



Texas Association of Community Schools

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TACS Zoom Meeting Summary
Meeting with TACS and Sara Leon & Associates
Wednesday, May 13, 2020
11:00 AM

Commissioner's Call 5/12/20

There are now COVID cases in 219 of Texas's 254 counties. 525,697 people have been tested, with 39,000 positive cases and 1100 fatalities.

They've added some updates to the Teacher Certification FAQ, but most of it deals with EPP programs.

The Commissioner talked about the COVID survey that ended on Friday. Results from that survey will be coming out next week around Tuesday.

Spanish Special Ed FAQ has been added to the TEA site.

Calendars were again the big topic of discussion, particularly the consideration of intersessional calendars for 2020-21.

Morath said that "Prudence demands that we make some kind of adjustment to our calendar" based on the changes to this year's schedule and students not being able to get rigor in their educational programs. He believes that modifying calendars in some way is best for students; it's adults who struggle with the change.

He again referenced the Socorro ISD calendar, which has been on a year round schedule for the last 10-20 years. Clint ISD transitioned this year to an intersessional calendar. Assistant Superintendent Jim Littlejohn did a presentation about the district's calendar and their remote learning during COVID-19. The PowerPoint is on the Instructional Continuity page. Clint ISD has 11,000 students, about 80% of which are economically disadvantaged and 63% are identified as at-risk. They have longer breaks in October, December, and March. They became a District of Innovation (DOI) in July 2017. They have what they call a "balanced calendar" with a 9-week schedule and intersessions. The intersessions are just for a subset of student and teachers - not everyone attends during these periods. Teachers remain on a 187-day contract, but have stipends if they work during an intersession. For next year, they are going to take advantage of ADSY (additional day school year) money and will have a 180-day calendar for elementary schools with an additional 30 days during the summer. Their calendar is on the TEA COVID page, too.

If you currently have some type of modified calendar, year round calendar or intersession calendar, we'd love to share it with our members. Please send it our way to mzumm@tacsnet.org, as we are compiling a list on our website.

Someone asked if school boards still have a say in their calendar, and Morath said yes, local school boards DO determine what your calendar looks like and this model is not a requirement.

They've added several new tools in the [2020-21 calendar workbook](#) under "School Calendar Resources."

When they moved into questions from the field, Crystal and "about 80" other attendees asked what funding is going to look like for school districts who do a blended/hybrid learning model next year. The Commissioner said he will get back to us but that TEA will adjust to ensure distance learning is covered with some type of funding in the fall. By next week, we should know more of what that looks like.

Morath talked about depending on how many districts go with an intersession or year-round schedule, UIL may need to adjust schedules. It will be the same with STAAR testing. Barry added that schools already have UIL games during holiday breaks, so some of that scheduling may or may not change based on calendars.

Many people asked if they can put all flex days at the end of the school year and the Commissioner said yes, he doesn't see why not, but he believes kids will probably need more instructional time.

Changes to TEA Website

Under the general support card, all that was added was a charter school FAQ, which doesn't pertain to our member districts.

Instructional Continuity Planning

They have added [intersessional calendar options](#). It is a one-page chart that compares a traditional calendar vs. an intersessional calendar without ADSY funds vs. an intersessional calendar WITH ADSY funds.

If you are using ADSY, you'll need 75,600 minutes, 180 days on campus, and up to 30 ADSY days. You are only funded for half of the day for additional days, and calendars must be board approved. If the calendars are different across campuses, they all need to be approved.

[This page](#) has included an example intersessional calendar with a reference page with all holidays for next year.

You'll also see the PowerPoint about ILEARN (Instructional Learning Environment Audio Resource Network), which is Clint ISD's remote learning program. This program sees classrooms using different recording methods and provides resources for teachers like microphones and recording software/devices.

[Additional Days School Year FAQ](#) Added

Question 1 says that participating campuses must meet both 180 days and 75,600 minutes to be eligible for ADSY.

