
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

April 8, 2020



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EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES — COVID-19 RESPONSE: APRIL 7, 2020

School Closures. On April 2, 2020, Governor Kim Reynolds signed a [proclamation](#) ordering the closure of schools through April 30 and waiving instructional time requirements as long as school districts put in place a continuous learning plan.

Department of Education. The Department of Education (DE) has released to nonpublic schools and school districts [procedures for continuous learning](#). Schools have been given until April 10 to notify the Department of their decision to not offer continuous learning, to offer voluntary educational enrichment opportunities, or to offer required educational services. The decision is made on a whole-grade level, not by specific class offering. Instructional time requirements will be waived unless the school chooses to not offer continuous learning.

The DE has received approval from the U.S. Department of Education for its [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA) waiver of assessment and accountability requirements for the 2019-2020 school year. The DE also continues to provide updated [guidance](#) to families, school districts, area education agencies (AEAs), community colleges, and teacher preparation programs. [Webinars](#) with school district superintendents and education stakeholders continue to provide updated information and provide a forum for the DE to respond to questions.

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) continues to provide employment services to job candidates with disabilities and continues to work with business partners. Business partner responses have been varied, as some businesses have a need for job applicants and others are reporting a pause in hiring. IVRS has been providing additional services to business partners to transition former IVRS clients into telework settings. Using virtual platforms, outreach services to clients in the secondary and postsecondary educational settings continue through the Pre-Employment Transition Services Program. Upcoming meetings and trainings are being transitioned to virtual platforms.

Iowa Reading Research Center. In response to school closures, the Iowa Reading Research Center (IRRC) has redirected its efforts from primarily supporting professional educators to supporting families who are trying to continue student learning at home. Among other [resources](#) on its website, the IRRC has developed [projects and standalone resources](#) for supporting home learning, which include the following:

- A 24-day [IRRC Book Study for Teens](#) designed for students in grades 7-12, with vocabulary words and reflection questions related to each day's reading assignment.
- Weekly [IRRC Writing Prompts](#) for students in English and Spanish, which will be released over six weeks from March 25 to April 29.
- [IRRC blog](#) posts focused on supporting literacy learning at home.

Iowa PBS. Governor Reynolds has asked Iowa PBS to provide the press conference [video](#) of ongoing news conferences from the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). Iowa PBS is also providing programming and support statewide. Several programs have begun production to historically document COVID-19 responses across the State. Multiple special informational programs have been aired and are available on [iowapbs.org](#). Iowa PBS has provided multiple online educational resources including the following:

- [Virtual Learning Camp](#) for educational skills and activities.

- Daily special [programming](#) for grades 6-12 in the subject areas of science, history, and English language arts.
- Parent [resources](#) to use to talk with children about COVID-19. Information on healthy habits, educational games, and activities are also available.
- Educational [activities and resources](#) that are available to download and print at home.
- At-home learning [resources](#) for families and children.

Area Education Agencies. The AEAs are working with the DE to implement guidance regarding the delivery of Early ACCESS and special education services. The AEAs are providing online enrichment activities and resources to educators, families, and students through [AEA Scout](#) and [AEA Learning Online](#). As schools expand continuous learning opportunities, AEAs are offering materials, trainings, workshops, and resources to support educators and students.

Early Childhood Iowa. The Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) Technical Assistance State Office has been hosting teleconference meetings with Early Childhood Iowa Area Boards to share strategies in addressing local needs and to provide State-level updates regarding responses and resources related to COVID-19. Some child care centers are struggling to remain open due to operational costs, decreased parent-paid tuition, and lack of access to essential health and safety products. ECI is working to connect centers with available resources. Additional ECI COVID-19 information and resources can be found [here](#).

Iowa Department for the Blind. The Iowa Department for the Blind has nearly all staff working remotely and has suspended its training center operations until May 1. Virtual services continue to provide needed training and services to clients. The Business Enterprise Program is working to support independent small business owners who have vending machine operations in government buildings that are currently closed or sparsely occupied. Thirteen paraeducators participated in a pilot training program that included how to make accessible learning materials that utilize universal design principles, improve participants' knowledge of braille, and facilitate general development of skills. A second spring session has been added that will begin April 13, and [registrations](#) are currently being accepted.

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