

ARCHIVE: COVID-19 Superintendent Call

April 15, 2020

The following are questions asked by directors of schools during this call and the answers provided by the department. For additional guidance and up-to-the-minute supports, please check the TDOE website for more information:

<https://www.tn.gov/education/health-and-safety/update-on-coronavirus.html>.

Staffing

- Question: Will the department provide guidance to districts on the State Board of Education's revised policies?
 - **RESPONSE:** The department is currently working with the State Board of Education (SBE) staff to produce a document that will include frequently asked questions both agencies have received related to the emergency rules adopted by the SBE on April 9. The SBE will be releasing the FAQ document in the coming days.
- Question: Will the department share guidance regarding coding for evaluations for teachers and administrators and how they should be coded?
 - **RESPONSE:** The department is drafting guidance documents that will provide further clarifications regarding the implementation of some of the emergency rules. There will be guidance documents on teacher evaluation and special education rules released very soon.
- Question: Will the past year of evaluation count for years of service and tenure? (Ex: If this past year was a staff member's 5th year, will they have to do another year in order to get a 4 or 5 LOE since that is a requirement for tenure?)
 - **RESPONSE:** The department is drafting a guidance document on teacher evaluation that will be released very soon that will explain how to close out teacher evaluation information in TNCompass for the year. In addition, the department will be providing a waiver form for directors to request waivers necessitated by COVID-19 school closures. This form will allow districts to submit waivers to the commissioner and the state board of education to approve. The waiver form will include options to waive laws related to teacher nonrenewal and tenure eligibility.
 - The waiver will allow teachers who have met all other requirements for tenure eligibility (including a 5 year probationary period) but have not acquired an official evaluation score during the 2019-2020 school year due to COVID-19 school closures to utilize the most recent two (2) years of available evaluation scores achieved during the probationary period to be deemed eligible for tenure. The 2019-2020 school year will count toward a teacher's five (5) probationary period.

- The waiver form would also include an option to waive the current law requiring school districts to notify teachers within five (5) business days following the last instructional day for the school year if a teacher's contract will not be renewed for the succeeding school year. The waiver would authorize a district requesting the waiver to notify teachers of non-renewal for the 2019-2020 school year no later than June 15, 2020.
- Question: If a teacher is at the end of a permit, will they have additional time to complete the requirements?
 - **RESPONSE:** Permits may only be granted to individual teachers for three years. A teacher on the third year of a permit will not be eligible to receive an additional year. ETS has plans to launch remote testing of Praxis by mid-May. The department will provide more information as we receive it from ETS. We would also encourage districts to recruit certified teachers either as a new graduate from an EPP or out of state teacher based on the new policy as permits are emergency credentials that should be used temporarily as a last resort.
- Question: What would be the status of a teacher who was teaching on a waiver for one year until he or she passed the praxis? Does this waiver remain for this school year or can there be an extension of the waiver for next year?
 - **RESPONSE:** ETS has plans to launch remote testing of Praxis by mid-May. The department will provide more information as we receive it from them. In addition, waivers are granted for a year at a time and can be renewed up to two times (for a total of three years on a waiver with escalating criteria). The department would also encourage districts to recruit for a properly endorsed teacher either as a new graduate from an EPP or out of state teacher based on the new policy as waivers are emergency credentials and should be used temporarily as a last resort.
- Question: Will there be an extension for administrators who have completed TASL for this year?
 - **RESPONSE:** The department will exercise additional flexibility for TASL-mandated administrators with licenses expiring on or before August 31, 2020, who are impacted by closures or cancellations of professional development activities. Leaders may submit individual requests for TASL credit events, which will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Event requests may be submitted here. This application has been updated to reflect individual requests.

BEP

- Question: How will ADM be calculated as it relates to BEP?
 - **RESPONSE:** The department will be able to address this question later this week as part of our guidance. Please continue to review our website for updates.

CARES ACT

- Question: When is the deadline for districts to spend the funds from the CARES Act?
 - **RESPONSE:** Currently, K-12 funds are set to expire September 30, 2021. However, we anticipate that the US Department of Education will issue additional guidance that may change this date.
- Question: For some districts, the changes to unemployment insurance have resulted in substitute teachers being approved for unemployment benefits, which may be a large expense for a district. Can the CARES Act funds be used to pay for that unanticipated cost?
 - **RESPONSE:** We are awaiting guidance on CARES allowability – including whether pre-award costs will be allowable. It would also depend on when these unanticipated costs were incurred. Typically, we recommend funding insurance with the same funding source as the salary (i.e. Title I or state) – shifting other allowable expenditures to the CARES Act.

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