

NORTHERN TIOGA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Building Opportunities

Remote Learning Guide for Families

Contents

Flexible Instructional Days: FAQ Guide for Families.....	2
Timing and Schedule Requirements (K-12).....	3
Rationale for Instructional Requirements (K-12).....	3
Work Requirements/Submission of Assignments (K-12)/Access to K-12 Supports.....	4
Impact of Flexible Instructional Days on Other Areas/School Calendar.....	5
End of the Year Activities/State Testing/K Registration.....	6
Attendance/Communications/Technology Support.....	7
Grading/Parent & Guardian Role.....	8
Enrichment/Special Areas/Senior Projects/HS Scheduling.....	9
Appendix A: Video Conference Etiquette and Access.....	11
Appendix B: Technology Resources/Contacts.....	13
Appendix C: Letter from PA Secretary of Education.....	15
Appendix D: FAQ from the PA Department of Education.....	16
Appendix E: Gov. Wolf's School Closure Order.....	23

Flexible Instructional Days

FAQ Guide for Families

Introduction: NTSD seeks an educational partnership with our student's families to provide access to school personnel, resources and services that are appropriate and reasonable while schools districts are physically closed. The health and safety of our students, their families and the community is paramount.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education has required all school districts to provide Continuity of Education plans with the focus on planned instruction for all grade levels. These remote learning plans or flexible instruction days are not intended to replicate our traditional onsite learning, however we are confident that learning and engagement opportunities will continue.

The purpose of this document is to outline how NTSD will offer a Flexible Instruction model for the continuation of the educational program. As this is an evolving situation, this resource document may be supplemented as additional federal and state guidance is developed and issued.

Our Vision: Empowering students to become productive citizens with a rural advantage.

The mission of NTSD is to equip all students with a foundation of critical thinking and problem solving tools essential for lifelong learning within local and global communities.

K-12 Frequently Asked Questions for All Grade-Levels Flexible Instructional Days

What is a Flexible Instructional Day?

A Flexible Instructional Day (FID) is an alternate approach to delivering instruction if a circumstance arises that prevents instruction in customary face-to-face manner.

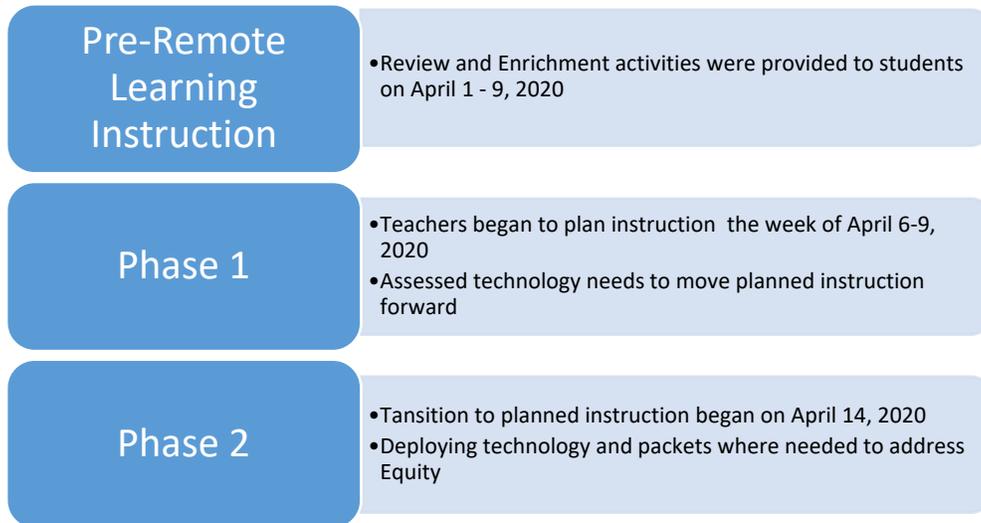
When did Flexible Instructional Days begin at NTSD?

The initial continuity of education plan provided a week and half period of enrichment and review activities. The district transitioned on April 14, 2020 to planned instruction for kindergarten through twelfth grade. The administration anticipated that transitioning to planned instruction may take a week in order to distribute laptops, flash drives and educational materials. The charts immediately below summarize the District's phased implementation of Flexible Instruction.

Pennsylvania Department of Education Flexible Instructional Day Information:

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/School%20Services/Pages/FID.aspx>

A FID is a program available to public school entities to be used as an alternate approach to delivering instruction if a circumstance arises that prevents instruction in the customary manner.



Timing and Schedule Requirements (K-12)

Will instruction occur in real-time? Will my child have to be available on a device at a specific time?

Students will not be required to participate in synchronous instruction, which means instructional activities at a specified time. The design of the District’s Flexible Instructional Days incorporates maximum flexibility for families navigating these challenging times. Instruction will be planned to be primarily delivered asynchronously.

There may be times where it is beneficial for synchronous opportunities to explain concepts, offer small-group conferencing or other instructional activities. Teachers may be inviting students to virtually participate although, student participation is encouraged but not required.

Rationale for Instructional Requirements (K-12)

Why doesn’t the District just offer a range of enrichment activities for students and allow students and families to choose their level of involvement? Why does work have to be required?

