

# School Closure FAQ

## Which schools are closing, and for how long?

The Governor has declared that all schools in Washington will be closed for six weeks, public and private. Schools will close no later than Tuesday, March 17, and will not reopen before Monday, April 27th.

## Why are schools closing?

There are multiple factors that led to this decision:

- The number of cases is rapidly expanding.
- Health officials can no longer map the contacts of infected individuals reliably.
- School districts within the region are experiencing unparalleled student absences.
- Many districts are on the brink of no longer being able to staff their schools due to staff absences.

## Why is my school closing if there are no cases in my area?

This is a dynamic, fast-moving situation, and counties impacted by COVID-19 now represent 75% of Washington's population. Public health experts agree that this is the best time to do a statewide closure, and going county-by-county would not allow Washington to get ahead of the wave of cases.

## What about higher education institutions?

All classroom instruction in higher education institutions, including public and private 2-year and 4-year institutions, as well as commercial and technical schools and apprenticeship programs, is prohibited under this order. Institutions may continue to operate social services, including administration, dormitories, food services, research facilities and medical clinics, with proper social distancing.

Higher education lab and clinic learning settings may continue to operate if a person is designated to ensure social distancing and proper steps to reduce risk.

## Are childcare options being provided during closures?

Closing schools has a major impact on our ability to staff hospitals, health care facilities, and other fire and medical departments. Superintendents have been asked to provide childcare, at no cost, to families who are in the medical field or who are first responders.



## **If childcare options are provided, how will those children be kept safe?**

Districts that provide childcare have been advised to take every measure possible to keep students safe, including providing social distancing, ensuring consistent hand washing, sending students home if they're sick, and routinely disinfecting commonly touched surfaces.

## **What if I don't work in those fields?**

If families don't work in the healthcare or first responder fields, but are expected to continue to attend work during the closure, they should reach out to their school district. Districts can make additional decisions that are needed for their communities.

## **Will meals be provided for students during closures?**

School meal programs should continue during school closure for COVID-19. Check in with your child's school to find out more about meal services and distribution.

## **Will students be learning from home during the closure?**

Superintendents have been advised to explore opportunities for extended learning, similar to packets that are sent home during Thanksgiving and winter breaks. Schools should not be providing online learning services unless they can provide those services equitably.

## **How will schools support students experiencing homelessness?**

Schools are expected to plan how they will continue to support students experiencing homelessness during the closure. Reach out to your school district for more information.

## **Will students have to make up missed days?**

Schools and districts that close in response to the COVID-19 outbreak should make every effort to make up missed time, including using scheduled vacation days and planned school closure days. However, OSPI will grant emergency waivers to allow districts to end the school year on Friday, June 19 at the latest.

## **Will this have an impact on student testing?**

OSPI has decided that all state testing will be canceled for the 2019–20 school year. This includes the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA), the Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science (WCAS), the Washington Access to Instruction and Measurement (WA-AIM), English Learner Progress Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21), and WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs.

## **How will families be notified about additional information?**

Districts are expected to follow their standard procedures for notifying families. This includes, but is not limited to, calls, emails, text messages, and contacting local news stations. If families are not hearing from their districts during a closure, they should get in touch with their school principal or district superintendent.