



CHARLESTON

CUSD NUMBER ONE

School Closure & Remote Instructional Days

Frequently Asked Questions

FOR CUSD#1 Teachers

March 22, 2020

During times of such uncertainty, we are more grateful than ever for the Charleston School District family's ability to work together, stay positive, and be creative about ways to serve our students and their families. Thank you all for your shared commitment to serving our students to the best of our ability.

We do realize there are many questions around what the coming weeks should look like. We hope to be able to provide some clarity by answering some of the most commonly asked questions. *This FAQ document was developed with joint guidance between CUSD#1 administration and the Charleston Education Association.*

The Illinois State Superintendent, Dr. Carmen Ayala, is continuing to issue guidance for school districts during this unprecedented set of circumstances. We will provide you with updates from the state, as we receive them. As you are all aware, this situation is ever-changing and evolving on a daily (sometimes hourly) basis. ISBE has formed an advisory group, who will explore possibilities and provide information for school districts moving forward. In the meantime, we want to answer your questions to the best of our ability.

Am I expected to review previously learned content or deliver new content?

March 23-March 30 are considered Act of God days and were originally intended to be a time to provide a review of material and not be graded. Now that the governor extended the school closure date to April 7, the ISBE is contemplating that districts will transition to 'Remote Instructional Days.' Any time spent out of school beyond March 30 may be used to introduce new content. We realize this creates challenges and more questions for teachers and parents.

Please consider using any time beyond March 30 as days when students should begin as much new learning as possible. You will need to be creative in your design of this instruction and understand that not all students will be able to participate in this learning, in the same ways. This is the time to share ideas with colleagues, work together, develop co-constructed lesson plans and activities, and collaborate as much as possible to ease the burden off of one teacher.

What about grades?

The statement from the State Superintendent reads as follows:

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.

Students will undoubtedly need opportunities to positively impact their grades in your class(es). The longer students are out of school, the more opportunities for demonstrating learning we must provide for them.

What about students who don't have internet or a device to use at home?

During our first week of school closure, teachers are making very important "check-in" phone calls. As part of these calls, we will identify which students have access to technology and which ones do not. The district will be using this critical information to develop a plan for those students. District administration and the technology department will work together to plan ways to provide students with the devices and internet access they need to make remote learning a possibility for all students.

In the meantime, we ask teachers to think creatively about how to "level the playing field" for students. After reaching out to families, you may discover a few of your students do not have access to computers at home. For those few families, you may provide paper copies or "packets" that they may pick up at Charleston Middle School during one of the assigned meal pick-up times. We hope this solution is only temporary and we ask for your patience as we work to find a longer-term solution.

Do I count "attendance" or participation? What if a student has access, but chooses not to participate?

There will be no attendance taken at this time. We would encourage you, however, to keep track of students participating in your class activities as you would if you were in the classroom. If you know students have access but are not completing work, not attending any virtual "meetings," or participating in your online activities, we encourage you to reach out the student and/or parent. Students should feel their participation is valued, as you would if you were talking with them face-to-face. Their participation and effort could be factored into their grade as well (as long as it's not going to negatively impact their grade).

Am I allowed to work from my classroom (calling parents, copying, preparing lessons)?

In Governor Pritzker's Executive Order, he states that individuals should only leave their homes to perform "essential activities." We understand that you may need to access materials and resources. If you must retrieve materials from your classroom, we ask that you enter and exit the building and your classroom, limiting the locations you visit and contact with others. You are also asked to contact your building principal when you've been to the building, with specifics about when and where you visited, so that proper cleaning can take place after your visit.

A copy of the executive order is linked [here](#) with more specific guidance on what are considered "essential activities."

If I'm not using my school phone to call parents, how can I call parents without giving out my personal phone number?

There are a variety of methods to reach out to parents. When you make personal phone calls, you may choose to "block your number" from a parent by using *67 before dialing the number. If using this, your number will show up as "No Caller ID" on their phone.

If you have to leave a voicemail for a parent, ask them to return the call to your school extension or send an email with a good time to call back. You can check your voicemail at school by calling 217-639-1011 and follow the prompts.

Is the district expecting teachers to use one particular "platform" or means to provide remote instruction?