The Pennsylvania Department of Education provided guidance for school districts to offer continuity of education and planned instruction. This requires instruction of new concepts/skills aligned to grade level standards. For students to be successfully prepared for the next grade level in elementary school, or the next sequential course in secondary school, exposure to, and completion of, tasks associated with the remainder of the current year/course, are essential. At the time of schools closing, students had approximately 12 weeks of instruction remaining, which amounts to approximately 30% of a school year of information, as well as opportunities to learn and refine skills and academic habits of mind.

Work Requirements and Submission of Assignments (K-12)

[How do students submit work?](#)

Teachers will communicate specific expectations for assignment submission. This will include how and when work should be submitted weekly.

Student Supports during Flexible Instructional Days

[Are Professionals available during remote instruction/FID?](#)

To the extent possible, all professionals are available to support students, staff, and families. This includes, but is not limited to, teachers, school counselors, nurses, social workers, librarians, and mental health professionals. There remains a structured day in place for staff that includes an opportunity for synchronous communication. Email communication expectations remain consistent. Schools also use Face Book, Parent Link, and others as specified by the school (e.g., DoJo, Remind Me, etc.). Non-emergency communication beyond the workday or on the weekends should expect return communication the following work day.

Access to Supports (K-12)

[How will my child receive the support that they are scheduled to receive?](#)

Support teachers (e.g., Special Education, Title 1 Reading Specialists, etc.) are creating learning activities and/or are providing support through differentiated instruction and/or support plans. These supports are communicated directly from the Support teacher to the family. There may be times that learning support aides check in on students they have been working with for the school year.

Incorporation of IEP/GIEP/504 Accommodations (K-12)

The District remains committed to providing meaningful access for all students including our students with disabilities. We are committed to providing a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students. Students with IEPs, GIEPs, and 504s will continue to receive the supports and services outlined in these plans, to the extent possible. Support Teachers will continue to work with general education teachers on accommodations and modifications to assignments to ensure access to the general education curriculum. Additionally, as appropriate, special education staff will provide instruction in areas identified within the student's IEP or GIEP. Related Services such as Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Vision Support, Hearing Support, etc. will be provided through a teletherapy approach. Special education teachers and related service providers will contact families to share how they will be

providing services. Annual IEP/GIEP/504 meetings will be held virtually. A Student Services team member will contact families to schedule a time for the meeting. Meetings will be held via phone conference or Zoom with parent approval.

Impact of Flexible Instructional Days on Other Areas

Access to Meals (K-12)

NTSD's Food Services offers "grab-and-go" lunches and breakfasts on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 11:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. While meal pick-up occurs on only three days, children will still be able to receive 10 meals per week. A parent, guardian, or family member may pick up the meals for the children in their household. The distribution sites are listed on the NTSD website found at:

<https://www.ntiogasd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FEEDING-PROGRAM-FINAL01.jpg>

**FREE MEALS DISTRIBUTED MONDAY WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY
11:30AM – 12:30PM**

WESTFIELD ELEMENTARY 1355 RT. 49 WESTFIELD, PA 16950	CLARK WOOD ELEMENTARY 110A ELLISON RD. ELKLAND, PA 16920	RB WALTER/WILLIAMSON 33 JUNCTION CROSS RD. TIOGA, PA 16946
COWANESQUE VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL 51 N FORK RD WESTFIELD, PA 16950	UNITED CHURCH OF NELSON 79 VILLAGE DRIVE NELSON, PA 16940	CALVARY UM CHURCH 6 FRANKLIN ST. LAWRENCEVILLE, PA 16929
KNOXVILLE COMMUNITY CENTER 301 E MAIN ST. KNOXVILLE, PA 16928	OSCEOLA FIRE HALL 7654 STATE RT 49 OSCEOLA, PA 16920	TIOGA BOROUGH POOL BROAD ST. TIOGA, PA 16946
VALLEY CHRISTIAN CENTER 146 MAPLE ST. WESTFIELD, PA 16950		MILLERTON UM CHURCH 5443 MAIN ST. MILLERTON, PA 16936

School Calendar (K-12)

The school calendar for the remainder of the 2019 -2020 school year has not been altered. Scheduled school days will be treated as instructional days. The last student day will remain as June 4 with graduation following. Please note that decisions have not yet been made on the end-of-the-year activities.

April 2020							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	Comments
			1	2	3	4	2 – 3 Hour Early Dismissal/Parent Conference
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	3 – Parent Conference
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	10 & 13 – Easter Recess
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	14 – Snow Make Up Day
26	27	28	29	30			
May 2020							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	Comments
					1	2	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	25 – Memorial Day Recess
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26 – Snow Make Up Day
31							
June 2020							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	Comments
	1	2	3	4	5	6	2 & 3 – 3 Hour Early Dismissal
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4 - 3 Hour Early Dismissal, Last Day of School
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	5 – Professional Dev. Day
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
28	29	30					

Graduation Dates:

**WHS – June 4,
2020, 7:30 PM**

**CVHS – June 5,
2020, 7:30 PM**

Board Approved: 7/23/19

School and End-of-Year Activities (K-12)

During the closure, all field trips, school activities, and athletic and extracurricular activities are cancelled. We understand the value of end-of-year culminating activities for students. The District will continue to explore supporting routines and special events to the degree possible, following the guidance of health professionals and government officials (e.g. prom, end-of-year activities and trips, etc.). The elementary, middle school and high schools will have yearbooks for the year. Commencement is a once-in-a-lifetime event for students and families. The District will explore other alternatives to appropriately honor this accomplishment. Students who fulfill their graduation requirements for the year will still graduate on June 4th at WHS and June 5th at CVHS.

