

Pandemic/Epidemic Emergencies

The Board of Education (Board) recognizes that a pandemic/epidemic outbreak is a serious threat that stands to affect students, staff, and the community as a whole. With this consideration in mind, the Board establishes this policy in the event the town/municipality and/or school district is threatened by a reasonably likely pandemic/epidemic outbreak. At all times the health, safety and welfare of the students shall be of foremost concern along with the health, safety and welfare of the District employees and mindful of the overall health and welfare of the community.

Planning and Coordination

The Superintendent shall designate the head School Nurse or other appropriate staff members who in conjunction with the School Medical Advisor, shall serve as a liaison between the school district and local and state health officials. This designee and the School Medical Advisor are jointly responsible for connecting with health officials to identify local hazards, determine what crisis plans exist in the school district and community, and to establish procedures to account for student well-being and safety during such a crisis. The designee shall work with local health officials and shall keep the Superintendent advised when the risk of a pandemic or an epidemic of a serious illness has materially increased.

The Principals and/or school nurse or other designee shall develop a curriculum component to health classes that is designed to teach students about preventing or limiting the spread of communicable diseases.

The District shall purchase and store supplies necessary for an epidemic/pandemic outbreak, including but not limited to disinfectant products, face masks, water, examination gloves, and other supplies as recommended by the school nurse and/or School Medical Advisor and the Connecticut Department of Public Health.

The Superintendent shall develop procedures and plans for the transportation of students in the event of an evacuation. Such procedures shall include provisions for students who cannot be transported to home at the time of the evacuation.

Response

In the event anyone within the school is discovered or suspected to have a communicable disease that may result in an epidemic/pandemic, that person shall be immediately quarantined pending further medical examination, as recommended by state and national protocols. Local and state health officials shall be notified immediately.

In conjunction with local and state health officials, the Superintendent shall ascertain whether an evacuation (school closing), lockdown, or shelter-in-place needs to be established. As soon as

such a decision has been made, the school district shall notify the parents/guardians of all students.

In the event of an evacuation (school closing), the Superintendent is charged with determining when District schools shall re-open. In the event of a lockdown or shelter-in-place, the Superintendent shall notify all proper authorities and relief agencies to seek their assistance for the duration of the lockdown or shelter-in-place.

Infection Control

Any student or staff member found to be infected with a communicable disease that bears risk of pandemic/epidemic will not be allowed to attend school until medical clearance is provided by that individual's primary care physician or other medical personnel indicating that that person does not bear the risk of transmitting the communicable disease.

Students with excessive absences due to a communicable disease shall be given a reprieve from other Board policies relative to excessive student absences. Efforts will be made by the staff to determine what, if any, school work the student can complete while absent.

Staff members who are forced to miss excessive days of work shall first use any leave entitled to them through the Family and Medical Leave Act and/or accrued sick leave. If a staff member has still not received medical clearance to resume his/her work duties, absences in excess of a staff member's allotted leave be managed through existing contract provisions and will not affect the employee's right to continued employment.

Continuance of Education

The Superintendent shall develop a plan of alternate means of educating students in the event of prolonged school closings and/or extended absences. Such a plan may include, but are not limited to, providing students with assignments via mail or by email, local access cable television, or the school district's website.

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Board of Education, may amend the traditional class schedule and schedule of days. Such a plan may include extending the school day, having school days held on Saturdays if Connecticut statute changes, the use of previously scheduled vacation days, and/or extend the school year beyond the previously established end of school year, within applicable statutory requirements.

(cf. 5141.22 – Communicable/Infectious Diseases)
(cf. 5141.6 – Crisis Management Plan)
(cf. 6114 – Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness)
(cf. 6114.6 – Emergency Closings)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-154a Professional communications between teacher or nurse and student.

10-207 Duties of medical advisors.

10-209 Records not to be public.

10-210 Notice of disease to be given to parent or guardian.
10-221 Boards of education to prescribe rules.
19a-221 Quarantine of certain persons.
52-557b Immunity from liability for emergency medical assistance, first aid or medication by injection. School personnel not required to administer or render.
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. 1232g, 45 C.F.R. 99.

