- Laredo ISD has three different grading scenarios: one for students who did paper packets, one those who did distance learning, and one for those who chose a blended model. They cover how teachers are supporting students and how parents can support their kids as it relates to grading policy.
- Northside ISD's elementary students will do 1-2 tasks each week in each subject area, and instead of grades, teachers will provide "rich, timely feedback." Middle schoolers are not being graded on distance learning yet to give them time to adjust (grading for them starts April 20), and high school students are being graded now. Grading will reflect mastery of these skills.
- Lago Visto is on a 9-week schedule, so that's a good one to look at if your district is the same. They are doing 3 types of grading: Incomplete, Pass, and Fail. Class rank is based on the third 9 weeks. They also posted their retention and promotion standards.

[Phase 3:](#) TEA has added an Excel matrix with districts sharing what they are doing in regards to several issues, including how many hours a day the teachers are working at a minimum; if they require PLCs; how they're handling special ed; and if they are doing video conferences with entire classes, among other things. Not many districts have filled out the spreadsheet yet – perhaps 3 ISD's and several charters were posted at the time I reviewed the document. Alamo Heights was one that had it all completed if you are reviewing resources.

They've also added an [Instruction Partners document](#), a resource for implementing culture that is split into 4 phases. It's a very helpful tool for a multitude of areas. The area focused on today including Phase I and looking at basic needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs and ensuring that students, families, and staff are taking care of themselves are the topics covered in Phase I of this document.

[Phase 4:](#) Houston ISD has shared their website: "[HISD at HOME](#) (Home-based Ongoing Mobile Education). Their site provides contact information for parents on every page. HISD at Home allows families with tech questions [to book or schedule on-site help](#) and a staff member will call and help them.

PSJA (Pharr-San Juan – Alamo) ISD has similarly implemented a Help Desk form on their site. It's a google type form and a great idea to have a place where parents can request help.

More TEA Updates

CCMR data will be reported on TEA reports such as TAPR. TEA is waiting on USDE for guidance on how lagging indicators will impact next year's accountability.

Crystal covered School Finance Questions #5 and #6:

Question 5:

Q: "If my school is closed for an extended period of time, how will Foundation School Program ADA funding be calculated?"

A: If schools stay closed and don't re-open for the rest of the year, they will look at ADA through the end of the fourth 6 weeks, and on PEIMS the fifth 6 weeks will go through year end.

If schools re-open, then the sixth 6-weeks will be used for funding purposes

Question 6:

Q: If my school is allowed to open, but large numbers of students remain at home, will my funding be reduced?

A: No. If this happens you can seek low attendance waivers. If it is expected for extended period of time, as long as you provide support for those students to receive instruction at home, you can code those students in your student information system as Absent – COVID 19 (a choice should have been added by all SIS vendors in the state for this), subject to your commitment to provide instructional support for those students while at home. (You will file this attestation document for that purpose). When calculating ADA, these students will be considered present for the purposes of state funding.

Other Updates/Resources

On TASA's website, districts can share responses of how they plan to address graduating seniors, prom, grading etc. TASA is also asking you to share what your plans are for registration and enrollment for 20/21 year.

USDE posted a correspondence on [April 3 covering states' flexibility with federal funding](#). Districts don't need to worry about carryover because the CARES Act is waiving carryover limits. If your district has utilized carryover in the past 3 years, it'll still be waived. Also, they've added [revisions to how to clean and disinfect building](#). Pass this resource on to your maintenance staff.

Keep in mind that the census deadline is now August 14. At this time, only 28.4% of Texans have completed the census. Let's help the percentages go up and make sure our schools get the funding they need and deserve! Complete now at my2020census.gov.

Public Health Resources

Please review [the overview](#) (found at bottom of page) to know what is to happen this coming week. They are very specific about calls, texts, social media posts and email blasts.

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 3, 2020. It is intended for informational and educational purposes only, and is not a substitute for legal advice.