

Date: Mach 19, 2020

To: ETA Members

From: Jack Janezic, IEA UniServ Director

RE: School Closure Guidance

On behalf of your leadership team, I want to thank you all for your efforts to keep our collective community forward focused. The public has a growing appreciation for the scope and quality of work you all do every day. That said, we are all in a place that I personally hope will not serve as a planning tool for the next time. Instead, we are collectively trying to persevere professionally while maintaining our sense of humanity. The stories of people's compassionate actions will never all be told and we'll never know how the smallest of choices made all the difference to somebody, near or far.

Several questions continue to arise from membership about some of the differences between Emergency Days and Act of God Days. The guidance that follows is considered with our membership in mind. For example, on Emergency Days (ex. Snow days) custodial, building and grounds, transportation, and some administrative staff are expected to report to work. Teachers are not.

Please keep in mind that while ETA comprises 2500+ of the employee pool for U46 there are still another 1500+ people in all other job categories. Superintendent Sanders messages are to all staff and therefore it's imperative that our members understand how the rules apply to them and be mindful of how they apply to others as we engage in both formal and informal communication networks to inform and support one another.

Clearly there are many who are currently performing their essential duties, some remotely while others at their normal or temporary work sites, during this first mandated closure of schools.

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Issue	Type of Day		Comments
	Emergency	Act of God	
Make up at the end of the school year	Yes	No	<p>School code identifies the number of Emergency Days that are allowed by ISBE on an annual basis. Emergency Days are positioned at the end of the BOE adopted district calendar and are utilized when a regularly scheduled day of attendance is cancelled, district-wide, at any time over the course of the school year. While we commonly say that “emergency days will be made up at the end of the year”, in fact they’re already there and become active workdays if and when a scheduled day of attendance is cancelled.</p> <p>Under current school code, Act of God days count as attendance days and therefore do not need to be “made up”.</p> <p><b>ISBE Public School Calendars 2019-2020</b> (<a href="#">link</a>)</p>
District determination?	Yes	No	<p>District-wide closure of schools due to events outside of their control, typically a snow day or a “cold” day in our part of Illinois, is the prerogative of the superintendent.</p> <p>Statutes require a district to exhaust their Emergency Days prior to applying to the state for access to Act of God Days, or as we’re currently experiencing, they can be declared by the State.</p> <p>The Governor’s executive order overruled the normal rules and identified all the days from March 17<sup>th</sup> through March 30<sup>th</sup> as Act of God Days.</p> <p><b>Governor’s Executive Order 2020-5</b> (<a href="#">link</a>)</p>
Expectation of work	No	Yes	<p>Any expected work must align with the core mission of the district and address essential needs. Additionally, directives from other agencies must be adhered to, such as the following: limited size of gatherings, social distancing, attendance policies, grading of student work, etc.</p>

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### **Pertinent governmental resources:**

1. Office of the Governor: COVID response and Executive Orders ([link](#))
2. ISBE COVID-19 Webpage ([link](#)):

As of right now, below are links to the guidance documents on the ISBE site. Please use their site for the most accurate and recent information.

Please pay attention to the dates of the documents. As guidance arrives from other agencies, both state and federal, the original documents are updated and posted as new documents and possibly making prior guidance incomplete.

For instance, clarification of expectations regarding grading student work during this executive order was updated in a letter from Dr. Ayala, State Supt. Of Schools. In the letter you'll find:







Another question we received frequently today was about grading student work during the closure. We wish to clarify that:

Student work completed during the mandated statewide school closure must not negatively impact a student's grades or otherwise impact a student's academic standing. As we do not yet know the full extent of the closure and want to minimize any negative effects on students, schools may allow student work to count during the closure only to increase a student's academic standing.

Our students may be experiencing varying mental and physical health challenges at this time and may have very different access to supports and technology at home. Our goal is that no student is negatively impacted by the closure and that no school district's policies or procedures should widen the equity gap.

Lastly, on topic of SpEd and students with IEPs, the first substantive update on SpEd didn't arrive until March 18<sup>th</sup>.

### ISBE Communications (shortened list)

- [ISBE Guidance to Schools on Mandatory Statewide Closures](#)  - **March 18, 2020**
- [ISBE Special Education Guidance on Statewide School Closures](#)  - **March 18, 2020**
- [Message from State Superintendent Dr. Carmen I. Ayala](#)  - **March 17, 2020**
- [Joint Statement of the Office of Governor JB Pritzker, Illinois Education Association, others](#)  - **March 17, 2020**
- [ISBE Guidance to Schools on Mandatory Statewide Closures](#)  - **March 16, 2020**
- [ISBE Guidance to Schools on Mandatory Statewide Closures](#)  - **March 14, 2020**