Question 2 says that everyone is eligible for ADSY funding if they meet the above.

Question 3-6 all deal with this same information.

Under the *Calendar Design* section, it clarifies that 2 hours is considered the minimum for a half day of instruction (question 2).

Question 3 says that Staff development waivers do not count towards the 180 instructional day requirement.

Question 4 says yes, Saturdays are eligible as long as they're instructional days.

Question 5 says ADSY formula funding is available starting September 1, 2020.

Under the *Funding/ADA* section, Question 1 gives you the formula for how to estimate funding for your district.

Question 2 says that half day funding from HB 3 for ADSY can be combined with other funding sources, both state and federal; however, all requirements tied to other funding sources still apply.

Question 3 clarifies that district charter partnership funds cannot be combined with ASDY funds.

Lastly, Question 4 in this section says that low ADA in the summer will NOT affect overall ADA for the school year.

In the *Program Design and Implementation* section of the guidance, TEA says in Questions 1-3 that this design is meant to be flexible based on what works best for your district. You can use this model at one campus or all campuses. Students can even attend a different campus from the one in which they are enrolled for the optional additional days.

Question 5 says that you need separate board-approved calendars for ASDY campuses if some are going less than the 180 days.

Question 6 says if an LEA extends its school year, you cannot move the dates STAAR testing or the school start date (unless you are a DOI, then you can move the school start date).

Question 7 covers that yes, you still have to follow the student-teacher ratio for summer programs

Question 8 dictates that you must follow the teacher minimum salary schedule as well. Contact attorneys for clarification if you are offering extra pay.

Question 9 says that since additional days attendance is non-compulsory for students, the additional days do not qualify as grading periods.

Question 10 clarifies that the HB 3 incentive program for providing additional days in the school year will not affect the distinction designation regarding attendance.

Question 11 says there will be no national school lunch program for those extra 30 days, but a district can apply for the Child and Adult Food Care Program (CAFDC) for the summer.

Academics Card Updates

The [Grading FAQ](#) has new questions added.

Question 13 clarifies that yes, you should have gotten board approval for your grading policy unless your school board designated the superintendent as someone who can make these changes.

Question 14 says to use your best information to make a decision about student retention.

Question 15 deals with progress report signatures and returning information. Parents do not have to physically sign progress reports; an e-signature or email/digital affirmation that they received the information will suffice if the student requires additional written notice due to unsatisfactory work.

Question 16 refers you to the [Attendance and Enrollment FAQ](#) for dates on the 5th and 6th six-week period dates.

Question 17 says that while districts CAN grade student's work for attendance purposes, it is not the only documentation that can be used.

Question 18 says for high school students, districts are required to report only completion data. Consequently, there should not be a need for districts to alter their grading practices for the 6th six weeks grading period because of PEIMS reporting.

Question 19 gives you the new "2020 Waived" code that will be added to the STAAR performance level code table (TC31) in the Texas Records Exchange (TREx) system for students for whom the STAAR assessment requirement has been waived.

Question 20 says that a school district must provide at least one window to test between January 1 and March 31, one window to test between April 1 and June 30, one window to test between July 1 and September 30, and one window to test between October 1 and December 31 annually. These requirements remain in place. For the April 1-June 30 window, districts may want to plan to offer credit by exam (CBE) at the end of the window to allow sufficient time to determine what options they will be able to make available. TTU and UT-Austin High School are offering online proctoring if you'd like to look into their services.

Texas Educator Card

As stated above, the changes are [mostly EPP updates](#).

One exception deals with credential reviews for out-of-state certified teachers. The guidance says that if you're hiring an out of state teacher, they still have to go through credentialing process and review, and recommends you get that done promptly so you can get them on the one-year contract.

Questions from Chat

We had some good questions come up in our Zoom Chat Box.

It was asked that if only some of the kids come in intersessions, COVID closure wouldn't be covered. So does this schedule allow anyone to plan for these days "off"? Crystal said that if you have to close, it works almost like bad weather day. For example, if you had to close for a week in September, you might only have one week for intersession in October rather than the two.