Policy adopted by the Salisbury Board of Education: June 22, 2020

6114.8 EMERGENCIES AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS - Appendix 1

Basic Components of Pandemic Planning

Every district should have an Emergency Management Plan that:

- ❖ Addresses all four phases of emergency management planning (Mitigation and Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery.)
- ❖ Is flexible enough to address multiple hazards (be “all hazards plans.”)
- ❖ Is practiced on a regular basis.
- ❖ Is developed in an interactive, cross-cutting manner, in collaboration with community partners and stakeholders.
- ❖ Is based upon sound data and information.
- ❖ Includes provisions for being continually reviewed and updated regularly.
- ❖ Is coordinated with community pandemic influenza planning efforts, as well as state policy and planning efforts.

Pandemic Plan

This plan is built upon components in existing emergency management plans and could contain elements unique to an influenza pandemic.

Communication Plan

- ❖ Identify audiences and key messages (students, parents, staff, etc.)
- ❖ Focus on clear, accurate, consistent, and timely communications.
- ❖ Identify trusted spokesperson (also, identify who will be lead for health matters.)
- ❖ Identify trusted media partners.
- ❖ Establish redundant communications methods identified in advance (primary, secondary and tertiary methods identified and all parties are familiar with them.)

Plan for continuity of learning or instruction

- ❖ Consider alternate learning strategies.
- ❖ Consider potential restructuring of the school calendar.

Identify stakeholders and partners.

Identify a contact within the local public health department and collaborate with that entity to create complementary plans, coordinate with other partners, and communicate consistently with the public.

Identify and coordinate with other key stakeholders such as law enforcement, school security personnel, local emergency management office, businesses, community and faith-based organizations.

Review and refine policies and authorities

Review school district's or school's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and Business Continuity Plans (BCP), which outline procedures for continued function during an extended

emergency.

Consider:

- ❖ Essential functions, goods, and services that must be maintained under a variety of conditions;
- ❖ Essential tasks that can be performed from other locations such as home, as well as technology support necessary to implement such measures;
- ❖ Essential people and material support;
- ❖ Delegations of authority, and
- ❖ Personnel/Human Resources policies (leave, disability, payroll, potential high absenteeism).

Identify legal authorities for school closures, limitations on responsibilities and functions (such as school lunch provision), and school's potential responsibilities and liabilities.

Review and refine supply policies and contracts including potentially ordering and warehousing items such as tissues, soap, or hand sanitizer.

Initiate or expand prevention and education efforts

- ❖ Conduct preventative hand-washing and cough/sneezing etiquette campaigns.
- ❖ Encourage staff, faculty, and students to stay home when ill.
- ❖ Provide information to parents, staff and students about elements of pandemic plan.

Create and implement a surveillance system in partnership with state and/or local health departments to identify and track student absences due to illness, which would allow the rapid detection of unusual changes or trends in student health.

Develop an Incident Command System (ICS) specific to a pandemic, that identifies roles and responsibilities of educators, law enforcement, and health officials in advance of an incident.

Consider and plan with community partners to address issues specific to your school environment, such as:

- ❖ Students with special needs, including those who are in special education, receiving supplement services at school. English Language Learners, or have special health care needs;
- ❖ Working with Child Nutrition Directors to help families identify sources for feeding programs for students who receive meals at school in the event of long-term school closures;
- ❖ Potential social services needed during and after pandemic has ended
- ❖ Possible alternative uses of school buildings during a pandemic (such as for mass immunizations or hospitals);
- ❖ Potential uses of school buses during pandemic and if/how this affects contracts;
- ❖ Current alternative uses for schools and determine necessary policies/procedures under school closures;
- ❖ Capacity to address requirements for cleaning the building if it was used for community health needs or if there were sick students;

❖ Fiscal, academic, emotional and physical recovery issues, including;

- Return to learning;
- Ability of students, family, and staff to access available mental health supports, particularly during a crisis if schools are cancelled;
- Bereavement needs; and
- Availability of mental health service providers, including community and faith-based organizations.

