



Texas Association of Community Schools

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TACS Zoom Meeting Summary

Meeting with TACS and Sara Leon & Associates

Friday, May 22, 2020

11:00 AM

Commissioner's Call 5/21/20

There are 225 out of 254 counties in Texas with at least one case of COVID. About 770,000 total tests have been administered, with 51,323 positive cases reported and 1,400 fatalities.

There are two documents for closure guidance in the [Most Popular Guidance section of the TEA COVID site](#). The current guidance is in effect through next Friday and then starting June 1, the summer guidance is in effect.

The Commissioner did go into CARES Funding on his call and we will cover some of it below, but due to the wealth of information presented, we have decided to hold a separate webinar on this topic with Dr. Amanda Brownson from TASBO next Wednesday, May 27 at 1:00 PM. We will be sending out an invite to that event soon. The link to join the meeting on the day of the event is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83915992605>. Invite your business managers and CFOs!

The Commissioner said he will need schools' help in getting the info on the Pandemic EBT out to parents. You can see guidance on this nutrition program [here](#). Lone Star card holders will see the extra \$285 per child automatically placed on their cards, but others will need to apply for the benefits. Information on eligibility is found [here](#). P-EBT is for children 5-18 years old who received SNAP food benefits for the month of March 2020 and children up to 21 years old who are certified for free or reduced-price meals at school in Texas during the 2019-20 school year. This includes students that attend a Community Eligibility Provision campus or a Provision 2 campus and students certified for free or reduced-price meals. P-EBT is only intended for students who are in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program.

TEA has now posted a [toolkit with a letter template](#) you can use for initial contact. There is a communication schedule as well to use as a guide.

TEA COVID Website Updates

Academics Card

[Reading diagnostic instruments guidance](#) is now available. As you likely know, students in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and seventh grade are all required to do some sort of reading or literacy assessment.

For kindergarteners, the Commissioner has approved TX-KEA (CLI) and mCLASS Texas Edition as the alternative. A waiver of the requirement to use one of the two specified instruments will only be approved for one year and will not be waived in the 2021-2022 school year and beyond.

For first and second grade, a reading instrument on the list adopted by the commissioner or by a district-level committee must be used. These include mClass, Fastbridge earlyReading, CBMreading, and TPRI/Tejas Lee.

For seventh grade assessments, LEAs are required to use one of the reading diagnostic instruments adopted by the Commissioner. However, this will be waived for one year as well along with the kindergarten assessment, so you can use whatever you did last year.

Please remember, the assessments are not waived, the waiver is to allow you to continue the use of whatever instrument you used last year for the 2020-2021 school year ONLY.

Instructional Continuity Planning

[Calendar Guidance and FAQ](#) has been added. There is a chart comparing a traditional calendar, a COVID 19 response calendar, and an intercessional calendar with additional days. There is a helpful feature showing which plans will require additional funding, flexibility, operational changes, etc.

CARES Act Funding

Some decisions have been made regarding CARES Act funding; the Commissioner has reiterated that it's a very complicated issue. See the new [CARES Act guidance here](#). One main takeaway is to know that every district will be held harmless with federal funds. \$286 billion will be given to TEA for ESSER funding. Ninety percent will go directly to districts. They have posted your LEA entitlements [here](#). Keep in mind, these amounts are based on your Title I funding. Only LEAs who receive Title I, Part A funds in 2019-2020 are eligible for ESSER grants.

Another funding source is money sent through the Governor's office. They have set aside a percentage of funds to go to school districts. Their office used the info from the surveys sent out by TEA earlier this year; the results estimate that schools have spent \$392 million on COVID-related expenses.

Every district will receive the greater of either \$50,000 or \$250 per state comp ed student. However, this amount may change if the initial estimates were found to be inaccurate. FEMA Category B funds are another funding source.

The grant application for ESSER funds will be released June 1. Once you apply, within 10 days you'll receive a Notice of Grant Awarded (NOGA) and from that point on, you're authorized to release 20% of that funding. This notice won't be posted in eGrants or anywhere else, so hold on to this NOGA email. It will not look like a standard NOGA. You will be required to complete expenditure reports like other federal programs. Keep in mind that in spending this money, you'll have to do quarterly reporting. USDE is allowing pre-award costs for the ESSER funding back to March 13, 2020 and you can spend these funds until September 30, 2022. Question #18 on the guidance gives a list of allowable expenditures.

You will use fund code 266 and PIC code 99 can be used. Another good thing is there is no supplement vs. supplant provision for ESSER funding. Share this information with your business managers!

Transportation

You'll recall that initially the Commissioner said transportation would be held harmless, but now TEA is saying that the transportation allotment may be cut, but districts can use the money saved on gas and maintenance towards their transportation funds.

On another transportation note, a TAA was posted regarding a **statewide waiver for out-of-district transportation interlocal agreement requirements**. Read it [here](#).

The requirements of the 2020-2021 SY waiver are that the district:

- Has made a good faith effort to enter into an interlocal agreement with an outside district to provide for transporting of transfer students;
 - Documentary evidence of efforts made to enter into an interlocal agreement must be retained by the district and must have occurred within the six months immediately prior to applying for the waiver;
- Has a current, board adopted local policy that bars the district from screening the approval of transfer enrollees on the basis of academics, discipline, or attendance, regardless of any related exemption under a local District of Innovation plan or authority under statute;
- Certifies that it has a 2019 academic accountability rating of A, B, or C, along with an overall score of 70 or higher; and
- Certifies that it received a 2019 district overall rating that is equal to or higher than the district from which it would be transporting students.

The CARES funding and COVID expenditures FAQ was covered through page 7. We will cover the remainder of the document on Wednesday morning at 11 am and then our financial webinar at 1 pm with Dr. Amanda Brownson from TASBO will cover the remaining finance documents!

Upcoming Trainings

Sara Leon and Associates' training on ADA essentials during COVID will be next Thursday, May 28 at 2:00 PM.

Registration URL: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZclcOuurzwsH9f_Befq-WpaO6yjmyHnQ8Re

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 22, 2020. It is intended for informational and educational purposes only, and is not a substitute for legal advice.