



COVID-19 SCHOOL OPERATIONS GUIDANCE (Approved 3/23/20)

The State Board of Education appreciates the hard work and dedication of school leaders, educators, and other school staff statewide during this difficult time. After consulting with the Governor, the Governor's K-12 Emergency Council members, and the Department of Health and Welfare on the ongoing extent of this crisis and the impact to our school districts and charter schools, it is now time to set a statewide framework for responding to extended school closures and reopening. This guidance will allow local districts and charter schools to respond to their unique populations and community needs, while still assuring for the continuity of services and learning to our Idaho students. Our local school district and charter school leaders will need to be prepared to make decisions and set priorities based on their current situation in their respective communities, and they must be able to do so within a common framework. This will help to establish stability and common expectations for our school districts and charter schools across Idaho.

Idaho's state constitution and statutory framework authorizes the State Board of Education with governance and oversight over all publicly funded education. Idaho's constitutional obligation to a general, uniform, and thorough system of school is going to be challenged in this crisis.

Given the current situation, the State Board of Education directs that all school districts and charter schools implement a soft closure through Monday, April 20. During this soft closure period, local districts shall follow national CDC guidelines pertaining to large gatherings and social distancing. While students are not permitted in schools, the State Board expects efforts to continue facilitating essential services and student learning. The Board will reassess this timeline as circumstances dictate.

During this soft closure period, the Board expects that school districts will continue to provide these educational and essential services to the best of their ability. The school districts and charter schools are asked to focus on the following:

1. Develop and implement a continuation of essential services to your local communities. At a minimum, plans should include providing food service to Idaho's underserved populations and childcare for our community members that provide critical services, with a focus on meeting the needs of local communities and supporting wider state emergency plans.
2. Implement and/or develop remote learning strategies that will benefit all K-12 students in school districts and charter schools. These plans should be designed in the event that a community needs to maintain closures for an extended period or the remainder of the school year.
3. School districts and charter schools shall develop a plan on delivering special education services, following recent federal guidelines, which may include revisions of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 Plans. The U.S. Department of Education has provided new guidance on revising IEPs and delivering remote education to special education students which can satisfy federal requirements.

Over the next few weeks, the State Board of Education will work with Idaho's public health officials and the Governor's K-12 Emergency Council to develop criteria that districts and charters can use to inform their reopening decisions.

Additionally, the State Board and the State Department of Education will continue to evaluate current state mandated educational requirements, and will make decisions to increase flexibility over the coming days and weeks as specific areas are better identified.

The Board will schedule regular meetings throughout this crisis so that they can act quickly and nimbly to the needs of our Idaho students.