

ARCHIVE: COVID-19 Superintendent Call

April 3, 2020

The following are questions asked by directors of schools during this call and the point-in-time answers provided by the department. Commissioner Schwinn also gave a presentation on TDOE's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. 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>.

Legal Requirements and Needs

- Question: What effect do any of the recent Governor's Executive Orders have on after school care for students?
 - **RESPONSE:** Governor Lee's Executive Order 22 provides the following under the list of "Essential Services":

"Human Services Operations. This includes, but is not limited to: government or government-funded human services to the public through state-operated, institutional, or community-based settings; long-term care facilities; day care centers, day care homes, or group day care homes; residential settings and shelters for adults, seniors, children, or people with developmental disabilities, intellectual disabilities, substance use disorders, or mental illness; transitional facilities; home-based settings to provide services to individuals with physical, intellectual, or developmental disabilities, seniors, adults, or children; field offices that provide and help to determine eligibility for basic needs including food, cash assistance, medical coverage, child care, vocational services, rehabilitation services; developmental centers; adoption agencies; businesses that provide food, shelter, social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged individuals, individuals with physical, intellectual, and/or developmental disabilities, or individuals otherwise in need. Human Services Operations shall be construed broadly to avoid any impacts to the delivery of human services, broadly defined;"

- Question: Will Governor Lee close schools beyond April 24?
 - **RESPONSE:** The TDOE will provide further guidance on this matter when it is available.

Communications

- Question: Can you provide more information about the recently released survey? Should families and community members respond or only district leaders?
 - **RESPONSE:** Two surveys were released to gather input on how the state could best support districts in their response work. One was designed for district leaders, and the other for broader stakeholder input. This public

version of the survey available for families and community members is available [here](#).

- Question: The survey released by TDOE mentions multiple potential options for making up missed school days, or extending the school year. Please provide more information on these questions and how they may relate to work districts are currently doing to provide virtual instruction to students.
 - **RESPONSE:** As districts make decisions on how best to serve their students, the options listed and many others exist as strategies that may be employed to help further students' academic progress in response to the unexpected closures. These questions were intended to gather information on districts' current thinking in what approaches may work best for each local context to determine the best way TDOE can support districts and teachers in serving students. Pursuant to the language in T.C.A. section 49-6-3004 (f) and (g), that is pasted below for convenience, school calendar decisions are made at the local level.

"(f) Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year and every year thereafter, LEAs shall commence the school year no earlier than August 1 unless the LEA's board of education votes by a majority of its membership to establish a year-round or alternative calendar for all or any of the schools within its jurisdiction in accordance with department of education attendance policies.

(g) The length of term selected by a local board, and the length of the school day corresponding to that term, shall not affect either the amount or timing of payments made to the LEA under the basic education program (BEP) or otherwise, if the LEA operates for the full chosen term. Equally, the length of term and the length of day shall not affect the compensation of any teacher employed for the length of that term."

Finance

- Question: Please provide more information related to how districts might budget for the additional remedial instructional time, as well as efforts to support students emotionally and socially.
 - **RESPONSE:** The Department will continue to support extended learning opportunities through optional programmatic efforts like ReadyRosie and PBS lessons for districts to use in whatever way makes sense. The commissioner has already waived the 180-day requirement for this year, to provide districts with flexibility to serve the needs of local communities.

Anything related to learning time will remain a local decision. The Department does not have the authority to mandate additional time. As districts make local decisions on how best to serve their students, the

Department understands that programmatic, operational, and fiscal capacity will be among the primary considerations taken into account. Should your district choose to consider additional time, through tutoring, days, remediation groups, etc., it is recommended that you discuss with your local boards, attorneys and stakeholders related to additional compensation needs, additional hiring needs, etc. Strategies leveraging various approaches will all come with different implications for these areas. The recently passed CARES Act provides one-time, relief funds that will be available to districts and may be used for a number of purposes outlined in the legislation, including strategies to cover learning or whole child needs.

- Question: When will updated budget projections be available?
 - **RESPONSE:** As new information becomes available, TDOE will reach out to TOSS and superintendents.

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