



Texas Association of Community Schools

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TACS Zoom Meeting Summary

Meeting with TACS and Sara Leon & Associates

Wednesday, July 13, 2020

10:00 AM

Superintendent's Forum Call

TACS and other organizations met via Zoom with Speaker Bonnen and Chairman Huberty this weekend. These were the three big issues that came up during the call:

1. Help on attendance accounting. Schools need some flexibility; right now there is a 3-week grace period being given. Many people were suggesting 12-weeks, some 18-weeks; TACS is on board with more flexibility for our schools.
2. Floor for average daily attendance.
3. Allow instructional design for learning to be given back to communities. Communities are differently impacted by COVID and there needs to be more local input.

One of TACS's other main concerns is staffing and what it will cost a district to run remote instruction. TEA has continued to talk about helping all districts recruit, retain, and support quality educators. However, there's an inequity between large and small schools. Small schools don't have much of an option when teachers don't want to come back; some of them have 15 or 20 teachers total. Furthermore, stretching teachers to teach multiple grade levels and subjects may mean they aren't certified in those areas. There is also a link to a TEA presentation with the 4 quadrants about staffing of who should come to work and who should stay home. You can find it [here](#) (slide 21).

We are in support of relaxing STAAR requirements, but right now we are focusing on the battle of getting school started before we move onto accountability. We need flexibility in instructional methods and making sure we don't burn out teachers. We also need flexibility in attendance.

Connectivity is another huge issue; Barry and Crystal have some calls this week regarding broadband access with people lobbying on this issue.

Jill Siler shared a [small schools consideration one-pager](#). We have an inherent system of inequity in our districts in asking them to provide remote and in-person learning. There is no choice for our teachers because they don't have the resources for stand-alone staff. See [this Google doc](#) for a brainstorm chart of all different options for in-person and remote learning; they each have pros and cons.

Benny Soileau talked about how a call he was on last week covered a document that outlined 5 problems districts are foreseeing, and recommendations for those problems. The issue that they're working on is getting those topics to the governor in conjunction with Bonnen and Huberty, in order to make progress. One of the big issues in Huffman ISD is asynchronous accountability in establishing attendance, and finding a model that works and that allows teachers to report mastery. If teachers can look at a body of work over a week or two weeks (instead of each day) and then report that through PEIMS, it would take a huge burden off them.

Tammy Boyette reported that there is a call on all the necessary PEIMS codes this afternoon. TACS is looking more into this. TASBO may have someone working on this issue and districts typically have representation on those calls. Crystal will talk to Amanda at TASBO to see what kind of work they are doing. TASBO did discuss PEIMS concerns in-depth on Saturday so it's likely they are talking about solutions. Nurses are concerned about attendance and sending kids home; one district reported they share a single nurse with four other districts.

Questions Asked:

Question: Is there a waiver for teachers to forego a duty-free lunch?

Answer: Not that we've seen; probably something that teacher groups are discussing though.

Another attendee added this to the chat: "Duty-Free Lunch (Texas Education Code §21.405) Unavoidable or unforeseen circumstances exist when, because of illness, epidemic, or natural or man-made disaster, the District is unable to find individuals to supervise students during lunch. Nothing in these provisions allows for walking children to the cafeteria or collecting them after lunch to count as part of the duty-free period. The teacher is entitled to 30-minutes duty-free without other duties."

Q: For teachers doing lunch duty (to take kids outside for open air, etc. If we ask our board to approve a stipend as a thank you; do you think that would be a good decision?

A: Probably a good idea, but there are always staff members who still may take issue.

Q: Is anyone concerned about the liability if or when a teacher contracts COVID-19? Could a district fall into that?

A: Sara Leon of Sara Leon and Associates said that unless we are aware that there is a strong likelihood of illness and a deliberate indifference to safety measures, you should not have liability concerns.

Q: Sara - when you say "deliberate indifference to safety measures" - does that include mandatory face coverings? My school community has no cases and my community is pretty strong anti-face covering. Do we need to think about that differently from a liability standpoint?

A (from Sara Leon): "I am thinking more along the lines of the meat packing plants, where they kept on going 'business as usual' in the face of obvious dangers. If you have folks refusing face coverings, I would consult with your local health authorities so you have some cover there. I'm personally not qualified to speak to the efficacy of various preventative measures, so I would rely on health authorities in your area."

Q: What is everyone thinking as far as allowing fans at games and events?

A (from Sara): Get input from local health officials.

Q: Several districts have announced they are going completely remote the first three weeks. Can we truly do that under the current guidelines from TEA? The Commissioner said that parents must be able to drop off a student any day that we are open for instruction.

A: The guidance from TEA online says that if there are parents who want their kids there 5 days a week, it has to be provided.

Q: Will we be allowed to require masks for students 9 and under while at school? What about on buses?

A: Requiring masks by age might be difficult since ages can vary between the grades, plus you could have half a third grade class wearing masks and half not if going off age alone. This rule might be easier to do by grade level.

Q: Does anyone have information about the FFCRA and the paid two weeks leave that is outside their days?

A: Sara Leon provided [this FAQ](#). Her firm also might do another training for TACS members on this.

Q: What about UIL and extracurricular participation for remote learners?

A: This is a local decision. We were told TASB is working on a resolution regarding the UIL question in terms of board resolutions. If you want to share what you're thinking extracurricular-wise, [here is a shared Google Doc](#) where you can leave input.

Q: I would LOVE to know how everyone is going to proctor tests for remote learners (impact on GPA - ensuring academic fidelity).

A: You can't require someone learning 100% remote to come in to a test; however, if there are certain classes that may require an in-person assessment (for instance, a skill like welding), you should let parents and the student know at registration that an in-person component will be required in order for them to pass.

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