6114.8 EMERGENCIES AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS - Appendix 2

PREPARING FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASE: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENSURE THE CONTINUITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR SCHOOLS (K-12) DURING EXTENDED STUDENT ABSENCE OR SCHOOL DISMISSAL

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) wishes to remind states, districts, schools, students, staff, families, and guardians as well as communities about the importance of:

- 1. addressing the prevention of infectious disease in schools, including the seasonal flu, viral meningitis, enterovirus, and Ebola; and*
- 2. ensuring the continuity of teaching and learning in the event of student absences or school dismissals.*

The purpose of this document, therefore, is to provide recommendations to help schools maintain the continuity of teaching and learning for: 1) individuals or small groups of students who are out of school for extended periods; and 2) large groups of students and staff disrupted by school dismissals or large numbers of faculty absences.

These recommendations present points for education stakeholders to consider as they plan for and improve their ability to provide continuous learning, ranging from take-home assignments to online learning initiatives. This document offers key questions for states, districts, school leaders, teachers, parents, and students to think through as they prepare for continuity of teaching and learning, and provides information on resource opportunities and best practices.

There are a number of reasons why students may be absent from school for extended periods. For example, a student may have a chronic health issue or illness for an extended period of time. Using seasonal influenza as another example, a district may pursue *selective* dismissals of students at high risk of flu complications (i.e., to prevent the spread of flu to vulnerable communities), *reactive* dismissals (when a significant proportion of students in school have a documented fever), or *preemptive* dismissals (to proactively decrease the spread of flu). Whatever the reason and regardless of the duration of such interruptions, all education stakeholders should consider the effects of significant absences on student achievement and establish plans in advance that not only ensure health and safety, but also maintain a continuity of learning.

Options to get the material to students who are at home

ED is mindful that available resources will play a part in determining how each school creates its continuity of teaching and learning plan. This framework offers several options for consideration when preparing in advance, all aimed at helping districts, schools, and teachers plan and execute distance learning with whatever resources they have or are able to obtain. The strategies outlined below range from sending copies of assignments home to students to web-based distance learning course work. Specifically, they include:

- **Hard copy packets:** Textbooks, packets or portions from textbooks, photocopies of reference materials, curricula, and assignments can be prepared in advance for distribution to affected students;
- **Online materials or other content:** Digital copies of textbooks, reference materials, assignments, and audiovisual learning supports can be made available on the Internet using online learning platforms and websites;
- **Teacher check-ins and tutorials:** A variety of technologies (telephone, e-mail, web conferencing) can be used to facilitate one-on-one interaction between students and teachers, counselors, and other appointed adults (e.g., tutors) during prolonged absences or dismissals;
- **Recorded class meetings:** Using audio or video technology, recorded class meetings can be given to some or all absent students via podcasts, live or on-demand television, DVD, captioned closed-circuit or public access television, or online;
- **Live class meetings:** Schools can use available tools such as conference calling or webinars, online courses, or virtual schools with two-way interaction between the teacher and students;
- **Other student supports:** Schools can use any of the above methods to promote non-classroom priorities, such as college and other counseling support, including student loan preparation (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) or study groups that are enabled through web-based tools.

Considerations for ensuring continuity of learning

The following five guiding questions will help districts and schools develop learning continuity strategies and action plans:

1. How will affected parties communicate during short-term or prolonged absences or during school-wide dismissals?
2. How will students understand and access available academic resources and other supports from home?
3. What equipment and other resources are available or need to be acquired to enable school and district learning continuity plans?
4. What additional training or experience is required to prepare all parties to respond appropriately when needed?
5. How will the district or school ensure access to all materials, including for students with disabilities?

A decision table attached to these recommendations (Appendix A) includes detailed questions that schools, districts, and states can use to inventory instructional content and available technology; evaluate educator, student, and parent readiness to participate successfully in distance learning; and evaluate state and district operating plans to support various distance learning options.

