

ARCHIVE: COVID-19 Superintendent Call

June 3, 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>.

Waivers

- Question: Will there be guidance with waivers of current SBOE rules if risk mitigation openings are contrary to current rules? Such as teacher to student ratios (i.e. virtual student counts w/physical counts, the start of the school year (before than at/aft August 1).
 - **RESPONSE:** Waivers needed based on school closures last year due to COVID-19 and issues related to COVID-19 that could require waivers during the 2020-2021 may be submitted via the [COVID-19 LEA Waiver Application](#). Districts may submit waivers via the application through June 30. As you can see on the application, the department included some pre-filled waivers that we thought many districts would require related to the non-renewal of non-tenured teachers, the eligibility for tenure, and the annual required trainings for school board members. In addition, the application includes space for districts to request any other waivers they deem necessary based on school closures occurring last school year and waivers districts anticipate will be needed during the upcoming 2020-2021 school year. There is not a specific list of waivers, districts are submitting them based on what rules and laws they believe they cannot fully implement based on COVID-19.
 - Additionally, the department is working with the state board of education to promulgate an emergency rule to address issues related to the instructional day requirements in the law and how districts will re-open safely for the 2020-2021 school year while still meeting those requirements using blended learning and other less traditional instructional strategies. The rule will require districts to submit plans to the department for approval. District plans will be required to address how schools will continue learning and meeting the instructional requirements in the law in less traditional ways to keep students and staff safe, if necessary, due to COVID-19.
 - The board will vote on the emergency rule at a special called meeting later on June 22 and the department will be providing a template for plan submission soon after. The department's General Counsel, Christy.Ballard@tn.gov, is available for anyone who would like to schedule a call to discuss these issues in more detail.

Assessment

- Question: How many questions will be available on the formative assessment?
 - **RESPONSE** Start of Year Checkpoints will be much shorter than a full TCAP exam, typically falling between 17-30 questions depending on subject/grade, and more focused, targeting the skills that will help students engage in the grade-level content for the year. The intention is that these can be deployed within a standard classroom schedule/school day without the need for rearranging schedules to accommodate the length of the exam.
 - The assessment item bank will have access to the all the publicly released TCAP assessments. Each year, as we are able administer and then release more TCAP questions, more will become available and will be added to the bank each year.
- Question: Can we know what company the on-line TCAP item bank is through?
 - **RESPONSE:** The state will be using our current test administration vendor, Pearson, to stand up the platform for the TCAP released question assessment bank. The released TCAP questions included in the item bank were developed for TCAP including processes that ensure all TCAP questions go through Tennessee educators before use.

CARES Act

- Question: What if you have already submitted your CARES Act for items that maybe allowed in Stafford?
 - **RESPONSE:** We recommend amending your CARES Act application. This is a practice we will continue to encourage throughout the summer/fall as additional grant opportunities become available to ensure districts are able to leverage funds most strategically.