

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Nevada Department of Education

March 9, 2020

The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) is coordinating with the Governor's Office and the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to support schools in prevention and response plans related to COVID-19, also known as the Coronavirus. The Department has developed the below Frequently Asked Questions Document (FAQ) to support district and school administrators in addressing local needs while ensuring the well-being and safety of students, educators, staff, and communities.

Please share this FAQ with relevant audiences and use it as a reference in concert with other resources, including the following:

- The Governor's Office [Frequently Asked Questions document](#) released to the public on March 7
- The Nevada Department of Health and Human Services' school administrator resource for the novel coronavirus found near the bottom of the State's [COVID-19 website](#)
- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools](#)
- The U.S. Department of Education webpage on [Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel](#).
- The School Superintendents Association (AASA) [web resource](#) targeted at district leaders

Currently, schools do *not* need to take any special precautions beyond what is normally recommended to prevent the spread of germs. You can help students and staff reduce their risk for getting and spreading viral respiratory infections, including the flu and the common cold, by following the simple steps below:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands;
- Avoid contact with people who are sick;
- Stay home while sick and avoid close contact with others; and
- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash hands.

In addition, it is recommended that schools continue to follow their regular cleaning and disinfection program for facilities as well as transportation.

As always, the health, wellness, and safety of our students, educators, and staff remain our top priority. Please emphasize the importance of regular handwashing, hydration, and rest to your school communities. If someone feels ill, please encourage them to stay home, rest, and recover, rather than continuing to work or attend school. NDE will continue to work closely with local, State, and federal officials to address questions/circumstances related to COVID-19.

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Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

General

Question (Q): What support is the Department of Education providing to schools and districts?

Answer (A): The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) worked with the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to develop a [resource](#) for school nurses and administrators. This resource is available on the [State's coronavirus website](#), which is the best place to go for the most up-to-date information. In addition, NDE continues to collect resources that have been made available by the federal government and other national organizations to support district administrators.

Q: Do schools have emergency plans in place in the case of a severe outbreak?

A: All schools must have Emergency Operations Plans in place, and they are on file with the Department of Education. Because these plans address a wide range of issues, including potential active shooter situations, they are not available to the public. Districts and schools are encouraged to continue working in close coordination with local health districts to prepare and respond to emerging issues.

School/District Closures

Q: Who has the authority to close schools/districts for illness?

A: Decisions on school closures are made locally by education and public health leaders. Districts and schools should continue to work in collaboration with local health districts to ensure that all decisions are made with the safety and students, educators, and staff at the forefront, as they do every day.

Q: What happens if a school/district is closed and does not reach the required 180 instructional days?

A: Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 387.151 gives the State Superintendent of Public Instruction broad authority to count days when schools/districts are closed as session days in cases of emergency. If more than 75% of district facilities are closed, the district must first use its 3 scheduled contingency days. If a less than 75% of district facilities are closed, the State Superintendent may declare a session day without the use of contingency days (NAC 387.120).

In 2017 and 2019, extreme weather circumstances resulted in the Nevada Department of Education issuing guidance allowing schools/districts to submit updated school schedules to meet minimum instructional minutes – rather than day – requirements (NAC 387.125 & 387.131). We will work in consultation with districts and be flexible in this time of uncertainty. Annual instructional minutes minimums are as follows:

- Kindergarten: 21,600 minutes
- Grades 1-2: 43,200 minutes
- Grades 3-6: 54,000 minutes
- Grades 7-12: 59,400 minutes

Q: How will districts and schools make up lost instructional time?

A: [See answer above regarding 180-day requirement]. In addition, some schools and districts already operate on alternative schedules such as 4-day weeks, which would allow flexibility in making up lost instructional time.

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Q: How long does a school have to close if one of its students or staff members has the coronavirus or has come in contact with someone who has?

A: Districts and schools have been and will continue to work in close coordination with local health districts, and NDE will continue to work with DHHS, to support appropriate decisions on a case-by-case basis.

Q: If schools close, will virtual learning/digital days be an option to continue operations?

A: Currently, Nevada statutes and regulations related to attendance and session days do not allow for traditional schools to count days in session if students are not physically in attendance. NDE is aware that some schools/districts have made devices available to every student as part of their instructional plans and will consider virtual learning opportunities on a case-by-case basis, rather than unilaterally for any school/district that may be affected.

A major concern when shifting to virtual learning is equitable access to learning for students who have severe cognitive disabilities, are English learners, or experience other challenges in reaching proficiency; virtual learning has a high probability of exacerbating achievement gaps by failing to reach and support our most underserved and vulnerable students, including those who may be homeless, highly transient, low-income, etc. To support a shift to virtual learning, the Department of Education would also need to be assured that educators have the training and experience necessary to provide quality, full-time instruction virtually.

Funding/Cost/Salary Considerations

Q: Will school/district employees get paid in the event of a long-term closure?

A: Each school/district is responsible for addressing personnel-related matters, including possible contract revisions.

Q: Will schools/districts lose funding if they have to close?

A: School districts and charter schools receive monthly Basic Support payments through the Distributive School Account (DSA), based on the number of days each school was in session in the prior quarter (excluding hold harmless accommodations). If a district or charter school closes for an extended period, their DSA payment will be revised, based on their quarterly enrollment reports, in the following quarter's payment schedule. Similarly, once any missed school time is made up, the DSA payment will incorporate the additional time.

Quarantine

Q: How long should a student or staff member who may have come in contact with the virus wait before returning to school?

A: [Centers for Disease Control Interim Guidance for Preventing the Spread of Coronavirus in Homes and Communities](#) indicates that individuals should consult with healthcare providers or local or state department of health staff before returning to normal activities. School districts have been and will continue to work in close coordination with local health districts.

Q: If a student is absent for an extended time due to illness or quarantine, how will they make up instruction?

A: Schools/districts have established practices working with families to put learning plans in place for families in unique situations, including prolonged illnesses and chronic medical issues. Schools/districts are advised to review and revise contingency plans for supporting a greater than normal percentage of

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its population in the case of quarantines that do not result in a full school closure. Schools/districts will also need to coordinate with families to ensure that students who are healthy enough to participate in learning, but unable to attend school, receive services to which they are entitled under state and federal law, including nutrition services and special education services.

Q: How will students who rely on school nutrition programs receive food if schools are closed or if they are quarantined?

A: The [CDC's Interim Guidance for Administrators of Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools](#) recommends that, in cases of community spread illness, schools design strategies to avoid distribution in settings where people might gather in a group or crowd. Districts/schools are encouraged to consider options such as "grab-and-go" bagged lunches or meal delivery. The State Department of Agriculture oversees school nutrition programs and is working on providing updated guidance to districts and schools.

School Cleaning

Q: Should schools take extra precautionary measures with regard to cleaning?

A: As it is flu season, schools should maintain a regular schedule of cleaning high-touch surfaces, which include desks and tables, doorknobs, bathrooms, and computers, as well as regular cleaning of buses. On March 5, 2020, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a list of [EPA-registered disinfectant products](#) that have qualified for use against COVID-19. It is important to note that there may be additional disinfectants that meet the criteria for use; the EPA will continue to update its list with additional products as needed.

Q: How/Will schools be reimbursed for the extra costs of cleaning?

A: We are in close communication with the Governor's Office as well as our federal partners to make sure we are taking advantage of all of the resources available for schools and communities that may have to respond to cases of COVID-19. At this time, districts have indicated that they have the supplies available to support routine preventative cleaning. The Department of Education is asking all superintendents to review their current inventory of cleaning products and track all expenses related to cleaning for the COVID-19.