Kindergarten Registration

Kindergarten registration for the 2020 – 2021 school year will be modified. RBW, Westfield, and Clark Wood Elementary will provide Kindergarten Registration packets to parents/guardians. In person registration will not occur as it has in the past. Some information can be found at: <https://www.ntiogasd.org/kindergarten-registration-for-the-2020-21-school-year/> Please call the elementary school in your attendance for more information.

Standardized Testing (K-12) (Pennsylvania State Exams: PSSA, Keystone Exams, PASA, SAT, and Terra Nova)

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) cancelled PSSA testing and Keystone exams for the 2019-20 school year. This includes the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA). The school district has cancelled the administration of Terra Nova testing in grades 1-2. Information about SAT exams can be found at: <https://www.collegeboard.org/> Please be sure to check the College Board site as SAT administration has been affected.

The PA Department of Education will require Keystone Exams to be administered to each high school student at some point in grades 9-11. The district will await further guidance from PDE.

Attendance (K-12)

At this time, student attendance is accounted for via student engagement in instructional activities and/or through completion of weekly assignments or tasks. PDE is providing additional guidance on attendance and attendance protocols are subject to change.

Communication (K-12)

[What is the best way to keep up to date with my child's schedule/assignments?](#)

Teachers are available for regular office hours. These specific times have been posted for each teacher. This time can be used for parent and student questions. Teachers communicate via email, phone, and/or videoconferencing, depending on circumstances. Each school has a specific mode of communication to communicate assignments. Please check Face Book or call your child's school if you need assistance.

Technology Support (K-12)

[What if my child needs technical assistance?](#)

Grades 7-12: Please contact the teacher of the class for technical support and they can direct you to the appropriate technical assistance based on the need.

Grades K-6: Please contact your classroom teacher for technical support and they can direct you to the appropriate technical assistance based on the need

K-12 Planned Instruction Description:

On April 1, 2020 the NTSD faculty provided enrichment and review activities for students. These activities were offered to all student either online or as a printed packet. Enrichment and review activities will not be graded, assessed or used for bonus points.

April 6 - 10, 2020 the NTSD faculty began the preparation for planned instruction. This included a survey of sufficient internet access and availability of a laptop/device for remote learning. The transition to planned instruction will begin on April 14, 2020. It is necessary to acknowledge that it is a process to transition from enrichment and review to planned instruction. Time will be needed to establish new procedures for instruction, receiving assignments, communicating and attaining equipment and educational materials.

All teachers' kindergarten through twelfth grade will provide planned instruction for their students. Teachers will distribute work to their students online or in paper/pencil mode based on the family's needs. Work assigned on Google Classroom can be saved to a flash drive in situations where students do not have the internet.

Grading: We will continue focus on mastery of essential skills needed for the next school year. Our commitment to provide feedback to students remains consistent. Final exams will not be administered in high school. Posted grades can be found at: <https://parents.csiu-technology.org/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f> In addition, third marking period report cards are posted to the CSIU Parent Portal.

Parent/Guardian Role

Since elementary age students have different levels of independence, family partnership is necessary for students to engage in tasks and to access on-line resources. Time and assignment completion depends on each individual families' circumstances. Instruction and assignments will be designed for maximum flexibility for families.

Steps or routines parents/guardians can follow to support student engagement include the following:

- Check teacher updates and assignments
- Review learning assignments with your child
- Help your child find a work space where they can work independently on learning tasks.
- Correspond your child's classroom teacher if you or your child has questions or needs extra help. Teachers will be available and present on-line daily to help and support. These hours of availability will be posted by the teachers.

How long can I expect my child to work on this daily?

We encourage families to try to maintain a routine that helps create a feeling of normalcy for students. Students work at different paces and have different levels of proficiency and independence. Learning is designed to include some screen time and activities that are extensions of this time (e.g., reading aloud, pretend play, investigations, writing, and drawing). Students will not need to be on a device for all the learning time described below. Generally work should be no longer than two hours.

- If students experience great difficulty or become exceedingly frustrated with a task, have the child stop the activity, and please email the teacher.
- If a student continues to demonstrate frustration or misunderstanding, encourage the student to conference with the teacher during office hours.
- During face-to-face instruction, teachers glean information about students' strengths and struggles. Knowing teachers do not have access to these same informal cues during online instruction, teachers will appreciate parents'/guardians' thoughtful partnership.

Enrichment Opportunities

We are offering additional enrichment resources to keep students engaged in learning throughout the day. These extension and engagement activities are designed to provide choice for students and families. The following are some examples of sites that can be used for enrichment:

Google Classrooms	Remind Me	Accelerated Reader
Classroom DoJo	Reflex Math	Xtra Math
Study Island	Reflex Math	Education City
Reading Eggs	Learning Farm	Khan Academy
McGraw Hill Wonders	Exact Path	McGraw Hill My Math
Online Textbooks	Newsela	Scholastic

Students may also read books and Accelerated Reader will be available to test at home. Please see your ELA or classroom teacher for more information.