There was also a question on the calendar and the 180 days vs. minutes. Yes, it is hard to determine minutes vs. days when TEA says you need 180 days minimum, but these only apply to your pre-K to 5 program and ASDY. Otherwise, assume you will need the usual 75,600 minutes.

In terms of what we are hearing from the Governor's office regarding mandatory start date because of COVID-19, not much yet! Crystal believes it will be hard for the Commissioner to make a blanket statement on not going back to school in the fall when some counties have few or no COVID cases. We'll probably see some more information coming out in the next week as more practitioners speak during the superintendents' calls about their plans for next year. Sara Leon says it's unlikely the Commissioner will waive the mandatory start date; you'd need to be a DOI for that. The concern that the Governor will not allow school to start until a set start date is valid, though.

Region 12 RAC Meeting Overview

Yesterday, Barry attended the Region 12 virtual RAC meeting. They spent most of meeting discussing calendars. One of the commissioner's representatives from TEA gave a summary. There was an interesting presentation from the superintendent in Coolidge ISD. Dr. Robert Lowry says they've been on a modified intersessional calendar for 12 years. Here's how it works for them: students return to school in late July and take a 2-week break in October. The first week is for remediation or acceleration. Just a few students usually attend this session, and they hire teachers at \$30 an hour to do a half day of teaching from 8 AM to noon. After that week, those students go into a full week break while the others continue on break. They take a week off in November for Thanksgiving, 2 weeks in December, and in March they do a 2-week spring break with the first week for remediation and acceleration (many more students attend this session since it deals with STAAR prep). They end school in late May and have a normal summer until they return in late July/early August. We'll be adding this schedule to our sample calendars list on our website when we receive it.

Other Announcements

Sara Leon recommends that superintendents develop a school safety plan or come up with a regional school safety plan with other school districts in your region. Contact your ESC Executive Director if you think this could benefit you. Region 15 ESC is beginning with this as an action step.

We've also received some questions about premium pay. Many districts have been saying they will end premium pay on the last school day on their calendar since the summer scheduling will be the same. Ending premium pay on June 1 has also been reported several times.

Several [To the Administrator Addressed correspondences](#) have come out this week. At that link, you will see guidance on high enrollment growth adjustments, the Equity Data Survey (which opened May 1 and closes July 31, complete this for federal funds), and crisis code reporting guidelines.

We gave some info on Operation Connectivity in our communique. This is a statewide initiative to deliver connectivity and device solutions for school districts, families, and students in Texas. The Task Force will gather critical information related to gaps in internet and device access for children. They will develop solutions, actionable playbooks, funding needs, source resources, and push for policies that connect more students to technology for at-home learning. The Task force will meet each month and working teams that support the Task Force will meet on a more regular basis.

TEA has some [items available for public comment](#). The proposed rules deal with technology, charter schools, and staff raises for ESC employees. ESC's work hard to hire the best and the brightest of practitioners. In order to do this, salaries need to be addressed based on the teacher's raises that were given this past year.

Lastly, Pearson is now offering teacher certification tests again. This is part of the reason that extensions weren't given to the teachers that are on a standard contract and haven't added things the district was desiring or requiring - for example, ELL certification.

Upcoming Trainings

Sara Leon and Associates' training on holding an election during the pandemic will be Thursday, May 14 at 2:00 PM.

Registration URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUqd-qgrzsjH901A7N2djg-LHwYYHdL3cU5>

TASB is offering several free webinars dealing with legal issues. First one is today at 2:00 PM and discusses ARD committees.

TASA/TASBO is providing a school finance webinar on Friday from 9-10 AM. See the TASA Today for more info.

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?
- Will there be any relaxations for STAAR for 20-21 based on the amount of time we will be spending catching students up?

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 May 13, 2020. It is intended for informational and educational purposes only, and is not a substitute for legal advice.