Potential resources and partnerships to close the gaps

Some states, districts, and schools have some or all of the resources and capabilities to fully develop and implement their continuity of teaching and learning plans; however, most will require additional planning and support to ensure these strategies are effective across all

schools and student populations. To assist in these efforts, ED has assembled helpful examples from prior state and district responses to similar circumstances (see Appendix A). State and local education agencies can assess their capacities now to increase the accessibility of resources in a variety of forms to all affected parties. These tools and resources may include:

- **Comprehensive learning continuity planning and implementation support:**

Guidance regarding how to develop and implement a systematic plan, including technology resources to ensure that all students, including students with disabilities, can learn in a variety of environments;

- **Physical instructional resources:**

Publishers' and other instructional material can be made available in hard copy to students unable to physically attend school;

- **Digital instructional resources:**

Publishers' and other instructional material can be made available digitally so that it can be shared via e-mail and through other web-based tools or transformed into additional, accessible formats (e.g., braille);

- **Organization and distribution of digital content:**

Technology that offers tools and systems to share not only instructional content, but also teaching and learning experiences via the Internet;

- **Phone conferencing:**

Conference calls to allow teachers to interact with multiple students simultaneously using the telephone;

- **Webinar support:**

Web-based technology that allows teachers not only to interact with multiple students on a conference call, but also to simultaneously show students instructional tools such as literature passages or math solutions on a shared Internet site;

- **Online courses and virtual classrooms:**

Electronic learning communities where students and teachers interact in real time using web-based tools;

- **Virtual server capacity:**

Working with service providers to enable safe and redundant storage and delivery of larger amounts of instructional content using the Internet.

Appendix A: Continuity of Teaching and Learning – Decision Making

By reflecting on how existing tools may be used to develop effective distance learning strategies and accessing new resource opportunities, state and local education agencies as well as schools can work to sustain student attainment and achievement during prolonged absences or school dismissals.

Instructional delivery option #1

General planning to ensure continuity of teaching and learning

Considerations

- Are distribution plans in place to ensure student access to resources in the event of sudden absences or school dismissal?
- Are contact information records for students, parents, guardians, and all staff (e-mail addresses, physical addresses, phone numbers, including mobile, etc.) on file, and do teachers have access to that information to check in with absent students regarding academic progress? Are policies regarding privacy and sharing of personal information in place and clear to all parties?
- How can schools and districts leverage distance learning resources from other sources, including current vendors, community colleges and universities, and online sources of open content?
- Are policies in place for awarding credit for courses in the event of sustained distance learning (e.g., credit without seat time, credit if courses are taken online from a commercial provider or from another district)?
- Are defined staffing plans in place to support distance learning in the event of small or large student or faculty absences?
- Will staff be permitted to return to school to use school-based equipment and resources?

Resource Opportunities and Examples**

- ED's Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center (accessible at <http://rem.ed.gov>) supports the development of high-quality school emergency operations plans (EOPs), building capacity in preparedness. The REMS TA Center provides training and technical assistance addressing school emergency management, including the continuity planning and infectious disease control.
- Los Angeles County Office of Education: Continuity of Instruction Resources: http://www.laschooltoolkit.com/gp_hh_5.html
- Standards for online programs in schools: <http://www.inacol.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/NACOL-Standards-Quality-Online-Programs.pdf>

Instructional delivery option #2

Hard copy packets

Considerations

- Are adequate resources or agreements in place to support copying and distributing learning packets and materials for students to use at home for up to 12 weeks if necessary?

Resource Opportunities and Examples**

- Physical instructional resources presented by the Federal Registry for Educational Excellence (FREE) including teaching and learning resources from dozens of federal agencies accessible at <http://free.ed.gov>

* All hyperlinks and URLs were accessed in November 2014

** The tools and resources identified in this document are not intended as endorsements, and are merely offered as examples that you may take into account in your own continuity of learning efforts.