



Texas Association of Community Schools

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TACS Zoom Meeting Summary
Meeting with TACS and Sara Leon & Associates
Wednesday, May 6, 2020
11:00 AM

May 5 Commissioner Call Recap

Much of the superintendents' call focused on Graduation 2020. There is a new document - [Graduation Ceremonies and End of Year Promotions](#) - that discusses the different types of graduations that will be allowed. Also see the [Guidance for 2020 Seniors](#) for other info. Sara Leon & Associates

There are 4 options for graduation this year:

Option 1: Completely virtual graduations. You are already approved to do these. One example would be a real-time virtual graduation with senior pictures with pre-recorded speeches and social media elements.

Option 2 is hybrid ceremonies, which can take place after May 5 only if certain measures are in place. The total number of individuals in close proximity should not exceed 5. Everyone must be screened with the questionnaire provided in the guidance. Hand sanitizer must be available and any areas with people must be properly cleaned and sanitized. There can be no rehearsals. See guidance for the rest of the requirements. As always, consult with your legal counsel and seek written approval from the local jurisdiction tasked with enforcement before solidifying your plans.

A hybrid ceremony may look like individual student filmed in a cap and gown walking across stage, with pre-recorded valedictorian and salutatorian speeches, all compiled into a video.

Option 3 is a vehicle graduation where students and families drive up to an area to grab their diploma and then hop back in the car to continue the graduation line. These are permitted after May 15, but screenings and other measures are required for this option, too. You'll need to limit the number of people in the cars and the school employees on-site. The people setting up and handling the diplomas should be wearing gloves and masks. See guidance for more info.

Option 4 is an in-person, outdoor ceremony, which is permitted after June 1 for every county (but this IS subject to change). You may be able to hold an in-person outdoor ceremony from May 15-31 if your county's case number is lower and you have the county-required attestation (See the ["Texans Helping Texans" Guidance from April 27](#)). You will need to cap the number of participants, perform screenings (you may even want to screen family members), and have plenty of hand sanitizer readily available. Masks and gloves are encouraged. You also can't release everybody at once and create crowded areas of people. You will also need to think through your restroom situation and how you will keep that sanitized. Use the largest outdoor facility available with maximum spacing between seats. Livestream the event to limit participants and allow high-risk individuals to watch from home.

One creative idea suggested is have a mask made with your school logo or colors for graduates.

You CANNOT have an in-person, indoor ceremony AT ALL.

Give the above linked guidance to your graduation coordinators so they are familiar with the proper protocols.

The commissioner also discussed a survey sent out to superintendents regarding costs for districts tied to COVID-19 by TEA and is due on Friday. It is lengthy, but they would really appreciate your feedback. It would be best to have representation from all sizes of districts and rural districts as well.

[Special Ed FAQ Updates](#)

Students cannot come back during this period to complete a Special Ed evaluation. That is not a reason approved by the agency as an allowable student entry.

In reference to how the governor's order affects LEA requirements, such as sending out notifications about cameras in special education classrooms, LEAs should consider the last day of school as indicated on their published 2019-2020 school year calendar as the last day of school.

[Student and Parents School Visits Guidance- Newly Added](#)

Effective May 5, students can come to campus to clean out their lockers, get their belongings, and return items. Schools need to screen students prior to them coming. Parents/family should only enter the building if they absolutely need to (such as having younger children). Otherwise, they should wait in the car. Have hand sanitizer readily available.

Make sure students keep a social distance of 6 feet from each other. Stagger which students come to pick up their supplies over several days. Crystal's idea is to maybe do it by last name (such as, students with a last name starting with A, B, and C come Monday; D-F come Tuesday, etc.) so that families only have to come once if they have kids in multiple grade levels. You should also have high-risk individuals come to campus on a day of minimal exposure when there won't be many people present.

If students has had a positive COVID test or thinks they had it, they have to be 72 hours post-recovery (no fever or medication), have improved symptoms, and be 7 days past when their symptoms first appeared. If someone has been exposed to the virus, he/she must wait 14 days before coming to campus. If they weren't officially diagnosed/exposed but believe they were, have them bring a doctor's note.

The guidance has a more extensive list of student health protocols. Be sure your custodial staff knows to clean bathrooms, doorknobs, lockers, etc. regularly during this time.

There is no UIL for the remainder of year.

Park access rules are similar to what's been covered: 5 or fewer individuals to a party, social distancing of 6 feet, and masks are encouraged.

Staff should be allowed to work remotely, but they can go to their classrooms if they need materials, to work from the classroom, or to clean out the room.

[Discipline FAQ](#)

Several new questions have been added.