This is also a great opportunity for older students to research post-secondary credentials and colleges as well as to research careers of interest. Please feel free to contact your school's guidance counselor by email if you have questions.

Special Areas and Specialists

- Special area teachers (Art, Music, PE, and Library) will also be providing resources. We hope these resources may support parents in keeping some learning routines in place that keep students interested and engaged while we undergo this new challenge of social distancing and remote learning.

Senior Projects (9-12) and Scheduling for HS for next school year

At this time the community service component of the graduation is on hold. Please feel free to call the high school guidance office in your school to discuss details.

Williamson High School Guidance Office

570-827-2191

570-827-2192

570-827-3019

Cowaneseque Valley High School Guidance Office

814-367-2233

The feasibility of a modified version of the project will be reassessed upon returning to school to determine if a modified version of a senior culminating project may be offered. Given the uncertainty of the situation, devoting time to securing senior project placements during the closure is not an efficient use of time for students and teachers.

Any remaining course scheduling in grades 9-12 will be using Google Classrooms. Please check your Google Classrooms and look for a Guidance section. In addition, feel free to contact your schools guidance office, for scheduling questions and concerns.

The course catalog can be found on the district's website:

<https://www.ntiogasd.org/department-listings/academic-affairs/high-school-courses/>

Please select: [NTSD High School Course Catalog 2020-2021](#)

Career Cruising: <https://public.careercruising.com/en/>

The NTSD Remote Learning Guide will be a working document as revisions may be needed due to this evolving situation as new updates come from Governor Wolf, Pennsylvania's Department of Education and the Department of Health.

Appendix A: Video Conference Etiquette and Access

Videoconferencing Expectations

What guidance can the District provide when my child is on a video conference with a school staff member?

All synchronous video conference sessions are optional. When students are participating in a video conferences, such as Zoom.

- Remember that any direct instruction lessons may involve two-way camera and audio usage. (This means that the instructor will likely see and hear what is occurring in your home, including what everyone is wearing).
- Do not audio/video record lessons.
- Maintain the confidentiality of other students, if your child is participating in a group lesson. (Remember that all students participating will likely see and hear what is occurring in your home, including what everyone is wearing, just as you may see and hear what is occurring in their home).
- If you have questions or concerns, please email your child's teacher after the lesson is complete. Do not interrupt the activity with questions, either through the audio or through emails. Allow the professional to focus on the instructional activity.
- This is a special time for the teacher to connect with the students. We appreciate you being quiet observers. If there are technical difficulties, please help out. If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to your teacher via email during the listed office hours.

Guidance for Children

- Sit in a quiet spot in your house with limited distractions and background noises.
- Make sure to stay in one spot and sit still during our meeting. Do not walk around with a device.
- Let friends finish talking. Don't interrupt your friend when he/she is talking.
- Don't eat or drink during our Zoom. Help everyone hear each other and focus.
- Keep yourself on MUTE until it is your turn to speak.
- Be on time.
- Make sure family members / pets know not to interrupt you during this time.
- Make sure you are dressed appropriately!

Accessing Video Conferences

A Zoom link will be sent by the host. An access code may be provided to ensure security. The host reserves the right to dismiss an attendee.

You will not need to download software. Simply click on the link in the email provided by the host. Or if you do not have internet available you may call in using the number provided.

The Zoom meeting invitation will look similar to the following:

Diana Barnes is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: My Meeting

Time: Apr 21, 2020 07:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/915174482130?pwd=SHY1OCW1RazFLVlkYeFJsOFYyM3pDUT09>

Meeting ID: 915 1748 2134

Password: 5NfSZBBA

One tap mobile

+16465588656,,91517482130#,,#,875873# US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

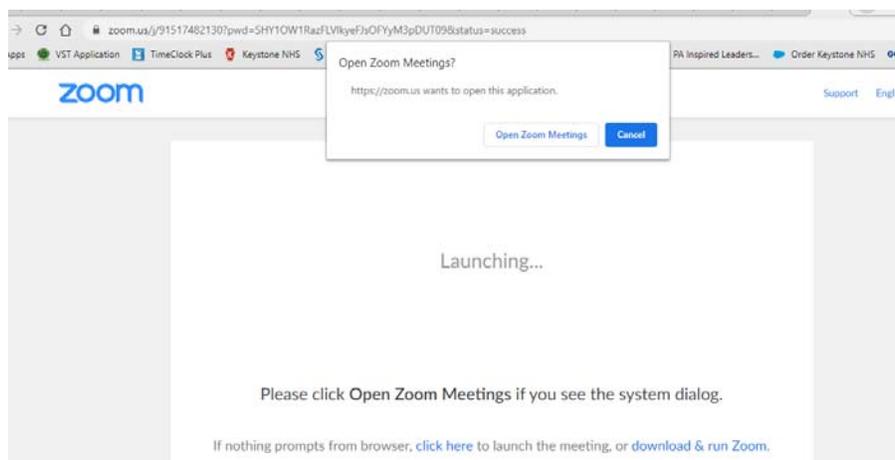
Meeting ID: 915 1748 2155

Password: 876543

1. If you are joining by a device you will click on the zoom web link and prompts will be provided to open the zoom. You may be prompted to enter a meeting ID number. There is no need to download software.

