

Department of Education (FDOE) Q&A Guidance Regarding COVID-19

The purpose of this Q&A document is to provide additional guidance and clarification following a statewide conference call with superintendents on Friday, March 13, 2020.

1. Q: What prompted the updated recommendations regarding COVID-19?

A: As a result of an update following [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) issuing guidance specific to COVID-19 in Florida, [Commissioner Corcoran announced additional recommendations, including extending Spring Break.](#)

2. Q: Where can I find the new recommended school calendars?

A: Official school calendars are approved by local school boards. [FDOE recommended extending Spring Breaks.](#)

3. Q: Are extra-curricular activities permitted during Spring Break or during the extended break?

A: The determination of extra-curricular activities is a local decision; however, the Commissioner recommends suspending all extra-curricular and co-curricular activities during Spring Break and the extended break. Questions about Florida high school athletic events need to be directed to the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA).

4. Q: Will 21st Century programs be allowed to make up lost hours?

A: Programs have two options to offset the missed hours. They may add additional hours to the afterschool program if days are added to the end of the school year or offset the hours by adding them to summer programs.

5. Q: During the extended break, should we continue with extended day programs in schools?

A: The determination of extended day programs is a local decision; however, the Commissioner recommends suspending all extended day programs during Spring Break and the extended break.

6. Q: During the extended break, will districts be able to continue with the National School Lunch program?

A: Effectively, yes during the unplanned break, and FDOE has been working directly with the Division of Food, Nutrition, and Wellness (the Division) at the Florida Department of Agriculture. On March 14, the Division obtained a waiver from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide flexibility for school meals during periods of school closure. The decision to continue meal services for students is a local one. However, FDOE is hearing consistently that districts are planning on continuing services, and districts must have their plan for alternative meal delivery approved by the Division in concert with USDA. FDOE will be participating in twice daily calls that the Division is hosting with all

school districts' food service directors. Note, this does not apply to the regularly scheduled Spring Break, because the waiver only applies to unanticipated events.

7. Q: Are waivers available for missed instructional hours?

A: Given that the impact of instructional hours missed due to COVID-19 is yet to be determined, the FDOE is refraining from making any decisions related to missed instructional hours until long-term impacts can be realized. As a reminder, districts do not need the state's approval to use available calendar days to remain in compliance with the minimum instructional hours required by law. If the school board concludes that it is not feasible to make up lost hours, districts may complete the "Application for a Reduction in the Required Instructional Hours" form. FDOE will deem a completed application to be a request for the consideration of the Commissioner and the State Board of Education to reduce the required instructional hours, as well as a request for a waiver of Rule 6A-1.09533, Florida Administrative Code, under section 120.542, F.S., to the extent that such a waiver is needed.

8. Q: When will the assessment window for the Grade 3 FSA ELA and Grades 4-10 FSA Writing, originally scheduled for April 1, begin?

A: The Commissioner has directed that the assessment window originally scheduled for April 1 will begin at least two weeks later.

9. Q: Will the results of the Grade 3 FSA ELA be available by the statutory deadline of May 31?

A: No. With the assessment window moved back at least two weeks, the release of results will likely be pushed at least two weeks later.

10. Q: Will the results of FSA ELA assessments for all other grade levels be available by the statutory deadline of June 30?

A: No. With the assessment window for the writing portion of the ELA assessment moved back at least two weeks, the release of results will likely be pushed at least two weeks later.

11. Q: What is an "Instructional Continuity Plan"?

A: An Instructional Continuity Plan is a plan to continue education in a virtual or alternative setting.

- Districts currently have learning management systems that can be utilized to continue instruction in an online format.
- [Florida Virtual School \(FLVS\) has partnered with FDOE to offer all school districts student support and teacher professional development tailored to the online learning environment.](#)
- District staff should develop or perfect their instructional continuity plan to prepare for the return of students, instruction and prepare for the testing window that has been pushed back.
- FDOE is available to assist schools and districts with their plans.

12. Q: Can teachers return during the extended week to work on the Instructional Continuity Plan?

A: That is a local decision; however, if teachers return during the extended week, this may impact the ability to make up lost instructional time. Please review your local instructional calendar to determine if professional development (PD) or planning days can be reallocated.

13. Q: Should 12-month employees continue working during the extended break?

A: This is a local decision.

14. Q: Will this affect students in dual enrollment courses that are continuing at their Florida College System (FCS) institution while the district is on extended Spring Break?

A: Colleges are working to adjust their schedules and course delivery methods to respond to COVID-19. The districts' and FCS institutions' dual enrollment coordinators should work together to ensure that students have the opportunity to complete their coursework within the semester timeframe.

15. Q: How will the extended break impact graduation?

A: Graduations typically begin in May and we will provide additional guidance later.

16. Q: How should I work with vendors regarding cancelation deposits not being reimbursed?

A: Keep track of expenses and work with your general counsel.