Unfortunately, no. This event transpired quickly and without ample time to train and prepare staff for a transition to e-learning. Ideally, we would utilize one platform to avoid confusion and keep our instruction streamlined across teams and teachers.

All teachers DO, however, have access to a valuable tool through Microsoft Office, called Teams. It would be worth your time to learn more about Teams. The benefit to this resource is that it is part of our Office 365 platform, making it easily accessible to all district students and staff. It is also linked to One Drive for sharing of documents and has the capability to schedule "meetings" or live video chats. The capabilities are quite limitless. An added benefit is that many of our middle and high school students are already familiar with using the One Drive to submit assignments.

We have linked resources on our webpage that will help you learn more about how to use Microsoft Teams to organize your instruction.

<https://www.charleston.k12.il.us/o/cusd-1/page/covid-19-school-closure-information>

Scroll down to the bottom left for "Technology Tutorials."

It is not required that all staff utilize Teams at this time, but we encourage you to consider using this resource for ease and consistency throughout the district.

What will this mean for instruction next year?

Let's take one day/week at a time on this issue. We will have some big questions to iron out the longer students are not in school. We are confident that here in CUSD#1, we will work together and collaborate, as we do best, to come up with solutions that are in the best interest of our students. In the coming weeks, we should know more about the school closure timeline. At that time, we will get our heads together ("virtually" of course) to discuss a plan for Fall 2020.

What about state tests such as IAR, SAT, ISA, and DLM?

The state has issued a guidance document on many topics, one of which is state assessments. Please review the most recent [guidance document](#), which briefly addresses state testing on page 1. In short, the state will request waivers for state testing requirements from the US Department of Education and provide more specific updates on this ever-changing situation.

How should I manage teaching from home while managing my own child's at-home learning?

We recognize that every teacher has unique challenges and obstacles they are facing at this time. We understand those and realize that you will need to find a balance between home and school. We encourage you to create routines, set schedules, and maintain boundaries in order to best find that balance. Though we expect you to continue to provide instruction and support for your students when they are at home, we want you to define what that looks like in your own personal situation.

Please be clear and specific with parents and students. Either create "office hours," where you are accessible by phone or email, or check phone messages/emails at least 2-3 times per day to answer questions and provide support to students and parents.

We also want you to focus on your own health and well-being, as part of that home/school balance. This is a stressful time for everyone, filled with worry and wonder. Please take care of yourselves. Go for walks, do yoga, read, watch a funny movie, spend time with family, or whatever activities bring you joy and relaxation.

What about committee meetings? Professional Development opportunities?

The answer to this question depends on how long schools are closed. The longer we are required to stay home, the greater need we will have for some committee meetings and professional development.

This is another place to get creative with technology. Several groups may still "meet," but via Microsoft Teams. On Teams, groups can talk together, share documents, and interact remotely to maintain collaboration and shared decision making.

There will also be PD opportunities provided for you, particularly for those who need professional development hours for license renewal. We already recognize the need for some essential support in the area of technology and e-learning. You can also expect professional development in Competency Based Education, Leader in Me, and other district initiatives. Some of these opportunities will be required and others will be optional.

We will find creative ways to log hours and provide clock hours for your work. You can anticipate a menu of options coming soon, as plans are further developed. It's important that we continue to move forward with innovation and important next steps. No Coronavirus will stop us!

You should also think about using this time to complete your mandated trainings using GCN. Please review the crosswalk [here](#).

What about IEP meetings?

Robert Lynn sent out some guidance about IEP meetings and delivery of services during this time. Please refer to the [guidance document](#) from ISBE on special education topics for more specific information.

In short, during Act of God days from March 23-March 30, we are permitted to delay and reschedule annual IEP meetings *with the permission of a parent*. After March 30, however, we should consider timelines and meetings to proceed as expected. The main difference is that IEP teams won't physically gather to meet. The case manager will work with the principal, parent, and IEP team members to schedule online meetings using district technology, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, WebEx, or Skype. It is not an option to NOT have an annual IEP meeting at this time. Not meeting those timelines would not only put us out of compliance, but would also create a large "back-log" of meetings to reschedule when we return to school.