



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

Updated on 3/18/20

K-12 SCHOOL CLOSURE FAQs

Governor Tony Evers [directed](#) Secretary-designee Andrea Palm to close all public and private schools beginning at 5pm on Wednesday, March 18th. This order applies to any type of pupil instruction or extra curricular activity that occurs in a school building or on school grounds. The previous anticipated re-opening date of April 6th has been rescinded. All schools should remain closed for instructional and extracurricular activities for the duration of the public health emergency or until a subsequent order lifts this specific restriction.

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is maintaining a website to provide the latest updates related to COVID-19 impacts to schools. Please visit [their website](#) for more detailed information.

Can schools close before Wednesday?

Schools districts, particularly those in counties with reported cases of COVID-19, may choose to close earlier than Wednesday. The CDC has issued guidance for schools to consider when making this decision: [Considerations for School Closure](#).

Where can I find out if schools will stay closed after April 6?

Governor Evers and the Department of Health Services (DHS) will continue to put out the latest information on social media, as well as issuing media releases to ensure the public is aware of the latest decisions and guidance. Additionally, the DPI will continue to share information with schools around the state. Families should also look for information from their local schools, who may also make decisions related to additional closures.

Can schools do virtual learning?

Yes. The order does not prevent a school from providing virtual instruction to pupils. The DPI provided information and resources to school districts who plan to use virtual learning time as allowed under the state administrative code provisions.

Will the required instruction hours be modified?

Districts have the ability to request a waiver from the DPI regarding hours of instruction. Whether school closures are mandated by the state or locally determined due to COVID-19, the DPI will address the issue of waivers based on the severity and length of the situation. The DPI has stated they will be empathetic to the ability of a district to reasonably meet the hours requirement. The DPI does not yet know the impact of closures or their length. The DPI will do whatever they can to expedite the process surrounding waivers and meet the needs of school districts.

How will students who qualify for free or reduced lunch be supported during the closure?

State and federal leaders are working to identify ways to support serving children meals during periods of school closures due to COVID-19. As a resource, the DPI has developed a [webpage](#) for options for serving children meals in a non-congregate setting in the event of a school closure due to COVID-19.

The DPI submitted a Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) waiver to USDA. This request is to waive the congregate feeding requirement for SFSP meals during unanticipated school closures at school and non-school sites during a public health emergency, such as COVID-19. The waiver is for all SFSP sponsors in good standing in the state. The public notice informing the public about the proposed waiver is posted at <https://dpi.wi.gov/community-nutrition/sfsp>.

What supports are available for students with an IEP?

The federal Department of Education (ED) issued new resources around protecting student privacy and [addressing questions regarding serving students with disabilities during the COVID-19 outbreak](#). If a school is closed for an extended period of time (generally, more than 10 consecutive school days) and educational services are not provided to other students, then services are not required for students with disabilities during the closure. If a school provides services through virtual learning, the school should make all reasonable efforts to provide students with disabilities equal access to the same opportunities, and, to the greatest extent possible, special education and related services are provided. Once school resumes, local educational agencies must make every effort to implement individualized education plans, and should consider, on an individualized basis, whether and to what extent compensatory services are required due to the closure.

Will school playgrounds be open?

Individual districts or schools will make determinations about access to school grounds. In doing so, they should follow recommendations and guidance from the CDC, Department of Health Services, and local public health officials. However, school grounds and facilities cannot be used for instructional purposes or for extracurricular activities. This includes athletics practices or other extracurriculars that regularly occur on school grounds.

What are the implications for state testing/assessments?

U.S. Department of Education (ED) indicates their goal is for all states to meet the assessment requirements under section 1111(b)(2) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The DPI asked each of its assessment vendors to determine whether the assessment windows can be extended. The DPI is working with these vendors to identify the feasibility of this option and will relay information to districts as soon as it becomes available. Please know the DPI is actively exploring all options, including a waiver, from ED if closures prevent statewide testing.

What are the implications for childcare/extended day programs?

The order only applies to pupil instruction and extracurricular activities, not to childcare functions. For programs run in school buildings, school leaders will make determinations regarding childcare or extended day programs, and families should look to their local provider for the latest information. Early Care and Education providers participating in 3K and 4K programs offsite may continue to serve those children in their child care setting at their discretion.

Are all athletics and club sports canceled?

The order requires all K-12 school buildings to be closed to extracurricular activities. If your child is involved in athletics or extra-curriculars that regularly take place in a non-school building, you should contact the provider organization regarding cancellations and follow [DHS guidance](#) regarding social distancing.

Will student graduations be affected?

This closure order currently only extends through April 6; however, the current public health emergency is a rapidly evolving situation, and we will be reassessing our recommendations and requirements for schools on an ongoing basis in order to protect the health of students, educators, staff, and the public. Districts may also make independent determinations about their planned events. Please look for updates from both the DHS and local schools and districts.

What conversations should parents have with their children at home?

The DPI recommends the following resource: [Talking to Children about COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) - A Parent Resource](#).

Does the order prohibit school staff from reporting to work?

No. The order only applies to pupil instruction and extracurricular activities, not to other functions. School leaders will make determinations on a case-by-case basis regarding access for other purposes, such as virtual learning, cleaning, food service, payroll and clerical functions. If school facilities are used for other purposes, districts should follow guidance from public health officials to ensure that appropriate health and safety measures are in place.

Will hourly staff be paid?

Gov. Evers recognizes that the closure presents challenges to students, families, educators, staff and districts, including financial impact. Local districts will need to determine how to best address the impacts of closures on hourly staff. Gov. Evers encourage districts and all employers to take whatever steps they can to minimize the economic impact to workers due to public health closures.