



PSEA Education Services Division

...IN BRIEF

March 25, 2020

Governor Wolf Announces Additional School Closures and the Cancellation of All State Standardized Tests for 2019-20

COVID-19 and School Closings

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every area of our lives. As of March 23, 47 states have closed schools statewide for some or all of the remaining school year, including Pennsylvania. These closures have significant implications for the provision of educational services to all students.

At this time, schools in Pennsylvania will remain closed through April 6. This applies to public K-12 schools, brick and mortar and cyber charter schools, private and parochial schools, career and technical centers, intermediate units, and childcare centers operating within any of the aforementioned as well as educational programming for students in non-education placements. Additionally, postsecondary institutions have suspended in-person instruction and non-essential services.ⁱ

Although this situation is constantly changing, the current return-to-school plan allows for administrators and school staff to return to school on April 7 and 8 prior to students returning on April 9. Since the return-to-school plan also intersects with many school spring breaks, some local education agencies are planning to reopen in the week of April 13. Employees performing life-sustaining services may continue their work throughout this closure.ⁱⁱ

COVID-19 and Standardized Tests

Due to the COVID-19 national emergency, Gov. Wolf has cancelled all state standardized tests for the school year 2019-20. This includes the Pennsylvania System for School Assessments (PSSAs) for all grades, the three Keystone Exams, and the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA).

Additionally, career and technical education competency tests are canceled. These include National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) and National Institute of Metalworking Skills (NIMS) exams.

Issues to Consider

PSEA is working hard to ensure that your voices are heard and that your professional needs are met as legislation and guidance are being developed. A few specific policy issues that PSEA is tracking and influencing related to school closure and the cancellation of standardized assessments include the following:

1. Educator Effectiveness System.

All aspects of Pennsylvania’s Educator Effectiveness System may be impacted by COVID-19 closures and cancellations. This includes the certain impact of cancelling assessments on the calculation of building level and teacher specific data and the likely impact of school closure on the completion of all observations of professional practice, Student Learning Objectives, and differentiated supervision practices. PSEA is advocating for solutions to each of these emerging issues and will share information as it becomes available on the implementation of the Educator Effectiveness system for 2019-20.

2. ESSA Accountability System.

On March 20, Pennsylvania received a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education related to some aspects of ESSA accountability and reporting requirements for 2019-20. The waiver includes a) the ability to cancel statewide assessments for 2019-20; b) no Targeted Support and Improvement designations for 2019-20; and c) a paring back of federally required accountability data reporting for 2019-20. Accountability requirements related to Comprehensive Support and Improvement schools and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement schools continue because these schools are in the middle of a three-year improvement cycle and will continue to receive supports.

3. Professional Learning.

Professional learning for educators also is impacted by school closures. PSEA is advocating for extensions, where possible, to state requirements and also is ramping up additional Act 48/Chapter 14 offerings.

PSEA is seeking a combination of guidance, regulatory, and legislative solutions to these issues. As additional information becomes available, PSEA will continue to provide updates to members.

For More Information

PSEA members with additional specific questions not covered in general guidance may contact Brad Hull in PSEA’s Education Services Division at bhull@psea.org.

ⁱ Pennsylvania Department of Education: [Closed Schools](#) and [Governor Wolf and Health Secretary Issue ‘Stay at Home’ Orders to 7 Counties to Mitigate Spread of COVID-19](#)

ⁱⁱ See latest letter from the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education at [Messages from the Secretary](#).