

DATE:	March 12, 2020
SUBJECT:	TEA Update: COVID-19 Initial Guidance and FAQs
CATEGORY:	Informational
NEXT STEPS:	Share with appropriate staff

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) continues to work with the Office of the Governor, Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to coordinate and plan the state's response to COVID-19. Many of you have contacted us with questions specific to your school district preparedness and operation plans. This communication has been invaluable as TEA works to address the many issues you now face.

As DSHS is the lead agency in the state's preparedness efforts, school districts should be working closely with your local health authorities as you weigh operational decisions. You can find your local public health organization on the [Department of State Health Services \(DSHS\) website](#).

A note on when to decide to close your district or schools. DSHS provides a daily update on its [website](#) of confirmed cases of coronavirus. Please consult with your local health authority when making closure decisions.

We recognize your immediate need is for information regarding how to best ensure the health of students, teachers and personnel on a day-to-day basis. In addition, you have asked for some guidance regarding strategies surrounding the spring break period in your district. To that end, this letter is intended to provide some initial guidance to you. More will come as we work through the issues you have already identified.

- **TEA COVID-19 Website** – TEA has established a [COVID-19 website](#) as a central source for information to school districts. Additional resources will continue to be added on a regular basis. Please use this website as your initial source for information from TEA.
- **Initial Guidance** – With this correspondence, we are releasing our initial guidance focused on several topics, including: district decision-making and communication; funding questions; potential attendance waivers; special populations, and online learning. Please note we recognize this is a rapidly changing situation at the state and local level. For that reason, the information presented is subject to change based on new information. We will update this guidance in the coming days.
- **Additional Guidance** – Information related to additional questions that have been posed will be shared in the coming days. Guidance will be provided on an ongoing basis to address as many issues as we can.

- **Daily Superintendent Communication** – In order to strengthen our communication channels, TEA will be launching a daily conference call with superintendents. This call establishes a daily avenue to share new information and help address concerns for your specific district. Superintendents will be provided with call-in information in a separate message sent via our TEA Superintendent list serve.
- **Email** – Many superintendents have already utilized disasterinfo@tea.texas.gov to submit questions and concerns. Please continue using that email address for any immediate questions.

TEA is sharing this guidance and working to create a standard for best practices. However, the decision to open or close a school still rests at the local level with school administrators. We encourage all districts to continue calmly communicating facts and pertinent information to students, parents, and staff. As Governor Greg Abbott and Dr. John Hellerstedt, Commissioner of the State Department of Health Services, made clear in a [joint message](#) earlier this week, the approach to COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses should be one of common sense, everyday action.

Thank you for the work you do for the school children of Texas.