

Frequently asked questions

Below are some common questions we have been receiving along with District responses.

Are BISD schools closed?

All BISD classes have been canceled, but campus and department offices are open with limited staff. We encourage you, should you need to contact the school, to call the front office for assistance.

How long will classes in BISD be canceled?

At this time, BISD has canceled all classes through April 3. We continue to monitor the situation closely and remain in communication with local health authorities. Any decision on future plans will be announced via our District website and social media channels.

Are students being marked absent during this closure?

No, students are not being marked absent during this time.

How will instruction be provided to students during this cancellation?

BISD is committed to providing high-quality distance learning opportunities and lessons for our students. Beginning March 23, District teachers will have available instructional materials, by core content and grade level, on our District website for use by students and parents. These resources can be found at <https://www.bisdbears.esc18.net/>.

More information will be provided soon.

What about our students with special needs?

There is specific guidance for meeting all student needs during this time of closure (Special Education, 504, etc.) and a plan for this will be forthcoming.

What if my child does not have access to the internet or to an electronic device?

The District is putting in place a protocol to address students who do not have internet access or electronic devices. While we are working through these protocols, teachers have created some instructional packets for these students.

How will my child's academic work be assessed and how will grades be assigned?

At this time, the District is working through the development of this plan. More information will be announced soon.

What is the status State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test?

On March 16, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott announced that he has waived the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) testing requirements for the 2019-2020 school year in response to the events surrounding COVID-19. He has also requested a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) for all testing requirements for this year.

What does this waiver mean for Balmorhea students?

STAAR 3-8, STAAR EOC and STAAR Alt 2 assessments will not be administered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for this school year.

Will Spring 2020 STAAR or STAAR Alt 2 need to be “made up” in the future?

Though Governor Abbott has waived the STAAR testing requirement for Texas students, the USDOE must also approve waiving federal testing requirements for this school year. We will provide information on the USDOE decision as it becomes available.

How will this affect classroom instruction for my child?

Balmorhea is developing instructional methods to ensure that students are learning and ready to succeed at the next grade level. We are also working on how to gather accurate diagnostic information on students in order to support their continued academic progress.

How will the STAAR waiver impact promotion requirements for Grades 5 and 8?

More information on this will be coming as released by the TEA.

How will the STAAR waiver impact graduation requirements?

TEA is working on guidance for grade-level promotion and other issues related to this assessment decision (e.g. graduating seniors this year and in future years).

Will Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) still be administered in Spring 2020?

TEA may extend the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) window for Spring 2020. We will update you as more information becomes available.

What is BISSD doing to address my child’s nutritional needs during the closure?

The BISSD Child Nutrition department has planned for the distribution of a breakfast and lunch at 2 designated locations around the District. The distribution will be through a drive-through pickup that takes place behind the school by the cafeteria and at the Catholic Church in Saragosa.

When will we know how long classes will be canceled?

We are monitoring the situation closely and will make another decision as soon as possible regarding whether or not we will remain closed and for how long.

What about extracurricular activities?

If we are not opening our buildings to offer academic services, we will not be hosting or supporting extracurriculars. While our schools are closed, our extracurricular activities will be canceled/postponed. We received UIL guidance last week that all UIL activities are canceled until the end of March. While we are closed, all facilities will remain closed to students.

General information about COVID-19

The coronavirus is thought to be spread via person-to-person contact through contaminated air droplets from coughing and sneezing by an infected person. As with controlling the spread of other viruses, we urge you to speak to your child about the following prevention measures:

- Wash your hands regularly, especially after using the restroom and before preparing or consuming food. Using soap and hot water, wash for about 20 seconds. Be sure to also wash your fingertips.
- Avoid coughing or sneezing into your hands or in the air. Always try to cough or sneeze into a tissue, and then throw the tissue away. If you don't have a tissue, cough/sneeze into your arm.
- As much as you can, avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.

We continue to monitor the situation regarding the novel coronavirus but we are emphasizing facts over fear in our planning.

If you feel that you may have been exposed to COVID-19 or have any concerns about it, we encourage you to contact your doctor or hospital immediately.