



COVID-19 School Closures:

Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated: 10:30 am, March 17, 2020

Will the Office for Schools waive the hours of instruction requirement?

The Office for Schools believes it is essential that schools make a good-faith effort to educate their students effectively during this period of facility closure. All schools have the ability to implement innovative programming, including, but not limited to, Virtual Instruction and Learning, in situations when schools are unable to provide traditional face-to-face instruction. As such, there is the expectation that our schools will implement this programming with the goal of finishing the 2019 – 2020 school year on schedule and with fulfillment of the required hours of instruction.

Applicable policy:

- Policy 6112.1: Instructional Time states in part:
 - *Schools will provide class schedules that will most effectively serve the essential components of instruction within that school; namely, the needs of students, the school's philosophy and goals, and the programs that flow from these.*
 - *Effective July 1, 2009, the school day shall consist of the following minimum instructional time.*
 - **Kindergarten:** 437 hours per year or two (2) hours and 30 minutes for five-year old children and two (2) hours for four-year old children.
 - **Grades One to Six:** 1050 hours per year or 6 hours.
 - **Grades Seven to Twelve:** 1137 hours per year or six (6) hours and 30 minutes.
- Policy 6111: School Calendar states in part:
 - *If school is closed due to inclement weather or other emergency event, the day is not required to be made up as long as the total number of hours of direct pupil instruction meets the yearly hour minimum stated above.*

We do encourage schools to have teachers log their activities in order to document the school's effort to meet the instructional requirements. The Office for Schools will not be asking for this documentation. The following excerpt from the March 16 document [Virtual Instruction and Learning Guidelines for the Week of March 16, 2020](#) may be helpful:

- We do not have clear answers on how VIL will translate into the required instructional minutes mandated by state law. **It is very important that, beginning today, all K-12 teachers keep logs of their planning time, virtual office hours for communication (includes recorded lessons, conference calls, individual feedback to students, website updates and posting of materials),**

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and estimated completion time for students on assigned tasks. This can be formalized for accountability purposes later. Note: There is not an expectation that time spent at home equals in-school hours. VIL should be reasonable and age-appropriate for a home setting.

What about the potential waiver for hours of instruction by DPI?

We are aware that the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction is probably going to allow private schools in the Wisconsin Parental Choice Programs to apply for a waiver from the required hours of instruction. We believe this waiver would provide relief from the burden of documenting hours of instruction for Choice schools, but it does not relieve them from their responsibility to continue to educate students to the best of their ability. *See answer to above question.*

The Office for Schools is pursuing the potential to apply for this waive on behalf of all of our Choice schools, so that each individual school does not have to do so. As soon as we have clarity on the process, we will let schools know.

Are there Safe Environment Program concerns specifically related to Virtual Instruction and Learning?

Yes. In addition to all other Safe Environment protocols:

- Emails between students and teachers should be sent through the school assigned email accounts and/or school learning management system.
- Video conferencing should be conducted in group settings whenever possible. Any 1-to-1 interaction between a teacher and student should be conducted in a public place in the home and should be for instructional purposes this would include video conferencing or a phone call.
- We recommend the following guidelines for 1-to-1 interactions between an adult and student:
 - A designated time should be set for the phone call, preferably when a parent, guardian, or other caregiver is also available to be present either on the call or in the room.
 - We recommend the teacher receive verbal confirmation from the child's adult caregiver that he/she is present.
 - A log of all such interactions should be kept by the teacher/adult.
 - An audio recording to be kept of the phone call or video conference (if possible)

Is there facility access allowed after 5:00 pm, March 18, 2020?

Yes. Essential adult personnel, which must be determined locally, are allowed access to facilities. This would include, but not be limited to, maintenance personnel and school employees needed for food distribution (if a school is doing this). There may be a need for select administrative personnel and staff to be present at various time, e.g., Choice Designee.

Please keep in mind the essential reason for the closure is to “flatten the curve” of the virus spread. Therefore, the number and frequency of personnel in the facility should be limited. Encourage all employees to work from home if at all possible. This includes teachers who may conducting VIL; it should be done at home if they have the capacity to do so. It is certainly acceptable for a teacher to come into the school facility to access needed materials and / or receive technical assistance.

Under the current closure order, there may not be any gatherings on students in our facilities after 5:00 pm, March 18, 2020. Students may come to pick up lunch and to drop-off / receive academic

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packets, but this needs to be accomplished with a process that limits time and exposure for all involved. Ideally this is accomplished with access to a confined area of the facility.

Principals are encouraged to conduct any necessary staff meetings via conference call or Zoom (or similar program).

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