If you are joining by landline, you will use the phone number to call in.

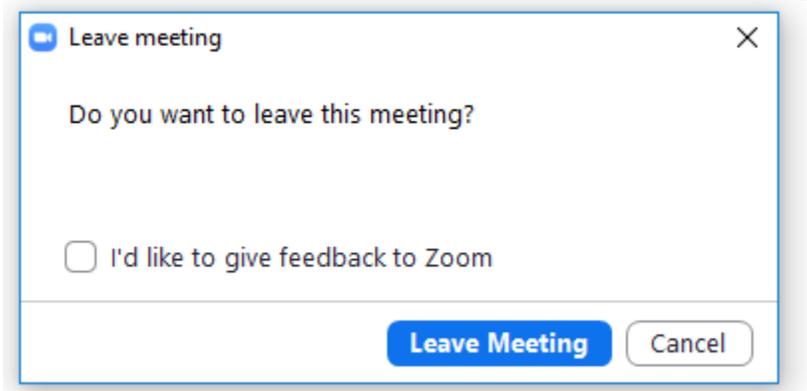
2. Upon clicking on the URL link the following will display



3. In the “Open Zoom Meetings?” window, click on “Open Zoom Meeting.”

4. An ID or password may be needed to enter the Zoom meeting. There may be a pause for the host to allow users to enter the meeting.

To leave a Zoom meeting click “Leave Meeting.”



Appendix B: Technology Resources

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the Governor's orders closing school buildings, and a new state law requirement; Act 13, that school districts make a good faith effort to offer continuity of education to students during periods of school closure. NTSD has provided learning activities so our students remain engaged and can continue in their education despite schools not being able to physically be open.

As a result of the current circumstances, all school districts throughout the Commonwealth and across the country have needed to quickly develop new formats for full instruction. This has required the increased use of technology and new products.

Student privacy has always been and continues to be a top priority when developing and implementing remote learning instruction.

Parents/Guardians have signed a NTSD technology use agreement and will utilize the technology as outlined in the document.

We appreciate your understanding, patience, flexibility, and partnership in this process, and we encourage you to stay in touch with your child's building principal if you have questions, comments, or concerns.

The parent's guide to Google Classrooms can be found at: <https://www.ntiogasd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2020-Parents-Guide-to-Google-Classroom.pdf>

Williamson High School: Kristopher.kaufman@ntiogasd.org

33 Jct. Cross Road, Tioga, PA 16946

570-827-2191, 570-827-2192

Cowanesque Valley High School: Matthew.sottolano@ntiogasd.org
51 North Fork Road, Westfield, PA 16950
814-367-2233

R.B. Walter Elementary School: Christina.fry@ntiogasd.org
65 Jct. Cross Road, Tioga, PA 16946
570-827-2171, 570-827-2175

Clark Wood Elementary School: Jess.millard@ntiogasd.org
110A Ellison Road, Elkland, PA 16920
814-258-5131, 814-258-5132

Westfield Area Elementary School: Cheryl.sottolano@ntiogasd.org
1355 Route 49, Westfield, PA 16950
814-367-2712

Northern Tioga School District
Dr. Diana Barnes, Diana.barnes@ntiogasd.org
110 Ellison Road, Elkland, PA 16920
814-258-5645 Ext. 1010

Director of Student Services: Daniel.fie@ntiogasd.org
110 Ellison Road, Elkland, PA 16920
814-258-5646 Ext. 1027

Principal of Academic Affairs: Amy.coots@ntiogasd.org
110 Ellison Road, Elkland, PA 16920
814-258-5646 Ext. 1036

Director of Technology: Todd.terpstra@ntiogasd.org

110 Ellison Road, Elkland, PA 16920

814-258-5646 Ext. 1029

Appendix C: Letter from PA Secretary of Education

April 15, 2020

Colleague,

It has been roughly four weeks since the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented change to our school communities, including building closures, transitions to distance learning, and the cancellation of traditional year-end activities. Over that time, I've been moved by the tireless efforts of school leaders across the state to ensure students and families continue to be served.

As educators, our top priority has always been to ensure the health and safety of students. As such, the immediate days after the statewide school closure were focused on communicating with families, removing barriers, and providing meals to students. As the situation evolved – and the duration of the closure extended, we placed a strong emphasis on continuity of education, either through enrichment and review or planned instruction.

Last week's announcement that schools will remain closed for the balance of the school year was another effort to prioritize the health and safety of our students, staff, and communities. It also means that with half of April, all of May, and some of June ahead of us, we must increase the intensity and focus of our efforts around instruction for all students, at all grade levels.

As educators preparing students to continue on to postsecondary opportunities, the workforce or transitioning to their next grade, it is our responsibility and expectation that every school offer planned instruction at every grade level for all students.

I recognize that there is no precedent for what you are being asked to do and it is not an easy task, but it is our collective, moral responsibility as education leaders to do all we can to ensure equity and opportunity for those we serve. We are a state rich in diversity – and that means no single solution will be effective for all schools. That's why PDE has outlined several resources available to support your district or school in this endeavor, including digital and non-digital options. If you have not already, please consider pursuing one of these resources or technical support by connecting with your local intermediate unit.