Question 8 says if you were going to expel a student and the expulsion hearing was supposed to take place after spring break, you can do it virtually but you still need to give due process rights. TEC Section 37.008(a) says distance learning can count for DAEP purposes. If you're doing JJAEP, you need to contact the juvenile justice department.

Question 9 asks if schools also need to record OSS and ISS under attendance, and the answer is yes.

Question 10 asks if code table C166 will be updated to include a Disciplinary Length Difference Reason Code for COVID-19, and the website directs you to the [PEIMS FAQ](#) for guidance. Also see the PEIMS FAQ for questions regarding Disciplinary Length Difference Reason Code 03.

It will be a local decision regarding if students with outstanding (incomplete) MANDATORY discipline actions will be required to fulfill them (Question 12).

Question 13 says that an LEA may decide to suspend a DAEP assignment until everyone physically returns to school. Nothing prohibits an LEA from reducing DAEP placement time and allowing a student to reenroll at their home campus. An LEA may credit a DAEP student for participation via distance learning should an LEA meet the educational needs of the student and the other requirements of TEC Section 37.008(a).

Question 14 says that if a student completes his/her assigned time at a DAEP campus, they must return to their normal educational setting.

Special Populations

The [English Language Learner/TELPAS Guidance](#) has been updated with several new questions.

Question 15 says that if you were not able to complete testing, but have already collected writing samples, you can simply discard them since they won't be scored.

Question 16 lets you know that submitting writing samples to Pearson online is optional.

Question 17 says that if an LEA chooses to submit scoring information for TELPAS or TELPAS Alternate for a student, then the Years in US Schools field should also be completed.

Question 18 says that if you choose to submit TELPAS to Pearson, the scores will not be counted against you in terms of accountability.

Question 19 says that a student who is on schedule to complete graduation requirements in Spring 2020 but who has not yet met assessment requirements for graduation may be eligible to graduate as a result of an IGC determination regardless of the number of EOC exams the student needs to pass. Students are required to complete IGC requirements for each course in which the student did not pass an EOC assessment. [See IGC Guidance.](#)

Question 20 reports that nothing needs to be done for students who did not start a TELPAS test. For students that started a test but did not finish it, if the LEA does not want to receive partial scoring information for this test, then the test should be marked as completed, and "Do Not Report" should be selected. For test sessions where no students have started a test, nothing needs to be done with the test session. Call Pearson's support line at 800-627-0225 for more help.

Waivers, Finance and Grants

A document with [steps for submitting an ASVAB waiver](#) has been added.

[Instructions for submitting a missed school days waiver](#) has also been added, with examples so districts can determine what scenarios pertain to them.

Reporting and Data

[Crisis Code Recording Guidance](#) has been added, with 9 crisis codes to be used for your summer PEIMS submission. All codes center around engaged, unengaged, and non-contactable but with timelines attached (for instance, if they were engaged prior to home learning but are now non-contactable).

Barry added that this may be the most important thing your district is asked to do. In hearing from the chairman of the appropriations and school finance committees, it is believed that with federal money coming, the 2020-21 school year may be well-funded. You may not see a huge difference in your allotment, but in 2022-23 when we have another legislative session, lawmakers are going to be looking for funds and will be searching for places to cut. They could use your successes with virtual education against you by saying that schools can easily go virtual to save money, or proposing vouchers for vendors providing virtual school. If you are having issues with student engagement or contact, be honest and forthright in your reporting. Start talking to your legislators NOW talking about challenges you have faced and the advantages of face to face instruction.

[TSDS/PEIMS Guidance](#)

Only one question added here. Question 8 says that a crisis code for students impacted by COVID will need to be reported in the 2019-2020 PEIMS Summer submission - see the crisis code guidance above for the correct one.

Other

Lastly, just a few items to ponder. If you look at the White House plan on opening schools again, it says we should be on a downtrend for influenza-like and illnesses and COVID-like syndromic cases for 28 days before proceeding to Phase 2 for re-opening. To reach phase 3 where you're fully open, you'll need 42 consecutive days of downtrend.

In TASA Today, a document that was entitled "blueprint for going back to school" has a lot of helpful information on what states and districts need to be considering before reopening.

Upcoming Trainings

Sara Leon and Associates' training on special education considerations for returning students to school will be Thursday, May 7 at 2:00 PM.

Registration URL: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0kcuiqj8uGNZvh6XMf_R3YID8o79nYx-H

Their next training on conducting school elections during the pandemic will be on Thursday, May 14 at 2:00 PM.

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 6, 2020. It is intended for informational and educational purposes only, and is not a substitute for legal advice.