I know that many LEAs have already submitted Continuity of Education plans that may not yet address the need for planned instruction at all grade levels. These plans are dynamic, and as you revise and strengthen them, you can submit updates to RA-

EDCONTINUITYOFED@pa.gov, and PDE will replace your plan with the most recent version.

These are challenging conditions, and as the situation has evolved, so has our response as educators. I am confident that, together, we will do everything in our power to ensure the provision of meaningful instruction to every student. And if there is anything my team can do to support yours, please reach out.

Thank you for all you continue to do to serve your community.

- Pedro

Source:

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/messages/Pages/April15.aspx>

Appendix D: Frequently Asked Questions from the PA Department of Education

What schools are closed?

All schools in Pennsylvania are closed until the end of their academic year. This includes: public K-12 schools, brick and mortar and cyber charter schools, private and parochial schools, career and technical centers (CTCs), intermediate units (IUs); and childcare centers operating within any of the aforementioned; educational programming for students in non-educational placements such as residential settings (boarding schools), residential facilities, detention centers, and hospital settings; PA Pre-K Counts, Head Start Programs and Preschool Early Intervention programs; and Private Academic Nursery Schools and locally funded prekindergarten activities. Additionally, postsecondary institutions have suspended in-person instruction and non-essential services.

How should schools with residential programs modify their programs due to closure?

The Governor's directive closing all public and private schools extends to in-person educational programming for students in non-educational placements such as residential facilities, detention centers, and hospital settings. Such programs may choose to offer continuity of education that does not involve in-person instruction in accordance with applicable standards and requirements, as addressed in other provisions of this FAQ.

What is the closure date for postsecondary institutions that follow a variety of academic terms?

Consistent with the Governor's Order and call for social distancing, postsecondary institutions must suspend in-person instruction at least through the end of the spring 2020 term. Postsecondary institutions may not resume in-person instruction until the governor permits them to open or lifts the closure of non-life-sustaining businesses. Given that deliberations about state-level mitigation strategies are ongoing, students and institutions should be aware that the return to in-person instruction will be contingent on further developments surrounding the pandemic. It is not possible at this time to determine exactly when it will be safe to resume in-person instruction.

What staff are essential?

Schools and postsecondary institutions ensure the equitable provision of multiple, life-sustaining services to students and families. Understanding that needs and service delivery vary across communities, decisions about essential staff should be made locally and in the context of aggressive social distancing. Examples of essential services include, but are not limited to, administration, food preparation and distribution, housing, information technology, building maintenance, and operations (e.g., payroll).

180 Day School Year

What are the consequences for districts/schools that don't meet the 180-day requirements?

Act 13 of 2020 waives the School Code requirement (Section 1501) for a minimum 180-day school term—an action that builds on the Administration's earlier commitment that no district or school would be penalized for falling short of a 180-day school term. While waiving the 180-day school term requirement, Act 13 also requires school entities to make good faith efforts to implement continuity of education plans for the duration of the 2019-20 school year.

Recognizing that schools will not be penalized for failing to meet the minimum 180-day requirement because of COVID-19 response efforts, must schools adjust their calendars to meet those requirements?

Given the extensive period of closure, schools are not required to adjust calendars. However, schools will be required to report their total days and hours for the 2019-20 school year on a simplified form; completed forms will be deemed approved.

Meals for Children

How can students access meals while schools are closed?

Pennsylvania sought and received approvals from the Federal government to allow schools the option to distribute meals to children age 18 and under at no cost while schools are closed. Districts/schools that want to act on this Federal approval must apply to PDE. PDE continues to expedite approvals. Districts/schools may utilize

essential staff to ensure students have access to meals. Although not required, participating schools are strongly encouraged to continue distributing and/or delivering school meals during breaks.

PDE is partnering with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, other state agencies, the American Red Cross, and public and private partners to expand these efforts.

Continuity of Education

Are schools required to provide any type of instruction during the closure of schools due to COVID-19 response efforts?

Continuity of education is the overarching term for educational practices that occur in the event of a prolonged school closure. To provide a consistent and equitable foundation for this work, PDE partnered with intermediate units (IUs) and the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PATTAN) to develop guidance and evidence-based resources around continuity of education, and to provide technical assistance to school leaders.

PDE expects all schools to provide continuity of education for all students in the most appropriate and accessible ways possible, while also honoring the Governor's guidance for aggressive social distancing of at least six feet between individuals. Moreover, evolving United States Department of Education (USDE) guidance implies that Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other federal protections continue to apply during mandated school closure.

How are schools expected to provide continuity of education during the remainder of the 2019-20 school year?

As schools are closed until the end of the school year, schools are expected to offer Planned Instruction at all grade levels as part of continuity of education plans. Planned Instruction is formal teaching and learning, similar to what occurs in a classroom setting. Within this process, teachers use planned courses of instruction of new concepts/skills aligned to grade level standards.

In addition to Planned Instruction, schools may offer Enrichment and Review, which consists of informal activities that reinforce or extend students' prior learning.

Both Planned Instruction and Enrichment and Review can take a variety of forms, including online/digital learning opportunities; non-digital learning opportunities (e.g., materials sent home with students); and other approaches designed in partnership with local IUs and PATTAN centers. Implementation at the local level is based on feasibility, availability of resources, local student needs, access and equity considerations, and social distancing guidance.

Schools must work to meet the needs of all students including attention to free appropriate public education protections for students with disabilities and English as a second language services for English learners.

Who must submit continuity of education plans to PDE?

Act 13 of 2020 requires only school entities to submit continuity of education plans. Act 13 defines school entity as "any school district, intermediate unit, area career and technical school, charter school, cyber charter school or regional charter school a child attends in order to fulfill the compulsory attendance requirements of this act."

Are non-public and private academic schools required to submit continuity of education plans?

Act 13 does not require nonpublic or private academic schools to submit continuity of education plans to PDE. However, it is possible that school entities that place students in nonpublic or private schools may request continuity of education or other plans from those schools to include in the plans the school entity is required to submit to PDE. Nonpublic and private schools are advised to reach out directly to students' home school entity for guidance

What free resources are available to support school communities in providing continued instruction to students?

On March 31, PDE released a collection of free statewide resources that are intended to help all schools that want to use them, including those not currently offering online platforms, those requiring additional technology support, and those that may rely on traditional methods to continue educating students. In addition, PDE is offering equity grants for schools to purchase computer equipment or provide instructional materials.

Special Education Services

PDE's Bureau of Special Education and the Bureau of Early Intervention will provide additional details and updated information directly to Local Education Agency (LEA) Special Education Directors.

Are LEAs (School Districts, Charter Schools, Cyber Charter Schools, IUs, CTCs, etc.) required to meet IDEA timelines for evaluations, re-evaluations, IEP meetings, and reporting?

LEAs should make every effort to meet federally- and state-mandated timelines including through virtual means or teleconferences to the extent appropriate and available. Typical practices should be followed to the maximum extent possible, which includes ensuring parents and/or guardians are provided with the opportunity to participate meaningfully.

USDE released the following guidance concerning IEP meetings, evaluations, and re-evaluations during the COVID-19 closure: *IEP teams are not required to meet in person while schools are closed. If an evaluation of a student with a disability requires a face-to-face assessment or observation, the evaluation would need to be delayed until school reopens. Evaluations and re-evaluations that do not require face-to-face assessments or observations may take place while schools are closed, so long as a student's parent or legal guardian consents. These same principles apply to similar activities conducted by appropriate personnel for a student with a disability who has a plan developed under Section 504, or who is being evaluated under Section 504.*

If LEAs are providing instruction during COVID-19 response efforts, how should they respond to IEPs that they are unable to implement as written?

Special education or related services may need to be adjusted through the IEP process. IEP teams should work to ensure that students are receiving appropriate services during the COVID-19 mandatory closure and ensuring alignment with aggressive social distancing guidelines. The mode of delivery might include schoolwork, packets, online learning, or some other appropriate learning adapted to the student's needs and individual situation. LEAs should continue to follow local policies regarding changing or amending an existing IEP.

According to previous guidance from the USDE Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), if an LEA continues to provide instruction to the general school population during an extended closure due to a disaster, but is not able to provide services to a student with a disability in accordance with the student's IEP, the student's IEP team determines which services can be provided to appropriately meet the student's needs.

Statewide Assessments

What's the status of the 2019-20 statewide assessments given the statewide closure of schools?

On March 19, the Secretary of Education cancelled all Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) testing and Keystone exams for the 2019-20 school year as a result of COVID-19. This cancellation includes the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA). On March 20, the USDE approved Pennsylvania's request to waive all Federal assessment, accountability, and reporting requirements for the 2019-20 school year.

On March 23, the Secretary also cancelled standardized testing for students in career and technical education (CTE) programs for the 2019-20 school year. These include exams from the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) and National Institute of Metalworking Skills (NIMS).

Student Teaching

Will PDE waive field experience requirements for teacher candidates?

On April 9, 2020, Secretary Rivera waived a portion of the 12-week student teacher requirement for educator preparation programs that are unable to meet the regulatory requirement of 22 Pa. Code 354.25(f) due to the Pandemic of 2020, provided that these programs:

1. Implement a research- and competency-based evaluation system, in accordance with forthcoming guidance, for candidates impacted by COVID-19-related school closures; and
2. Commit to providing targeted technical assistance to Pennsylvania local education agencies that hire educators impacted by these program modifications.

Student Enrollment and Attendance

How is student enrollment and attendance impacted by COVID-19?

During the COVID-19 school closures, local education agencies (LEAs) continue to be responsible for enrolling and educating new students during the remainder of the 2019-20 school year. As such, LEAs should review their current enrollment policies and procedures and make decisions and adjustments, as needed, to provide all students with continuity of education. LEAs also should post enrollment information, including a point of contact, on their public website so that the information is easily accessible to parents/caregivers and other LEAs.

Graduation Requirement

Can current seniors graduate at the end of the 2019-20 school year?

Yes. LEAs are responsible to ensure that the students anticipated to graduate in Spring 2020 graduate on time. No student should be restricted from completing their high school graduation requirements or pursuit of a post-secondary pathway due to the pandemic of 2020.

What academic requirements will be required of current seniors in the 2019-20 school year?

Establishing and calculating credits for coursework is the responsibility of each LEA. If graduating seniors have not completed their classes for the year due to the closure, illness, family illness, or related COVID-19 issues, the Department suggests the LEA use discretion to determine whether the students have completed sufficient course content to satisfy the LEA's established policy for course completion and academic proficiency. The Department recommends that LEAs provide all reasonable latitude for students to graduate on time.

How should LEAs address graduation for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) anticipated to graduate in Spring 2020?

Title 22, Chapter 4 of the Pennsylvania Code, 22 Pa. Code Chapter 4 (Chapter 4), and local policies continue to govern graduation requirements for students with IEPs. A student with disabilities may graduate one of two ways; either through the fulfillment of high school graduation requirements set forth in Chapter 4 or upon the completion of their IEP goals, as determined by the IEP team. IEP teams may meet virtually to consider the impact of the COVID-19 school closure and make determinations considering each student's circumstances.

How might COVID-19 related school closures impact high school transcripts?

This is an LEA decision. LEAs may want to consider noting on student transcripts that courses were abbreviated or grading policies were amended for the 2019-20 school year as a result of the pandemic to mitigate students' ability to enroll in postsecondary institutions after graduation or pursue other postsecondary pathways, including apprenticeships and employment.

How will schools distribute Scholarships/Academic Awards?

Distribution of Scholarships and Academic Awards is an LEA decision. LEAs should continue to engage Institutions of Higher Education and other outside agencies who provide student scholarships to ensure that the class of 2020 has access to the same financial assistance that would have been afforded them if the COVID-19 related school closures had not occurred. School counselors should be pro-active in sharing information on enrollment and financial aid with students and their families.

Should schools hold high school graduation ceremonies and traditional end of school year activities?

Schools may hold virtual high school graduation and other traditional end of school year ceremonies during the COVID-19 closure. The safety and security of all students and school community are a priority for the commonwealth and all chief school administrators. Currently, restrictions on gatherings larger than ten people and aggressive social distancing recommendations are in place across the commonwealth. When closure restrictions are lifted by the Governor, LEAs may consider the appropriateness of holding such gatherings.

As of March 31, 2020, the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) has continued to postpone both the winter sports championships and the opening of spring sports. Decisions regarding winter and spring sports will be made as further information becomes available.

Homeschooling Programs

How are homeschooling programs impacted by COVID-19?

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) understands that the mandated closure of Pennsylvania schools due to the COVID-19 response effort may be causing some uncertainty for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year, particularly for families that elect to homeschool their children.

PDE FAQ Source:

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/Pages/AnswersToFAQs.aspx>

Appendix E: Gov. Wolf's School Closure Order

Governor Wolf Extends School Closure for Remainder of Academic Year

Harrisburg, PA - Continuing his efforts to protect the health and safety of students and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Tom Wolf today announced that all schools will remain closed for the remainder of the 2019-20 academic year. The governor made the decision in consultation with Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine and Secretary of Education Pedro A. Rivera. Students and families can continue to pick up meals at designated sites.

Although schools are closed, teaching and learning may continue: schools are strongly encouraged to provide continuity of education for all students in the most appropriate and accessible ways possible. PDE has secured resources intended to help all schools that want to use them – including those not currently offering online platforms, those requiring additional technology support, and those that may rely on traditional methods, such as paper lessons, to continue educating students. There is no cost to schools or students for these resources.

“We must continue our efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus during this national crisis,” Governor Wolf said. “This was not an easy decision but closing schools until the end of the academic year is in the best interest of our students, school employees and families.”

Secretary Rivera said the administration's primary consideration has always been to make the best decision in the context of student and community health and safety.

“While the rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic and its mitigation efforts have created uncertainty in our schools and communities, today's action to close schools for the remainder of the academic year provides school communities with predictability and understanding of the conditions under which they'll be operating and serving students,” Rivera said. “As schools and communities adapt to the prolonged school closure, PDE will continue to work with our state, educational, and business and nonprofit partners to meet the needs of students.”

Today's decision applies to all public K-12 schools, brick and mortar and cyber charter schools, private and parochial schools, career and technical centers and intermediate units. All Department of Education early learning program classrooms, including those for Pre-K Counts, Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP) and Preschool Early Intervention, will also remain closed.

Colleges and universities may not resume in-person instruction or reopen their physical locations until the governor permits them to open or lifts the closure of non-life-sustaining businesses.

Schools will remain closed through the end of the 2019-2020 academic year as it is defined by the local school calendar.

Under the state's directive, schools could begin summer programming on the day after their academic year ends.

Secretary Rivera added that all re-openings will be contingent on public health guidance provided by the Secretary of Health and stay-at-home orders issued by the governor.

In addition to the school closure announcement, through his order Secretary Rivera also took action that will ensure crucial stability of education programs. Under Act 13 of 2020, the secretary has exercised his executive authority to adjust requirements for the evaluation of professional employees and waive student teaching requirements that may not be possible in the context of school closures.

"By taking these actions, the department is providing flexibility in the near term, while signaling that core functions of public education can and will continue," he said.

The department has been providing ongoing guidance to school communities in the form of FAQs. The guidance information is available at [education.pa.gov/COVID19](https://www.education.pa.gov/COVID19).

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Source: <https://www.media.pa.gov/Pages/Education-Details.aspx?newsid=829>